

## Maryland's First Live Photo-documented Chestnut-collared Longspur, *Calcarius ornatus*

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On 31 January 2015, we were slowly driving through the snow-covered farm fields of Washington County when we observed a small brown bird on the side of Chewsville Road. Our first impression suggested a Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*), but the bird's face appeared buffy and the auricular pattern less distinct than that species. The bird was feeding along the snowless area next to the road and in a strip of longer grass. Traffic was fairly heavy and every few minutes a car would drive by and the bird would flush, fly around, and eventually return to the roadside. It often gave a rattle call as it flushed. We viewed the bird with binoculars from about 30 to 50 m (~100 to 160 ft), and were able to obtain some photos and video. We watched the bird from about 1:00 p.m. until 1:30 p.m., until it was flushed by a passing car, flew up over a hill, and did not return.

Our photos showed blackish feathering around the breast, very short primary projection, no rufous in the wings, and extensive white in the tail, field marks of a male Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) in basic plumage. We sent out some poor snaps off the back of Feild's camera which allowed Matt Hafner and several others to confirm the identification. We then posted information of the sighting to the Maryland & DC Birding listserv (Feild 2015, Green 2015). We returned several more times during the day but were unable to relocate the bird.

On 1 February, about 20 people arrived early hoping the bird would return. The first sighting of note was a Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) that spent the day in the area. At about 8:30 a.m., the Chestnut-collared Longspur was refound several hundred meters from its previous location. It remained in this general area, in a small grassy patch near several fence posts, where it provided good views to many observers until at least 4:10 p.m. (Figures 1 and 2). It was also reported by one observer on 2 February, just after 9:00 a.m. There were many photographs taken during the three-day sighting that provided additional documentation of the bird (eBird 2015, Maryland Biodiversity Project 2015).



**Figure 1. Chestnut-collared Longspur.** Male, basic plumage. Chewsville Road, Washington County, Maryland, 1 February 2015. (Photographed by Clive Harris)



**Figure 2. Chestnut-collared Longspur.** Male, basic plumage. Chewsville Road, Washington County, Maryland, 1 February 2015. (Photographed by Jared Fisher)

There are 42 reports of the Chewsville Road bird on eBird for 1 February, plus one report for 2 February, the last report of which we are aware (eBird 2015). It is likely that as the snow melted, the bird simply moved away from the road. 31 January was a cold day with the temperature remaining below freezing and little snow melt. Away from the road the ground was almost completely snow-covered. 1 and 2 February were warmer and sunny, with temperatures as high as ~7 °C (~44.6 °F), and large areas of ground were soon snow free. This created an abundance of habitat for a very small brown bird.

The 2015 Washington County sighting was accepted by the Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee (MD/DCRC) (Phil Davis, in litt., 27 August 2015).

### **PREVIOUS MARYLAND RECORD AND REPORT**

There are two previous reports of Chestnut-collared Longspur in Maryland.

There is an accepted record of an adult male specimen that was collected by Captain Annsley Ludlam “on the Thoroughfare farm just beyond the drawbridge across Assateague Bay” at Ocean City, Worcester County, on 20 August 1906 (Kirkwood 1908, MD/DCRC 2015b). The specimen is housed in the Division of Birds, Department of Vertebrate Zoology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

There was also a sighting by Harold Wierenga at Sandy Point State Park, Anne Arundel County, on 30 October 1970. The bird was subsequently observed on 31 October by Harold Wierenga, Chan and Eleanor Robbins, Carl Carlson, Paul DuMont, Arthur Alexander, and Bill and Fran Pope (Wierenga 1970). This record was not accepted by the MD/DCRC. The decision summary states: “Some reviewers felt that the written description was not detailed enough, especially regarding colors and patterns of the head, upperparts, and tail plumage. The addition of the field notes taken at the time was appreciated, but proved insufficient to overcome the reviewers’ doubts. Chan Robbins has been unable to locate his field notes for this sighting; if they come to light the record can be reconsidered.” (MD/DCRC 2015a).

### **NORTHEAST AND ATLANTIC COAST RECORDS**

Table 1 summarizes the various state records committee-accepted records of Chestnut-collared Longspurs in the Northeast and Atlantic Coast states. There are 26 accepted records for this region, with records from 10 of the 17 constituent states. The first is from 1886, and the most recent prior record from June 2012. Since 1968, there have been records, on average, every 2.5 years. The records are fairly evenly spread throughout the year, with records in every

month except July. There are 6 records from June, more than in any other month. The majority of the records are from coastal locations, so the Washington County record is noteworthy in that it was roughly 250 km (155 mi) from the coast.

**Table 1. State bird records committee-accepted records of Chestnut-collared Longspur for the Northeast and Atlantic Coast states (listed north to south).**

State	Date	Location	Citation
Maine	13 AUG 1886	Scarborough, Cumberland Co.	MBRC 2015
Maine	22-28 JUN 2012	Biddeford, York Co.	MBRC 2015
Vermont	(no records)	(no records)	VBRC 2014
New Hampshire	29 NOV 1992	Deering, Hillsborough Co.	NHRBC 2010
Massachusetts	23-27 OCT 1991	Duxbury Beach, Duxbury, Plymouth Co.	MARC 2015
Massachusetts	15DEC 2004	Plum Island, Essex Co.	MARC 2015
Rhode Island	(no records)	(no records)	RIARC 2015
Connecticut	29 AUG 1968	Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, Fairfield Co.	ARCC 2015
Connecticut	7 JUN 1994	Stratford, Fairfield Co.	ARCC 2015
Connecticut	10 JUN 2000	Haddam-Killingworth HS, Haddam, Middlesex Co.	ARCC 2015
New York	16 FEB 1889	Long Island City, Long Island, Queens, New York	NYSARC 2015; Bull 1964
New York	14 SEP 1891	Miller Place, Long Island, Suffolk Co.	NYSARC 2015; Bull 1964
New York	21-27 APR 1923	Orient, Long Island, Suffolk Co.	NYSARC 2015; Bull 1964
New York	29 APR 1944	Dyker Beach, Long Island, Brooklyn, New York	NYSARC 2015; Bull 1964
New York	5 NOV 1968	near Rhinecliff, Dutchess Co.	NYSARC 2015
New York	6-8 JUN 1982	Bay County Park, East Rockaway, Nassau Co.	NYSARC 2015
New York	5 JAN 2001	Jones Beach State Park, Nassau Co.	NYSARC 2015
New York	18-20 FEB 2001	Jones Beach State Park, Nassau Co.	NYSARC 2015
Pennsylvania	(no records)	(no records)	PORC 2015
New Jersey	18 JUN 1980	Cape May, Cape May Co.	NJBRC 2015
New Jersey	14 JAN - mid FEB 1984	Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co.	NJBRC 2015
Maryland/DC	20 AUG 1906	Ocean City, Worcester Co.	MD/DCRC 2015b
Maryland/DC	31 JAN - 2 FEB 2015	Chewsville Road, Washington Co.	Phil Davis, in litt.
Delaware	(no records)	(no records)	DBRC 2013
West Virginia	(no records)	(no records)	WVBRC 2015
Virginia	5 JUN 1977	Chincoteague, Accomack Co.	VARCOM 2014; Wendy Ealding, in litt.
North Carolina	late FEB - early MAR 1992	Charlotte Motor Speedway, near Harrisburg, Cabarrus Co.	CBCBRC 2014
North Carolina	mid- MAY 2001	SE corner of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Haywood Co.	CBCBRC 2014
North Carolina	23 APR - 2 MAY 2011	Fort Fisher, New Hanover Co.	CBCBRC 2014
South Carolina	(no records)	(no records)	CBCBRC 2014
Georgia	(no records)	(no records)	GCRC 2014
Florida	24 NOV 1983	Pa Hay Okee, Everglades National Park, Dade Co.	FOSRC 2013
Florida	31 OCT 1999	Ft. Pickens, Escambia Co.	FOSRC 2013

There were no other reported Northeast or East Coast sightings of Chestnut-collared Longspur during 2014 or through July 2015 (eBird 2015).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our thanks go to Phil Davis (Secretary, Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee), Wendy Ealding (Secretary, Virginia Avian Records Committee), Matt Garvey (Secretary, Massachusetts Avian Records Committee) for supplying supplemental record information, and to Clive Harris and Jared Fisher for allowing use of their photos.

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