

Curlew Sandpiper
10 May 1985
Nashua, Chickasaw Co., IA
*Francis Moore
IBL 55:64, 56:44, Moore 1985, P-0154

Record Number: 85-05
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATION

Francis L. Moore

PHOTOGRAPHS

Francis L. Moore, 10 May 1985, P-0154

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 55:64

Moore, F. L. 1985. Curlew Sandpiper at Cedar Lake, Nashua,
Chickasaw County. IBL 55:72.

Records Committee: IBL 56:44

VOTE: 6-I-P, 1-III

I-P, Good documentation. Viewed photos in May.

I-P, Who knows what else we might find if more observers
checked more areas at the right time.

III, Good description of first state record. Apparently
photographed, but I have not seen these.

I-P, Description excellent, more diagnostic than the
backlighted photos (Good to have them both though).

General Notes

Curlew Sandpiper at Cedar Lake, Nashua, Chickasaw County — On 10 May 1985 I decided to drive to Nashua in northeast Iowa to look for shorebirds since there was not any suitable habitat around the Waterloo area. Upon arriving at Nashua and going to Cedar Lake on the northeast side of town I noticed quite a few shorebirds some distance out on the mud flats. Cedar Lake is a very shallow pool of water on the Cedar River at Nashua. The dam broke several years ago on what used to be a large lake and was not repaired. All that remains now is a large mud flat that is great for shorebirds in spring and fall.

While scoping the shorebirds from about 250 to 300 yards I noticed that one of the birds was rusty red color. My initial reaction was that I had finally found a Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) in Iowa. I continued scoping the other shorebirds as I approached the red colored bird to see if I could find anything else interesting. There were 20 different species of shorebirds on that side of the lake. After I got to within about 100 yards of the bird I decided to take a closer look at the red bird. The bird did not look right for *C. canutus*. It was intermediate in size to some of the Pectoral Sandpipers (*Calidris acuminata*) nearby. I then approached to within about 40 to 50 yards and carefully studied the bird using a 33X lens on my telescope. At that point I knew that I was looking at a Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*.) The details seen and photographed are as follows:

The bird was smaller than about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Pectorals and about the same size or larger than the other $\frac{1}{4}$ of them. The bird was about the same body shape as the Pectorals nearby. The black bill was long and thin looking and was decurved from the base to the tip over its entire length; it appeared to be about $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the length of the head. Behind the base of the bill the face was whitish with the white area extending into the loreal area and then forming a white superciliary line above the eye. The bird also had a very thin white eye ring. The breast, throat and belly was a rufous red color with the undertail coverts being white with some reocisin barring coming in from both sides. The head, crown and nape was a little lighter reddish color. The feathering on the back was reddish with darker centers to the feathers and a lighter feather edging. This gave the birds back a mottled appearance. The rump was mostly white with some reddish flecking near its edges. The tail and flight feathers were dark gray to black.

The bird was continuously feeding; sometimes with the feeding action of a Stilt Sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*) with its head under water for quite a while, from 5 to 10 seconds at a time. I did not hear the bird call while I watched it.

After watching it and taking photos of it for two hours I decided to call other birders that might be interested. Some people apparently showed up that afternoon and could not find the bird. I returned the next day with Tom Kent and with others showing up after we got there. We could not relocate the bird after an extensive search of the area. I am very disappointed that no one else got to see this unusual bird and am thankful that I had my camera with me to record Iowa's first record of a Curlew Sandpiper. — Francis L. Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703.

Great-tailed Grackle Nest in Central Iowa — The status of the Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) in the Midwest is changing rapidly due to its expansion northward from its historical range. Silcock (1983), Dinsmore et al. (1984) and Faanes and Norling (1981) give detailed descriptions of recent range expansions by the Great-tailed Grackle. Dinsmore et al. (1984) list only one possible Iowa observation of this species through 1982. However, during 1983 Great-tailed Grackles were observed in southwestern Iowa in Mills and Fremont counties (Silcock 1983). Both observations involved paired birds during the breeding season and the female of one pair was observed feeding young on two occasions.

On 17 May 1984 I saw a pair of Great-tailed Grackles at Finn Pond, 2 miles west

of Jefferson in Greene County, Iowa. Finn Pond is an 8.4 ha. prairie marsh owned and managed by the Iowa Conservation Commission. Finn Pond's emergent vegetation is dominated by cattail (*Typha glauca*) and river bulrush (*Scirpis fluviatilis*). The birds' behavior indicated that they were nesting in the marsh, but a search of the area was unsuccessful in finding a nest. I visited the site again on 29 May 1984 and again observed a pair of Great-tailed Grackles behaving as if they were nesting. A second search of the area resulted in the discovery of a nest. The nest contained 3 chicks and one egg. The remaining egg was pale blue, heavily marked with dark curved lines and measured 32.0 x 20.2 mm. The nest was constructed in a stand of cattail 42 cm above the water surface. The nest consisted of cattail and was lined with grass, probably bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*). The nest had a depth of 6.6 cm, an outside diameter of 17.0 cm and an inside diameter of 12.1 cm. The nest was located about 30 cm from open water and the water depth under the nest was 79 cm. Following the examination of the nest, I observed the female return and the male resume carrying food to the nest. On 31 May, 1984, the nest was visited by James Dinsmore (pers. comm.) who observed both adults and found that the nest contained 4 chicks. I revisited the site on 13 and 14 June 1984. No Great-tailed Grackles were observed and the nest was empty. The success of the nest could not be determined, although from its worn appearance, I suspect that the nest was successful.

This is the first description of a Great-tailed Grackle nest in Iowa to appear in the literature and also represents an apparent range expansion of approximately 150 km. into central Iowa. Whether the current expansion is permanent or just a temporary fluctuation will only become evident with more observations. I thank James Dinsmore for his assistance in writing this note.

Literature Cited

- Dinsmore, J.J., T.H. Kent, D. Koenig, P.C. Petersen, and D.M. Roosa. 1984. Iowa Birds. Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa. 356 pp.
- Faanes, C.A., and W. Norling. 1981. Nesting of the Great-tailed Grackle in Nebraska. *Am. Birds* 35:148-149.
- Silcock, W.R. 1983. Great-tailed Grackle in southwest Iowa: Continuation of an explosive range expansion. *Iowa Bird Life* 53:106-197.
- Mike Brown, Department of Animal Ecology, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.
- Capture of a Banded Peregrine Falcon in Northwestern Iowa** — The Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is considered to be extirpated from much of its former breeding range in Central United States, including Iowa (Hickey 1969, Brown 1971). Some Arctic regions, however, continue to support fairly stable populations (Evans 1982; Fyfe et al. 1976). These populations may supply the occasional, but rare, Peregrine migrants in Iowa which are seen along waterfowl migration corridors during spring and fall (Dinsmore et al. 1984).
- During a 1983 fall raptor migration study along the Mississippi River, funded by the Iowa-Conservation Commission, six Peregrines were seen and, more importantly, a previously banded individual was netted at a site in Allamakee County, 5.1 miles north of Marquette near the Luster Heights State Correctional Facility. A live Rock Dove was used as a lure, surrounded by collapsible dho-gazza nets (5' high by 7' wide) and a single bow net. Capture was made by David McIlrath on 19 October 1983, shortly before noon (CDT) on a day with overcast skies, northeast winds and occasional drizzle and rain.
- This bird, an immature female, and been banded as a nestling on 26 July of the same year with a Copenhagen Museum band by members of the U.S. Peregrine team working in the Sondr-Stromfjord region of Greenland. Information of the bird's history was obtained from Peregrine Fund officials, including F. Prescott

85-05

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) How many? 1Location? Cedar Lake on Cedar River at Nashua, Chickasaw Co., IowaType of habitat? Open mud flat with sparse emergent vegetation near open lake.When? date(s): May 10, 1985 time: 8:45 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.Who? your name and address: Francis L. Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703others with you: Noneothers before or after you: None before or after that I knew of

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

I first saw the bird from approx. 300 yds. and thought that I had finally found a Red Knot in Iowa. It was a real reddish color. I then approached to within about 100 yd. and took another look. The bird was about the same size and maybe smaller than the Pectoral Sandpipers that were next to it. I then figured I had a good bird. I approached to about 40 to 50 yds and decided to look at it very carefully. The bird had a streamlined appearance and was similar in body shape to the Pectorals nearby. The bird was smaller than about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Pectorals and about the same size or a little larger than the other $\frac{1}{4}$ of them. It was larger than the Semipalmated Plovers nearby but not that much larger. The bird was not chunky looking like a Red Knot would have been. The thing that stood out most was the long, thin, black bill that was decurved from the base to the tip, over its entire length. The bill appeared to be about $1\frac{1}{2}$ times longer the length of the head. Behind the base of the bill the face was whitish. The whitish color extended into the loreal area and formed a whitish superciliary line above the bird's eye. The bird also appeared to have a very narrow white eyering. The bird's breast, throat and belly was a rufous red color down to the vent area. The vent area was white with reddish all around it with the under tail coverts being white with some reddish ~~flashing~~ ^{barring} coming in from both sides. The bird's head was lighter reddish as was the crown, nape down to the back. The feathering on the back was reddish with darker centers to the feathers and with a lighter (Cont. on back)

Similar species and how eliminated: Red Knot has straight black bill and is larger than Pectoral Sandpiper. Sanderling is about same size but also has a straight black bill not long, thin and decurved as in this bird.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No.

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Sunny, windy. Sun full on bird from the East as I faced N. viewing the bird. Seen from 300 yd. at first, closest sighting from approx. 50-70 feet using Celestron C90 at 33X and 55x, and mounted on Nikon NIKKomat FTN camera at 1000 mm and Leitz 10x40B Binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen lots of Sanderlings and quite a few Red Knot

References and persons consulted before writing description: None

How long before field notes made? On the spot this form completed? 2 hours

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7-27-77
feather edging. The upper wing coverts were much the same and tended to merge with the back. The wing itself was dark gray to black. The tertials were reddish tinged with wide buffy feather edging, with the feather edging covering about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the tertial feathers on each side or about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the feather. The rump was mostly white with some reddish flecking near the outside edges of this area. The tail was dark gray to blackish color. The wings appeared to overlap the tail by $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch. The legs were black, and its eye was black. The bird was continuously feeding while being viewed. A lot of the time it fed like the pectorals nearby. Some times the bird would feed a lot like a stilt sandpiper and feed with its head under water for 5 to 10 seconds at a time, picking up small aquatic insects and worms. The bird was usually up to its "knee" joint in the water and was hard to guess how long its legs were, but they did not seem that long. The bird did not swing its head back and forth while feeding nor did it feed by probing "sewing machine" fashion like a Dowitcher would have done. As far as I know the bird did not call the whole time I watched it.