

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Lark Sparrow in Essex County: On the afternoon of 8 September 1981, Dr. and Mrs. Daniel O'Keefe and I were camped at South Meadows, 1½ miles north-east of Adirondak Loj in the Town of North Elba, Essex County.

At 5:50 p.m. Mrs. O'Keefe called my attention to a sparrow quietly sitting on a poplar branch about twenty feet high. The tree grew at the edge of the parking area closest to the State Truck Road leading south to Marcy Dam. From a distance of about forty feet, through 8.5 x 44 and 8 x 50 binoculars, we were able to obtain good views of a strikingly marked head, and noted that the breast was unstreaked. Through a 15x telescope we could clearly see the brown and buff-white crown stripes, brown cheek patch, and white and black facial and throat markings of an adult Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*). Dr. O'Keefe joined us and first noted the central breast spot as the bird obligingly changed poses. We also observed the tiny white spot under the eye and another behind the cheek patch. The white tail feathers, seen from below, were obvious.

Within ten minutes a light rain had increased and the bird flew across the parking area. The O'Keefes and I, and two unidentified campers who had joined us, shared a clear view of the white outer tail feathers in flight. The sparrow landed at the grassy edge of the dirt parking area, where it appeared to be feeding, and then flew up into the trees again. The light rain and brisk breeze had increased, and by the time darkness fell at 8:00 p.m. a low-pressure area had moved into the mountains, bringing a thunderstorm with heavy rain that lasted all night. The following morning was clear, but the bird could not be found.

The area around the parking lot includes a grove of Scotch pine and a mixture of poplars, balsam, sweet gale, alders, tamaracks, and a variety of other trees and shrubs bordering the West Branch of the Ausable River. The elevation of South Meadows is 2055 feet. According to Bull (1974, *Birds of New York State*, p. 581), the Lark Sparrow is very rare in the interior. This represents a first record for Essex County and the Adirondack Park.

John M. Peterson, Discovery Farm, R. D. 1, Elizabethtown, New York 12932