

McCown's Longspur in Chemung County: On February 21, 1970 I found what I believe to have been a McCown's Longspur (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) in a freshly-manured field on the Ridge Road, Chemung County, about a mile from the Schuyler County line. The fifteen-foot fertilized strip paralleled the road for some distance before it turned and encircled the sloping field. A chin-high snow bank separated the strip from the road and helped shield observers from the strong, bitter north wind that we faced. For this reason birds on the strip seemed unaware of our presence, though many of them were closer than fifty feet and were easy to observe with our 7 × 50 binoculars.

I had already found three Lapland Longspurs as I studied the flock of 100 or more Horned Larks and about 25 Snow Buntings, when I noted a strange Longspur. It was feeding in a deep furrow about fifty feet away, near the end of the field, with only four or five Larks nearby. The bird was much lighter in general coloration than any Lapland I have ever seen, its back stripes buffy and brown with no black or dark brown. The face pattern was also much softer and its breast more delicately streaked, ending in a creamish-white belly. I noted also a distinct reddish-brown or rufous patch at the bend of the wing, very noticeable when his side was toward us. I have often noted a rufous band on the wing-coverts of the Lapland Longspur, but this was not what I saw on *this* bird. I called this patch to the attention of Mrs. Wingert, an active member of the Chemung Valley Audubon Society, who was with me. Both of us studied the bird for some time with a 20-power scope before going to the car to try to identify it. I was aware of the fact that Peterson emphasizes the tail pattern as means of identifying the various kinds of Longspurs, but this I could not see on this bird. I did not wish to flush it before contacting other club members who might want to see it.

After consulting *Birds of North America* (Robbins, Bruin and Zim) I concluded that the light coloration and the rufous bend of the wing might well identify the bird as a McCown's Longspur.

Skies were overcast, it was mid-day, there was an icy wind, but visibility was good at this close range.

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Ed. Note: Without a specimen or photograph, this report, convincing as it may be, cannot officially be accepted as a state record. But it points out the necessity for careful scanning of such flocks in the future.