

Lark Bunting

Calamospiza melanocorys

A common sparrow of the Great Plains, the male Lark Bunting is distinctive with its black body and white wings. It is the only sparrow that changes completely out of a bright breeding plumage into a drab winter one.

Keys to Identification

Adult Description

- Small songbird; medium-sized sparrow.
- Short, thick, bluish bill.
- Large white patch in wings.
- Relatively short tail with white tips to feathers.
- Breeding male all black with white wings.
- Female and non-breeding male grayish brown and heavily striped.

Male Description

Breeding (Alternate Plumage): Body all black. Large white patch on upper part of wing. Tail black, tipped white.

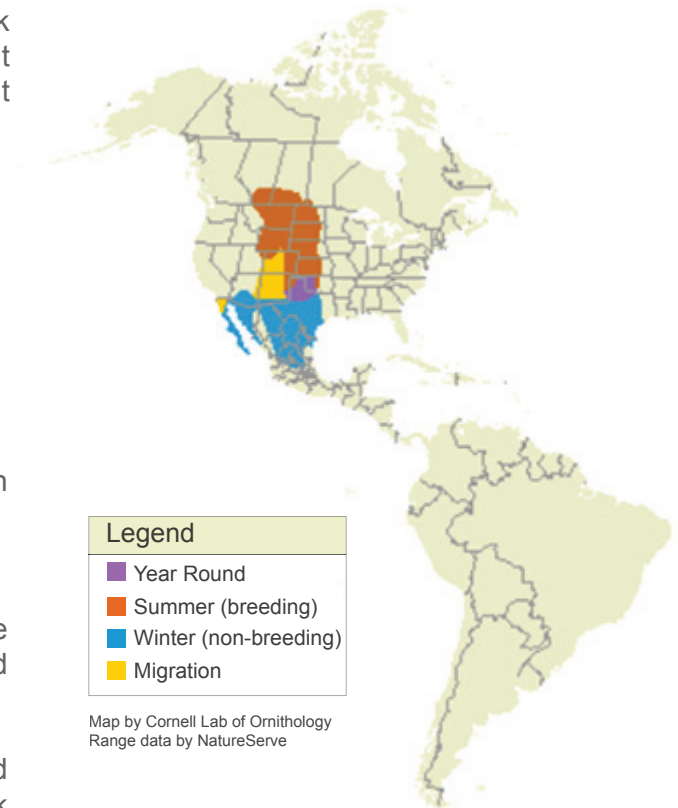
Nonbreeding (Basic) Plumage: Grayish brown and darkly streaked above. White below with large dark streaks on chest and sides. White patch in wings. Chin black. Black extending to belly feathers, but mostly hidden by white feather edging.

Female Description

Grayish brown and darkly streaked above. White below with large dark streaks on chest and sides. White patch in wings.

Immature Description

Juvenile similar to adult female, but buffier overall.



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Range data by NatureServe

Cool Facts

- The Lark Bunting often comes to drink out of water tanks provided for livestock. While the water may be helpful, the tank can be a dangerous place. Large numbers of buntings often drown in the tanks, especially in those containing mats of algae. Domestic cats also hunt there; one cat in Kansas caught 17 Lark Buntings in one day.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 5.5 - 7.1 inches
- Wingspan - 11 inches
- Weight - 1.1 - 1.8 ounces