

# Ontario Bird Records Committee

## Rare Bird Report Form

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**Species:** Lark Bunting.

**Date of sighting :** September 2, 2002

**Time:** 700, and periodically till September 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Number-Age-Sex:** One Hatch Year Male.

**Location:** The bird was at Thunder Cape Bird Observatory on the tip of Sibley Peninsula in Sleeping Giant Provincial Park.

**Habitat:** The bird was originally found in low lying scrub consisting mostly of trimmed Fir and loosely arranged Dogwood species. The bird spent most of the time in the lawn of the Bird Observatory using dense shrub for cover or hanging out amongst the rocky shoreline.

**Weather Conditions:** The day was cool and partly cloudy. A very large storm from the west came through the night before.

**Distance:** Distance ranged from 0cm to about 100m. The bird was banded.

**Optical Equipment:** 10X40 Bushnell Legends, 8X35 , and 8X 40 Bushnell.

**Photos:** Photos attached and taken by Stuart Mackenzie

**Names and Addresses of Observers:**

Stuart Mackenzie	Jody and Jessie Allair
1459 Baseline Rd.	c/o Thunder Cape Bird Observatory
Stoney Creek ON	??????
L8E 5G4	

**Experience:** The three named observers are extremely committed and very well apt at bird identification. This was the first time each of us had seen a Lark Bunting.

**Date of Report:** September 9, 2002

**Description of Sighting:**

Unfortunately the bird was confirmed upon its capture. The first sighting of the bird was made around 700AM. Stu was walking toward the east Heligoland trap and flushed a chunky fairly large bird into a young birch tree. During this extremely short

view he noticed faint white tail flashes on the outer rectrices and a faint facial pattern similar to a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak and about the same size. Other volunteers were doing a Heligoland run at the same time so Stu flushed the bird into the path of the drive. At the catch box, amongst about 20 American Redstarts a much larger bird flopped in and immediately large white wing patches were seen and the Lark Bunting was born. The head was mostly brown and very large and round. Dominantly brown with a very faint lighter supercilium, and light brown cheek auricular patch. The upper back was a varied gray, brown and black striping similar to that of White-crowned Sparrows but much fainter. Large tertials stood out with a faint white/cinnamon border. The upper tail coverts were striking cinnamon brown leading to a very dark brown with white patches on the tip of the outer two rectrices. Strong brown streaking was present along the breast and neck, becoming faint along the flanks. The belly was bare creamy white.

The wings were most distinctive. Primaries and secondaries being a dark brown along with the scapulars but over all the large white patch made up mostly of the greater coverts contrasting with almost black scapulars was the best field mark overall.

Age of the bird was determined firstly by feather shape and conditioning. Rectrices being very narrow and tapered. Other plumage was fresh and not well defined as typically found in adults along with fluffly feathers along the belly. Skulling confirmed it as a hatch year bird. Sex was determined mainly by the amount of white on the wing patch which was extremely large for a first year bird deeming it a male. There was no strong indication of black in the plumage besides that in areas mentioned above or noticeable in the pictures.

Please see the photos for any missed information.

Similar Species: *Zonotrichia* sp. – ruled out by white wing patch and white tail flashes  
Lark Sparrow – ruled out by white wing patches et al.