

Red Knot
13 May 1992
Riverton A., Fremont Co., IA
*Kent, *Fuller
IBL 62:77, 63:69

Record Number: 92-21
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246
Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, IA 52240

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 62:77
Records Committee: IBL 63:69

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

NA, I am voting NA because the down-curved bill doesn't seem to fit Red Knot. The other noted characteristics, although detailed, are not diagnostic to me, but that might be because my experience with Red Knot is quite limited.

A-D, Good details provided for Red Knots.

REVOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D, Many waders sometimes carry decurved bills even though it is not a common trait of the species.

A-D, Shorebirds: An Identification Guide (Hayman et al.) describes the bill as "bill blackish, rather short for the size of the bird, faintly downcurved." I still have no doubts about this identification.

A-D, I agree that the renderings in the NGS Field Guide suggest upturned bill, or at least one that is not slightly downturned as indicated in the documentation. However, other renderings and photos -- especially the excellent series of photos in Chandler's North Atlantic Shorebirds -- show bills that range from straight to slightly downturned. There appears to be some variation in this characteristic. Apart from this minor point of disagreement, the big picture clearly points to Red Knot. Similar species (Dowitchers, Sanderling, and Curlew Sandpiper) were correctly considered and dispatched in the written descriptions.

NA, Size "a little bigger than a Pectoral" seems to me to leave doubt as to whether this bird is as big as a Red Knot which is Killdeer size. The wing stripe is described as thin, I would not call it thin compared to pectorals and stilts. Thin and a little larger are subjective adjectives and my interpretation of what they mean might not agree with the documentors. I am also still concerned about the decurved bill, which I don't believe is a characteristic of Red Knot.

A-D, Fuller and I wrote descriptions independently without discussing details or looking at book while viewing. Interesting that we both thought the bill was slightly downturned at the tip. Only Peterson's Eastern Guide shows this. Other books with drawings and photos show straight bill. This slight aberration does not detract from other details that clearly indicate Red Knot.

A-D, Documentations appear diagnostic to me. Chunky plump shorebirds larger than Pectoral Sandpiper; reddish on sides of

head, neck, and breast; broad pale superciliary; thin white wing stripe in upper wing; gray upper tail and tail coverts; short stocky bill that was longer and slightly thicker than Pectoral all make these Red Knots. Shorebirds, an Identification Guide, Hayman, Marchant, Prater, 1986, describes bill as blackish, rather short for the size of the bird and faintly down curved. I see no contradiction between this and the documentations.

A-D, One observer noted that the bird had a short, stocky dark bill which appeared to have a slight droop at the end. The other viewer noted that the bill was longer and slightly thicker than pectoral's bill with slight down curve toward the tip. These observations don't make for a "down-curved bill" of the reviewer. Roger T. Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds -- East of the Rockies has excellent illustrations of Red Knots and show the slight droop at the end of the bill.

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Red Knot; *Number:* 2

Location: Riverton Area, Fremont Co., Iowa

Date: 13 May 1992; *Time:* 8:35 to 8:45 a.m. and again about 10:30 a.m.

Name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

Others before/with/after: I found birds and showed them to Dick Tetrault; Jim Fuller found them again later and we looked at them with Jim Scheib.

Habitat and circumstances: Shallow mud flats with pool at low water level.

Description of bird: Two chunky shorebirds larger than Pectoral Sandpipers in same field of view. They were feeding in shallow water up to their bellies. They feed forward, not down like a Stilt Sandpiper. Bill longer and slightly thicker than pectoral's with slight down curve toward the tip. Reddish on sides of head, neck, and breast but not well demarcated. Short, widely-spaced bars on flanks. Beady, small dark eye. Thin black line extending posteriorly from eye with broader pale superciliary line. In flight, thin white wing stripe on upper wing. Upper tail and tail coverts were pale gray, slightly paler on coverts. No white rump or white up back as would be seen on Stilt Sandpiper and dowitchers. Legs were probably dark, but I did not see them well. The upper parts were gray without conspicuous edging. Some of the lower scapulars were mostly black centered. Under parts were off-white.

Voice: Not heard.

Similar species: The chunky body, relatively short legs, feeding pattern, and lack of white rump led me away from Stilt Sandpiper. The bill was much too short for dowitcher. The bill was not curved enough for Curlew Sandpiper. These birds appeared to be partially molted into alternate plumage.

Any one have reservations?: No.

Light: Overcast, looking west in a.m.; *Distance:* about 30 yards at first viewing, 100 yards or more later;

Optics: 10x binocular, 20x scope.

Previous experience: Have seen one juvenile in Iowa and many on East Coast.

References before/after viewing: Looked at Scheib's field guide at second viewing.

Time of notes: While viewing; *Final typing:* handwritten form at 10 hours, typed 2 days later.

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DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Red Knot

LOCATION: Riverton Area, Fremont County

DATE: 13 May, 1992 (10:30-10:40 AM)

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240

OTHERS: With me were Jim Scheib, Tom Kent and Dick Tetrault

BACKGROUND: The excellent shorebird habitat of the main pool at the Riverton Area had attracted numerous shorebirds, including several casual and accidental species in the previous three days. Tom Kent had located two birds he had identified as Red Knots and I relocated them about an hour later. There were thousands of shorebirds on the main pool at the time.

DESCRIPTION: The size of the two birds appeared to be a little larger than nearby Pectoral Sandpipers, and their shape was plumper. They were picked out because of reddish coloration on the neck and breast. This was not a solid red, but was rather blotchy, indicative of a change from basic to alternate plumage. Other features that stood out included a relatively short and stocky dark bill, which appeared to have a slight droop at the end, and some barring under the tail, and on the rump. The birds were belly deep in water, and leg color was never seen.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Other birds which are reddish in alternate plumage are Sanderling, Curlew Sandpiper, and Dowitchers. Dowitchers and Curlew Sandpiper can be eliminated on the basis of comparative bill shapes and sizes. Sanderling is smaller, has a whitish belly, and does not feed belly deep in the water. No one disagreed with the ID.

VIEWING CONDITIONS and OPTICS: The morning was fair, and the birds were at a distance estimated at 100 yards and to the west, so the sun was at our back. A KOWA TSN-4 telescope with 20-60 X zoom lens was used.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen this bird in basic plumage four previous times in Iowa, and have seen hundreds of them off the coast of Georgia in 1987, some of which were in basic plumage, and others which were beginning to change to alternate plumage.

FIELD NOTES and REFERENCES: Field notes were dictated while driving after return to car, and National Geographic Field Guide was seen after that. This form was typed on 21 May.