

At a Glance . . .

October 1985

The October "At a Glance" species may appear particularly ambiguous due to the darkness of the printed photo. Nonetheless, several recognizable features should distinguish the bird from other possibly confusing species. Points to consider are the large, pale, conical bill, streaked flanks (visible between the goldenrod leaves), streaked back, unstreaked breast, broad, pale supercilium (eyebrow), and the dusky eyeline behind the eye. Taken together, these features readily identify the bird as a female Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*).

While superficially resembling a sparrow, a Bobolink is far too robust (six to eight inches) to be confused with a sparrow in real life. The flank streaks, dusky eyeline, broad supercilium, and absence of an eye ring should serve to distinguish the Bobolink in the picture from a Grasshopper Sparrow. The immature Dickcissel would fail to show such a broad supercilium and would not exhibit the dusky eyeline at all. The lack of obvious streaking on the nape should eliminate LeConte's Sparrow as a possibility. A final feature, and one not apparent in the photograph, that separates female, winter-plumaged male, and immature Bobolinks from sparrows is the sharply pointed tail of the Bobolink - a characteristic readily observed in the field. The adult female Bobolink in the picture was photographed during July in Marshfield, Massachusetts.

W.R.P.



Adult female Bobolink


Photo by Wayne R. Petersen

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Can you identify this bird? Identification will be discussed in next issue's *At a Glance*. Bird Observer will award a PRIZE to the reader who submits the most correct answers in 1985. Please send your entry on a postcard to Bird Observer, 462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02178 before the answer is published.




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