

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Least Sandpiper

Number: 1

Date: 2 Dec 1990

Time: 9:05-9:20 a.m.

Location: Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.-Oak Grove Beach

Observer(s): Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA

Other observer(s): none

Description of bird(s): I was birding the Oak Grove Beach area when I flushed seven shorebirds from a point on the beach. Six of the birds were Dunlin in winter plumage. The other bird was much smaller, perhaps one third as bulky as the Dunlin. The small size of the bird compared to the Dunlin was striking. The bill was roughly equal to the length of the head, was straight, gradually becoming thinner near the tip, and appeared black. The crown, nape, and mantle were dull gray, with a slight brownish cast to the mantle. The wings were also gray, but lacked the brownish cast. The tail and rump were the same color as the mantle. In flight, the rump appeared to have a white patch on either side, though the center of the rump was gray. The throat was white. There was a gray wash across the breast, which was sharply separated from the white lower belly. The undertail coverts were white. The legs had a distinct yellow-green color, contrasting with the black legs of the Dunlin. The bird did not vocalize. I concluded that the bird was a winter-plumaged Least Sandpiper. The age of the bird is unknown-many juveniles have completed their molt to winter plumage by late October (Hayman, et al.), and are thus not readily separable from adults by early December.

Similar species and how eliminated: The extremely small size easily identified the bird as a small sandpiper (peep sp.). The short, needle-like bill, dull, yellow-green legs, and very small size eliminates other peeps.

Optical equipment and viewing conditions: Viewing conditions were excellent with overcast skies. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America and Hayman, et al. Shorebirds

Previous experience with species: Very familiar with this species
from Iowa

How long before field notes written? none written

How long before this form completed? 6 hours