

WV BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT FORM

Please Type or Print Legibly

Species: Number: (leave blank)
Location: Date: Time:
Bird Seen: To: Age/Sex:

Description: In lieu of physical material substantiating a record (e.g., specimen, diagnostic photograph, vocal recordings) a complete written description can serve as verification for the biological record. Please be as thorough as your field notes allow. Do not feel constrained by the space provided. Additional supporting descriptions/illustrations may be attached. Note that photographs or recordings WILL NOT BE RETURNED but become part of the permanent record for the observation.

Structure: (Overall size and shape plus details on the head, feet, tail, etc.)

The structure was typical for a meadowlark, a chunky passerine in the Icteridae family, about 9 1/2 inches long with a relatively long, pointed bill and a short tail.

Plumage: (e.g. markings, coloration, molt)

Like both species of meadowlark, this bird had mottled brownish upperparts, a bright yellow breast with a black V-shaped breast band, and white outer tail feathers. See below for more detailed descriptions.

Description of any vocalizations, if heard:

I first heard the bird's distinctive song and knew immediately, based on previous experience, that I was hearing a Western Meadowlark. The song consisted of bubbling, flute-like notes, ending in a rapid gurgle, very different from the whistled "see-you see-yeer" song of Eastern Meadowlark. Incidentally, there was a nearby Eastern Meadowlark that sang occasionally, providing an instant, in-field comparison of the two songs. I am submitting a vocal recording, made the next day, in which the song can clearly be heard on three occasions.

Description of behavior:

The bird was in a grassy field, and like meadowlarks, spent most of the time singing from the grass. It moved around a lot, singing from one area of the field and then a few minutes later singing from another area. I rarely saw it fly, so it must have been running around in the grass from one area to another. On two occasions, it rose into the air and sang, presumably doing some sort of flight display. Also, an Eastern Meadowlark came in and attacked the Western Meadowlark, but it fended off the Eastern Meadowlark and started to sing more aggressively, and sat up higher in the grass, making itself more visible.

Habitat: (General and Specific)

Reedsville Farm has extensive grassy fields, many of which are used for cattle. The field that this bird is in is not a cattle pasture, however, and has short grass that is just starting to grow and turn green.

Circumstances of observation: (Include details of distance to bird, optics employed, lighting in relation to observer and the bird)

The bird was singing fairly constantly for about an hour, and during most of that time I was trying to see it through my Zeiss Terra ED 42 10X42 binoculars. I caught occasional glimpses as it ran around in the grass. It eventually flew to a nearby fence and perched on a wire, giving me a chance to study and photograph the bird. The distance to the fence was perhaps 100 to 120 yards. I studied the bird through my Kowa TSN-661 spotting scope, and took a poor-quality digiscoped photograph with my Canon Power Shot SX620 HS camera. The day was overcast so lighting was good and there was no issue with glare.

Previous experience with this species:

I have had prior field experience with Western Meadowlark in the American West and Indiana.

Experiences with similarly appearing species which are eliminated by your description: (Please be specific)

The plumage of both species of meadowlarks is very similar, and they can be difficult to separate in the field unless their very different songs are heard. This bird exhibited field marks that are consistent with those of Western Meadowlark. I was able to observe those field marks through my scope, and they are more or less visible in the photographs. Its upperparts were a lighter, more cafe-au-lait color than the darker brown tinged with rufous of the Eastern Meadowlark. Its flanks were whitish with broken streaks. Eastern Meadowlark would show more buffy flanks with continuous streaks. The streaks on this bird's head were lighter and more brownish than the bold blackish streaks of Eastern Meadowlark. And finally, the yellow of the throat extended well into the submoustachial region of this bird, and the area behind the base of the lower mandible was yellow as well. The yellow of the Eastern Meadowlark's throat does not extend to the submoustachial region, or to the area behind the base of the lower mandible, both of which are whitish.

Other observers: (Names, Addresses, E-mail please)

If the others agree with your identification they can sign this form here. If they care to provide additional details they can submit their own report.

N/A

Additional observer signature:

Additional observer signature:

Additional observer signature:

Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and especially how did these influence this description:

In the field, I consulted "The Sibley Guide to Birds". Later that afternoon I consulted the "National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America" and an online article from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, "Differences between Eastern Meadowlark, *Sturnella magna*, and Western Meadowlark, *S. neglecta*". I didn't consult these sources to confirm the identification, because I knew immediately what the bird was based on its song, but I needed to make sure I understood the finer points of distinguishing the two meadowlarks, and to make sure the field marks I noted in the field matched the information in the books.

How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

I wrote extensive notes right after seeing the bird, which were enhanced after consulting field guides and the internet. I wrote a detailed description later that afternoon for my eBird submission, and I wrote this report on April 3, 2020.

Name:

David Daniels

Address:

Date:

4/3/20

Signature:

Mail to: WV Bird Records Committee

Attn: Wil Hershberger

170 Stallion Ct.

Hedgesville, WV 25427

Or E-mail to:

wilhershberger@mac.com

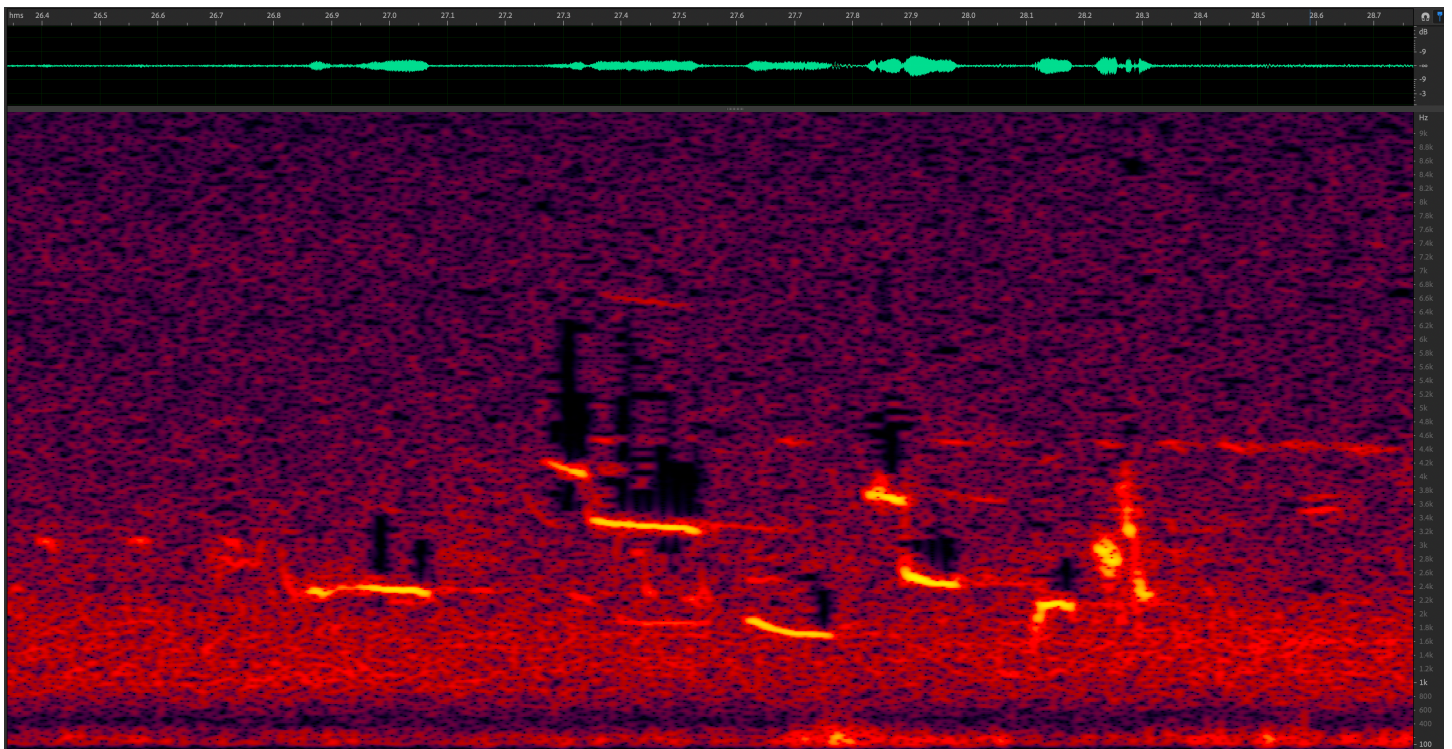
Please use the space below to add any appropriate details you feel were missing from the above form or to expand on any answers whose allotted space was insufficient for a complete response:

I am submitting two photographs and a voice recording with this report. The photograph depicting the bird facing away, with its back toward the camera, was taken on March 31, 2020. The other photograph, depicting the bird facing toward the camera, as well as the voice recording, were made the next day, on April 1, 2020.

I discovered the bird on March 31, 2020. The next two days, it was seen and photographed by multiple observers. It was still present the morning of the day I wrote this report. I plan on visiting Reedsville Farm every day, if possible, to see how long the bird remains.

Finally, my research revealed that both meadowlarks can occasionally sing the song of the other species. However, they quickly revert to their "correct" song and do not continue the "wrong" song for very long. In this case, I listened to the bird sing fairly constantly for about an hour, and at no time did it sing any notes that resembled those of Eastern Meadowlark. Also, I have now heard the bird sing the last four days and it has always sung the song of Western Meadowlark.

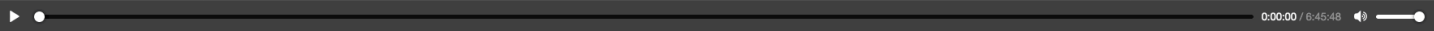
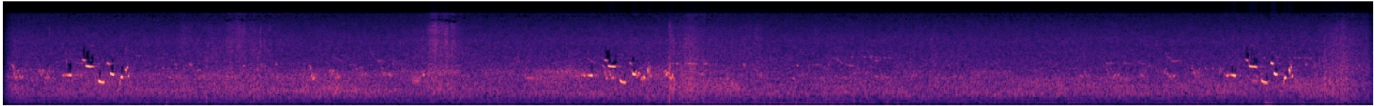




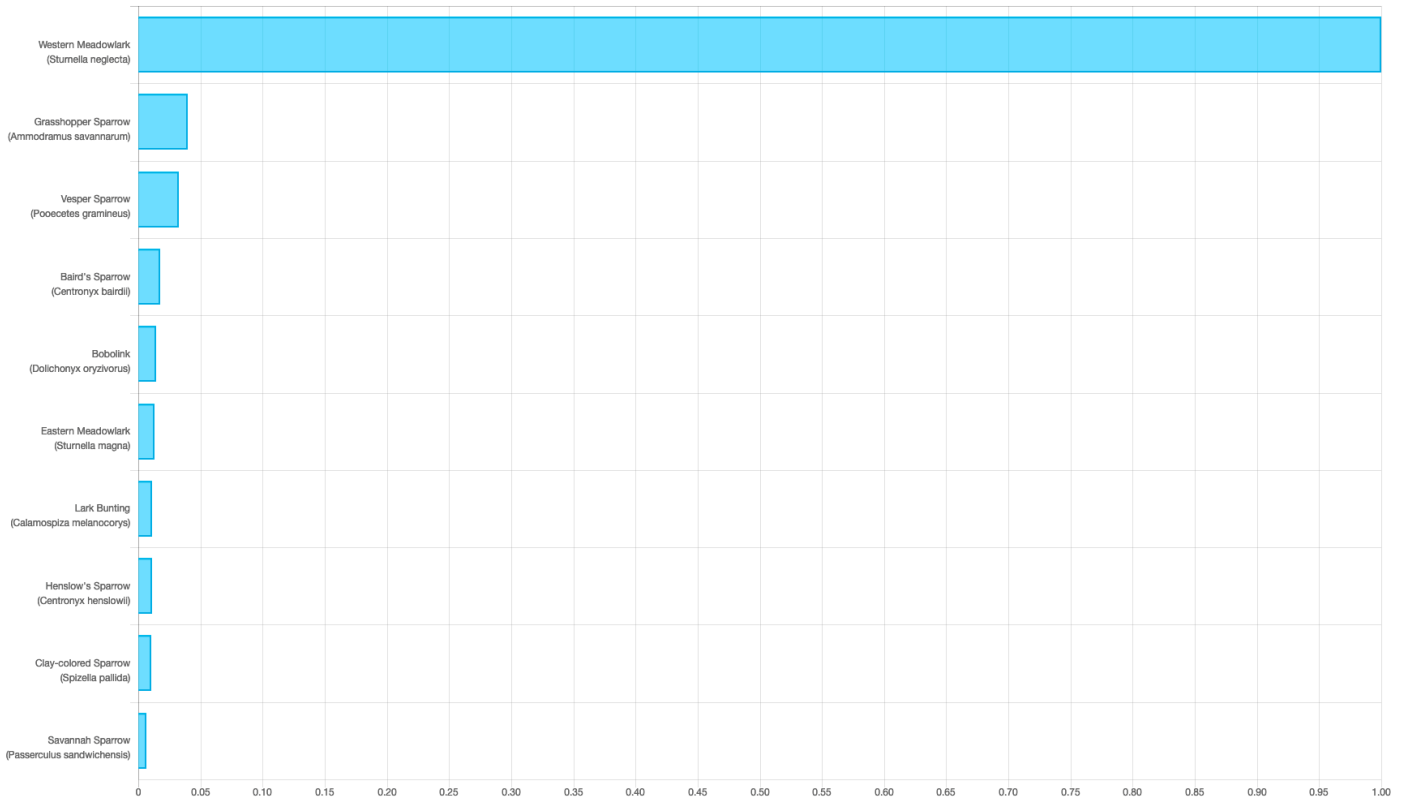
Sound file available at: <http://natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/WEME4-1-20.wav>

WVBRC 2020-1 Western Meadowlark Preston Co.wav

Upload File



This chart shows the average species probabilities for the entire file. Play the file or click the spectrogram for interval scores.



Prediction took 1.09 seconds

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BirdNET - Cornell Lab of Ornithology | Chemnitz University of Technology - 2019