

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Location: Sandpiper Beach, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA

Habitat: sandy beach with short grassy area nearby

Date: October 16, 1990 (late)

Time: 4:35 to 4:45 pm

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: None

Description of bird: I had been at Sandpiper Beach for about an hour and had seen four Black-bellied Plovers periodically. At one point, while scoping the plovers, I saw a smaller shorebird but did not get any satisfying looks at it. In trying to get closer I lost track of the bird. As I was leaving the area, I again saw a smaller shorebird with the plovers and Killdeers. Initially the light was terrible and all I could tell from the silhouette was that it was a medium-sized shorebird, considerably smaller than both plovers, with a relatively long neck, round head, and its straight bill was longer than a plover but still reasonably short and on the thin side. The legs were not particularly short but the bird looked a bit "pot-bellied". Shortly thereafter it flew out of the glare and closer to me. No wing stripes or rump patterns were discernible in flight. When the bird lighted I could see that the bill was black, legs were yellow, and the eye was black on a plain buffy face which made it really stand out. The back was pretty much dark and scaly and the underparts were buffy colored. The breast was a darker buff color than the belly and undertail coverts.

Similar species and how eliminated:

The larger size and lack of facial pattern and tail pattern in flight eliminated the Baird's Sandpiper. A juvenile Reeve would have been nearer the size of the nearby Killdeer; a Ruff even larger. Both would have a thicker bill than this bird. Upland Sandpiper would have been larger and not had the buffy color.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? NA

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics): Viewed through scope at 20x-35x at approximately 75 yards. Lighting OK with optics after it flew.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Buff-breasted Sandpipers have been seen at this location all fall, although it had been a couple weeks since the last observation.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Chandler, North Atlantic Shorebirds was consulted immediately after observation

How long before field notes made? 3 hours How long before this form completed?  
3 hours