

Western Meadowlark

Unanimously Accepted 7-0

Committee Member Comments:

CM1: The almost identical-appearing meadowlarks make up a species pair which I believe requires audio evidence in order to be properly evaluated by a state records committee. In this case, the written description and rather poor-quality photographs are certainly suggestive of Western Meadowlark, but the audio evidence clinches the identification. In addition, the bird was seen, heard, and photographed by multiple observers over several weeks.

CM2: This was a finely documented record by a skilled observer. The photographs included may not be definitive, but that is understandable given the subtleties in separation from Eastern and the distance to the bird. The sound files however do seem fairly definitive. Furthermore, I observed the bird myself and was able to note the appropriate field marks with patience. The vocalizations are also convincing. The observer deserves congratulations for noticing the different bird and documenting a difficult field ID so thoroughly. Nice job!

CM3: The description, images, and song are consistent with a western meadowlark.

CM4: Excellent documentation and good sound recording provided by the observer. The observer articulated well that he knew the differences in the Western and Eastern Meadowlarks, and pointed out that the song is one of the best ways to make the species distinction. The observer listened for at least one hour initially, and in days afterwards, and the bird in question never sang an Eastern Meadowlark song. The fact that the observer had an Eastern Meadowlark nearby singing near the bird in question was a good opportunity to make a comparison from live birds, rather than just comparing the differences on a sound app. His photos helped support the observation, and although not high quality, the difference in malar coloration was visible on the photos. The habitat and behavior of the bird also supports the species identification as a Western Meadowlark. I support this record for submission for the state list.

CM5: I vote to include the Reedsville, WV sighting of the Western Meadowlark record for the State List. First, I want to commend David for exemplary submission. The written description has good detail with research references and includes both photographic and audio evidence. The observer has previous experience and recognized the WEME. He was able to differentiate the bird from the Eastern Meadowlark. His report on eBird and WV Bird brought many others to observe this record bird. Therefore, this report meets the standard set by the by-laws for inclusion on the official State List.

CM6: Seen and verified by many over a long period of time. It doesn't get much better than this with photos and recordings.

CM7: The bird's vocalization is clearly that of a Western Meadowlark with the lower-toned bubbly intonation typical of the species compared to its Eastern counterpart. The only question would have been whether or not the vocalization would have been coming from a mimic or some other source. However, the fact that the observer saw the bird confirms the identification. Plus, the bird continued to vocalize in this Western fashion for an extended period over a few days.