

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 10/18/94

Red Knot

8 Oct 1992

Rathbun Reservoir, Appanoose Co., IA

*Scott, *Johnson, *Cummins

IBL 63:18, 69, Scott 1993

Record Number: 92-35

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Charlotte Scott, 320 East Lee St., Seymour, IA 52590 (6/30/93)

Tom Johnson, Mystic, IA 52574 (6/30/93)

Ray Cummins, 609 S. Main St., Centerville, IA 52544

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 63:18

Records Committee: IBL 63:69

Scott, C. 1993. Red Knots at Rathbun Reservoir. IBL 63:104.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Good details provided for Red Knots.

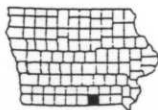
The North American population of the Great Black-backed Gull has been increasing for close to a century and as of yet there is no sign that the expansion of this species has stopped. The species was first reported in Iowa in 1978. In all, there are about 15 reports from Iowa; 11 from winter, 2 in fall, and 1 in summer. The above report is the first spring record. Reflecting this increase, the Great Black-backed Gull status on the latest checklist of Iowa birds (Kent and Bendorf, *Iowa Bird Life* 61:101-109, 1991) has been upgraded from accidental to casual.

810 North B Street, Indianola, IA 50125

RED KNOTS AT RATHBUN RESERVOIR

CHARLOTTE SCOTT

On 8 October 1992, between 7:45 and 8:45 p.m., I was parked 30-50 feet from a stretch of muddy beach on south Rathbun Lake near the dedication site in Appanoose County. It had been raining but had cleared. For two weeks we had been having very good shorebird activity at this spot, and that morning had been watching Sanderlings, Pectoral Sandpipers, and two dowitchers feeding. Three birds flew in and joined the dowitchers. They were the same stocky, plump shape as the dowitchers but smaller in size and had much shorter bills. They stayed with the dowitchers the entire time we watched and fed similarly--rapid probing in the mud and shallow water, sometimes going so deep their eyes were covered.



The black bills were straight, fairly heavy, and 1.5 to 1.75 times the length of the head. The legs were short and dusky colored. Their backs were gray, upper breasts a lighter gray, and very white on the belly. A distinct line separated the upper breast and white belly though not as decisive as on a Pectoral Sandpiper. The overall breast color appeared much lighter than on the dowitchers. The wings in flight had a faint, fine white line the length of the coverts, and the rump appeared light. The wing edges were dark, and a faint white eye line was visible. The overall appearance was of a nondescript gray, short-legged shorebird.

I have watched Red Knots in winter plumage in Florida and felt comfortable identifying these birds as Red Knots. The gals with me, Dorothy Cornett, Kay Malmberg, and Mary Montgomery and I viewed the birds through the scope, and we agreed on the identification. We alerted other members of the Rathbun Bird Club. At least two others, Ray Cummins and Tom Johnson, saw the knots later that day. They each saw four birds, and agreed with our identification.

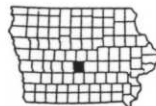
Most authorities I consulted agree that the Red Knot migrates from southern South America mainly along the Atlantic Coast and is a rare migrant in the interior. Although for many years there were few records from Iowa, there have been at least eight records in the past decade, all in fall with dates from 5 August to 27 September. Most involve only a single bird. This is the latest fall record from Iowa, and other than 14 seen in May 1934, is the most seen together in Iowa.

320 East Lee Street, Seymour, IA 52590

BLACK RAIL SIGHTING IN POLK COUNTY

DICK KRAEMER AND BARBARA MILLER

On 26 April 1992, between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m., we were birding an area 0.5 miles east of NE 14th Street (Highway 69) on NE 70th Avenue on the south side of Ankeny. This marshy area, locally known as Carney Marsh, is a combination of open water, cattails and grassy areas with trees along most of the edges except for the west edge (railway) and the road (NE. 70th Ave.) that cuts through the marsh itself. We were sitting on the railroad tracks on the west side of the marsh enjoying a good view of the marsh and several Soras. After 10 to 15 minutes of just watching, a small black bird appeared at the edge of last year's cattails and then disappeared. Fortunately it and its companion reappeared six or seven more times, allowing us time to confirm our original identification; two adult Black Rails.



These birds, which were about 50 feet apart, were at the edge of the cattails exhibiting similar behaviors of working their way in and out of the cattails and poking around in the mud with their bills. We did not see them fly or hear them call. They acted very cautious, never ventured far from the cover of the cattails, and could have been overlooked if we hadn't elected just to sit and watch for movement in the marsh.

The birds were easy to identify. Their location, behavior, and a clear view of all of their major identifying marks supported our original thoughts of Black Rail. At first glance it was a totally dark little bird with a short tail and neck acting very "rail like" With subsequent views we could see both the white speckles on its back and the rusty nape patch that was visible with 10x50 binoculars. The birds were viewed at a distance varying from 75-125 feet on an overcast day. Subsequent attempts to see the rails during the next several days failed. A neighbor, who watches the marsh for the owners, complained that someone in waders had trespassed into the marsh and waded through most of it the day after our observation. Perhaps this was enough disturbance for these reclusive birds to move on.

There are few other accepted records of the Black Rail in Iowa (see Dinsmore et al., 1984, *Iowa Birds*, Iowa State University Press, pp. 121-122). The most recent was one seen in Dickinson County on 8 October 1989 (Hansen, *Iowa Bird Life* 61:26-27, 1991).

2808 Randolph St., Waterloo, IA 50702 and 669 61st St., Des Moines, IA 50312

Dr. R. L. or Charlotte Scott
320 East Lee Street
Seymour, Iowa 52590

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What Species? Red Knot How many? 3

Location? Rathbun Lake Island View Area near the dedication site

Type of Habitat? Beach - actually mud

When? date(s)? Oct. 8, 1992 time: 7:45 AM to 9:45 AM intermittently

Who? your name and address: Charlotte Scott Seymour, IA

others with you: Key Malmborg, Mary Montgomery, Pat Cornett

others before or after you: Ray Cummins + Tom Johnson (after)

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior. We were watching 2 dowitchers feeding and moving down the beach - they were joined by 3 other birds much the same shape (stocky, plump) but smaller and much shorter bills. They stayed with the dowitchers the entire time we watched. Their backs were gray - breasts were gray on the upper part and very white on the belly. A distinct line showed between upper breast + white belly though not as decisive as on a pectoral. Their overall breast color was much whiter than the dowitchers. The bills were 1 1/2 - 1 3/4 times the width of the head - fairly heavy + straight. The wings in flight had a faint, fine white line. The rump appeared light in flight. The wing edges were dark. Legs were short + dark. A faint white eye line. In general a non-descript gray bird! Feeding was very similar to the dowitchers - rapid probing in the mud + shallow water, sometimes going so deep their eyes were covered.

(the pectorals)
Similar species and how eliminated: we considered pectoral sandpipers but decided they were more slender, longer leg. Also considered sanderlings, but thought they were lighter + smaller than our birds.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? I think we were all agreed after watching for a long time. I had seen them in winter plumage in Florida.

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: It was a hazy day, but we were only 30' - 50' away. Also had scope on them.

Previous experience with this and similar species: As I mentioned I see them often in Florida.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Birds of America + National Geographic Birds of America.

How long before field notes made? I made the ident. before looking at field notes, and we discussed size + color with dowitchers before checking guides.

How long before this form completed?

9 hours.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

92-35

What species? Red Knot How many? 4

Location? Lake Kathlamet - Island View - Medication point

Type of Habitat? Grassy shoreline - lake had flooded - receding

When? date(s): Oct. 2 time: 5:10 pm to 5:30 pm (3)

Who? your name and address: Tom Johnson Mystic, IA. 52574

Others with you: Ray Cummins

Others before or after you: Charlotte Scott, Mary Montgomery, Pat Corbett
Ray Johnson

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

4 shorebirds larger than sandpiper that was present, equal size to Killdeer which were present, smaller than short-billed dowitcher which was present. Birds had long bill - not decurved, black legs, 4 toes at least. Birds had rust on scapulars there was a whitish line above the eye. The birds were probing in the muddy grass all the time. When they flew they did not have the white on the side of the tail as pectorals do. They were grey on the back, white on the belly, bill longer than the head. These notes were recorded on tape without looking at any books. Charlotte Scott ~~and~~ had already called Ray Cummins & I to come and look at these birds after we got off work.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Shorter bill than dowitchers
Tail striping (white on sides) not like pectoral
No wing stripe as stilts.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? NO
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
Kowa TSN-2 + BTL 8-36 Binoc. - custom
Distance 50 feet

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Never seen before.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? off tape recorded that day this form completed? 50 days

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

92-35

Species: Red Knot, plumage basic 2ea juvenile 2ea Number: 4

Location: Rathbun Lake dedication sight

Observer: Ray Cummins 609 s. Main st. Centerville, IA. 52544

Others before/with/after: Tom Johnson, Charlotte Scott, Mary Montgomery, & Dot Cornett

Date: 10/08/92 Time Bird Seen: 6:00pm to 6:30pm

Habitant & circumstances: I went out to the dedication sight to try confirm a reported sighting of 4 Red Knots. The high water made a peninsula into the lake which was surrounded on three sides by swallow mowed grass mud flats.

Description: The Knots were the same size as the Killdeer present and much larger than Pectorals. The size comparison were made with individuals that were side by side at the same distance. The bill was completely black, straight, fairly heavy, and 1 1/2 time the length of the head. The bill did come out of the mud when probing unlike Dowitchers and Snipe. The eye was black with a whitish superciliary band. These chunky bodied birds had a white throat, grayish breast with dark gray streaking down the sides and a white belly and lower tail coverts. The back was gray with some rufous on the scapulars of two birds (juveniles). The primaries made a black band around the lower body. The legs were black. In flight a single white line at the base of the wing coverts was bolder than I expected. The rump in flight appeared grayish not pure white, but not seen good enough to notice any barring.

Description of voice: N/H.

Similarly appearing species: Size comparisons and obvious shape differences eliminates all but two species I am familiar with. Dowitchers are eliminated because these birds: 1) had ~~shorter~~ bills, 2) no white rump extending up the back, 3) would have been larger than Killdeer, and 4) feed with bill out of the mud. Great Knot would have also been larger than Killdeer, not had a bold wing stripe, and had bolder breast and side stripes.

Distance (how measured): As close 30ft. Estimated.

Optical equipment: 20X x 60X Kowa spotting scope.

Light: Sun at back excellent light

Previous experience with species: Have seen in Florida and Texas but not recently.

Anyone have reservations?: No.

Books and references: NGS consulted during sighting, but not during writeup.

Time of field notes: during observation. Final typing: 21 days.

Signature: Ray Cummins Address: 609 S. Main St.
Date: 10-29-92 Centerville, Ia. 52544