

## Norfolk Records Committee Description Submission Form

Species: Little Bunting	
Date/time first seen: 14 <sup>th</sup> October 2016	Date/time last seen:
No. of Birds: 1	Age/Sex: unknown
Location: Scolt Head Island, House Hills	
Finder: Ashley Saunders & Steve Cale	Email:
Identifier ( <i>if different</i> ):	Email:
Submitter ( <i>if different</i> ):	Email:
Other observers: Nick Parsons, Paul Eele & George Baldock	
Any who disagrees with identification? No	
Optical aids: Leica 8x42HD	
Distance from bird: 20m	
Have you attached photographs? No	Was the bird videoed? No
If photos are available on websites then please give address:	
Have the photographs been published in magazines? If so, where:	
Species present for comparison: Reed Bunting	
Which species were alongside the bird: Reed Bunting	
Observer(s) experience of the species: We had both seen one on East Hills the previous week, plus many others over the years.	
Observer(s) experience of similar species on the same day or previously: Plenty of Reed Buntings on the day. Both seen Rustic before	
Weather : Overcast	
Wind direction and Force: Mod-fresh NE	
Light conditions ( <i>good, dull, etc &amp; sun behind, side etc</i> ): Good, no harsh light, neutral viewing conditions	
Visibility ( <i>distance</i> ): 5km+	
Address of submitter:	
Phone No:	
<b>And finally, is the record 100% certain? Yes</b>	

In your description please include the following:

1. Circumstances of finding the bird (if applicable) but keep it brief
2. Plumage, bare parts etc and call (if possible)
3. Jizz (that 'indefinable something' about the way it behaved)

**Description:**

During an excellent autumn spell dominated by easterly winds in mid-October, Steve Cale, Nick Parsons and myself headed out to Scolt Head for the day on 14<sup>th</sup> October. We met Richard Moores on site, who found a Dusky Warbler right under our noses [!] and he headed off towards the hut leaving the three of us birding House Hills around 11am. Birds were clearly arriving and there were two Ring Ouzels, eight Mealy Redpolls and a scattering of other migrants in the bushes [not to mention a Black-throated Thrush further along the island which we would see later on!]. We made two circuits of the bushes at House Hills and then decided to park ourselves by the small pool for lunch. I left Steve and Nick, and wandered through the aspens to the bushes on the far side. As I looked back, I could see several Reed Buntings in a Hawthorn, dropping down into some seeding plants in the grass below, and I raised my bins to check them. Immediately I noticed the most obvious bird in the group had bright chestnut brown ear coverts and appeared to also have dark tramlines along the crown, but I was quite a distance away at this point so crept closer. Eventually I managed to find a position about twenty metres from the bush and now had a clear view of what was obviously a Little Bunting – I had some good clear observations of it for a couple of minutes, including alongside the two or three Reed Buntings present. As the bird leaned forward to wipe its bill on a branch, the distinct black tramlines on the crown could be seen to extend down onto the nape. It gave a distinctive, sharp 'tick' call a couple of times, before flying off with the Reed Buntings and dropping down out of view some way south along the ridge. Unbeknown to me, Steve had been watching the bird too, but from the other side of the bushes – we were both trying to ring each other and neither was answering, as we were both busy watching a Little Bunting!! Steve had closer views than me, and had the bird briefly in the aspens by the pool, but unfortunately it flew before he could secure a photograph. We searched for the bird again, meeting Paul Eele and George Baldock who were just arriving on site. Three buntings flew over us, and now the Little Bunting could be seen as noticeably smaller in flight. It 'ticked' again a few times, and Paul and George saw it perched again on the ridge with their scope but Steve and I did not see it again. Unfortunately Nick had wandered off and missed the whole episode, but did manage to see the bird in flight and hear it call right at the end. This has been something of a bumper year for Little Buntings in Norfolk, with several records to date, and this was our second seen in a week after a bird on East Hills a few days before.

- Distinctly smaller than Reed Bunting, though most obvious in flight when appeared a petite version of its commoner cousins. In the bushes, size difference was not obvious
- A small, dinky and finely pointed greyish bill
- Contrasting head pattern, created by a broad, chestnut supercilium and lores, bordered above by blackish sides to the crown which extended down in tramlines onto the nape very similarly to a Brambling, but more distinct.
- Bright rusty chestnut ear coverts, framed along the rear edge by a black margin, and indented with a distinct whitish spot
- Pale whitish underparts, neatly streaked blackish
- Warm brown mantle streaked strongly blackish
- White tipped median coverts
- Contrasty tertials with broad rusty edges
- A distinct, pale eye ring
- Dark malar stripe and malar patch
- Call an emphatic sharp 'tick', most similar to that of Hawfinch [though not as far carrying/penetrating]

date:

location:

LITTLE BUNTING Salt Head 14/10/16

Bold head stripes!

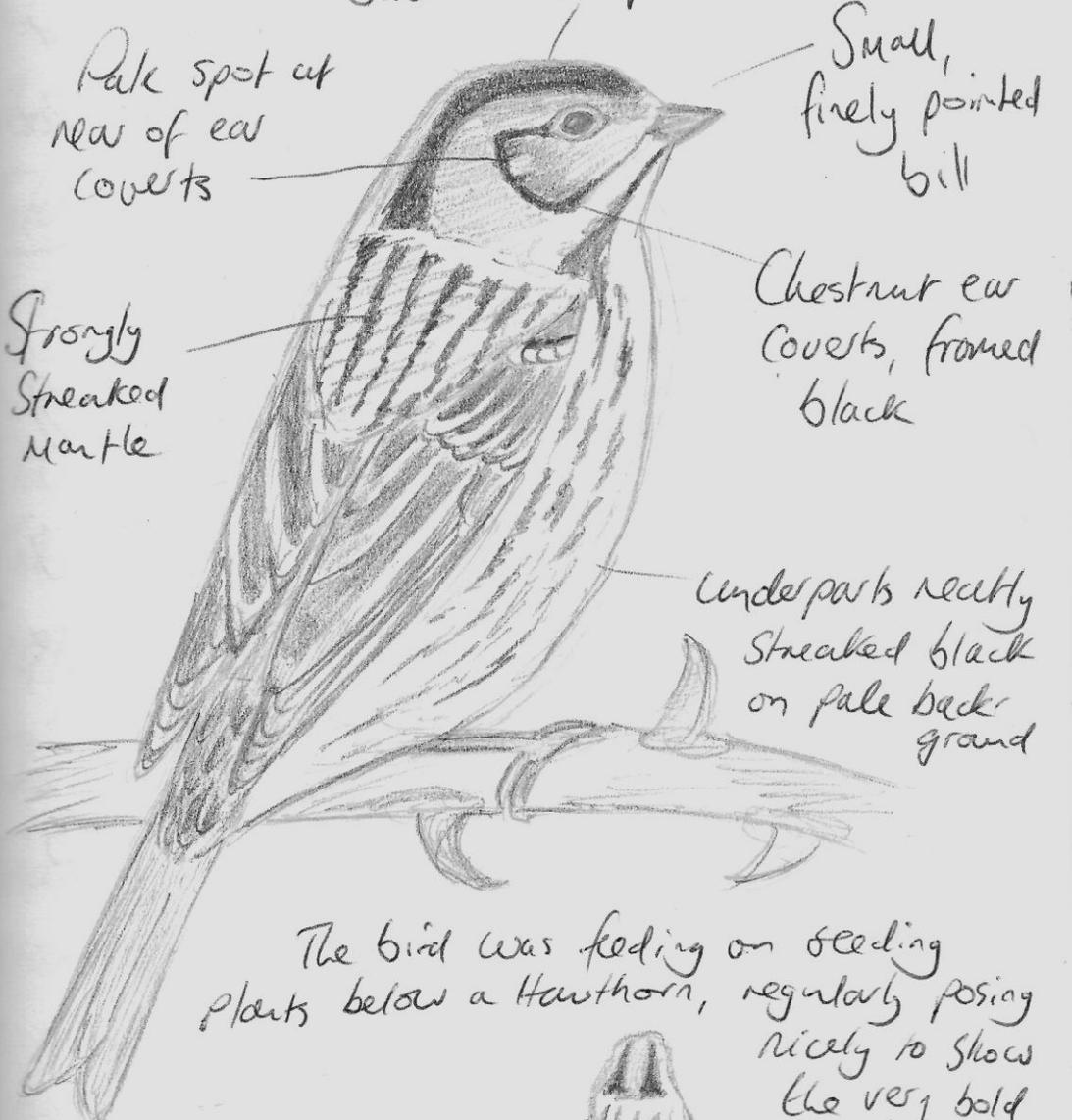
Pale spot at  
rear of ear  
coverts

Small,  
finely pointed  
bill

Strongly  
streaked  
mantle

Chestnut ear  
coverts, framed  
black

Underparts neatly  
streaked black  
on pale back-  
ground



The bird was feeding on seeding  
plants below a Hawthorn, regularly posing  
nicely to show  
the very bold  
black trans-  
lines down  
crown onto  
nape!



Very striking when perching forwards!