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**First Record of the Gulf Coast Tick,
Amblyomma maculatum, from the
Lark Bunting, *Calamospiza
melanocorys***

On 16 Dec 2006, we removed a single engorged ixodid tick from the head of an adult female Lark Bunting, *Calamospiza melanocorys*, that had been captured accidentally in a Museum Special snap trap baited with peanut butter and rolled oats to collect small mammals. The capture site was located on a tract of land north of U.S. Highway 90, approximately 2 km east of Alpine, Brewster County, TX. This land is grazed by cattle, and the desert scrub vegetation is characterized by grasses (Poaceae), mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), cactus (*Opuntia* spp.), yucca (*Yucca* spp.), fendlerbush (*Fendlera* sp.), and agarito (*Mahonia trifoliolata*). The specimen was shipped to Richard G. Robbins, who identified it as a nymph of *Amblyomma maculatum*, the so-called Gulf Coast tick, which in North America chiefly occurs along the Gulf Coast and in the southern Atlantic coastal states. Adults parasitize a variety of large wild and domestic mammals (Keirans and Litwak 1989); immature stages (nymphs, larvae) feed on small- to medium-sized mammals, but also on ground-frequenting birds, sometimes accompanying the latter on migrations as far north as southern Canada (Keirans and Durden 1998). A thorough search of the literature has revealed that our specimen of *A. maculatum* is the first to have been recorded from Lark Bunting.

The Lark Bunting feeds and nests on the ground, breeds in plains, prairies, meadows, and sagebrush, and winters in cultivated or brushy areas and deserts (Shane 2000). It should, therefore, be parasitized by any of numerous North American ticks specific to small mammals and lagomorphs, its ecological associates (Cooley and Kohls 1945, Cooley 1946, Rainwater et al. 2007). However, we have found only one brief reference to tick parasitism of this bird: a single larva of the Rocky Mountain wood tick, *Dermacentor andersoni*, that was removed from one of four Lark Buntings

examined for ticks on the grounds of the Idaho National Laboratory (formerly the National Reactor Testing Station) in southeastern Idaho (Allred 1968).

Amblyomma maculatum commonly parasitizes a great variety of ground-foraging birds, including members of the families Corvidae, Emberizidae, Icteridae, Laniidae, Mimidae, Odontophoridae, and Troglodytidae (Hixson 1940, Durden et al. 2001). Surprisingly, Lark Bunting is only the third North American emberizid from which *A. maculatum* has been recorded. We hope that our novel collection will prompt additional investigations of the ectoparasite fauna associated with the Lark Bunting, a bird that appears to be declining in concert with its open-country habitats.

In summary, the Gulf Coast tick, *Amblyomma maculatum*, is reported from the Lark Bunting for the first time. Only one other tick species, the Rocky Mountain wood tick, *Dermacentor andersoni*, is known from this bunting, a ground-nesting bird that should theoretically support a diverse tick fauna.

We thank Lewis Medlock for assisting us with trapping. Our Lark Bunting specimen has been assigned accession number CUSC 4016 and deposited in the Clemson University Museum of Natural Sciences. Our tick specimen has been assigned accession number YPM-ENT 300690 and deposited in the Division of Entomology, Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

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