

Whimbrel
24 May 1983
Coralville Res., Johnson Co., IA
*C. Bendorf, *J. Sandroock
IBL 53:47, 50; 54:37; Bendorf 1983

Record Number: 83-05
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Carl J. Bendorf
James P. Sandroock

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 53:47, 50
Bendorf, C. J. 1983. Whimbrel in Johnson County. IBL 53:57-58.
Records Committee: IBL 54:37

VOTE: 2-II, 5-III

II, Excellent description by Sandroock (wings and tail).
III, Good complete descriptions.

Bendorf, C. J. 1983. Whimbrel in Johnson County. Iowa Bird Life 53:57-58.

Whimbrel in Johnson County — At approximately 10:30 a.m. on 24 May 1983, I was scanning the edge of a large flooded field about ¼-mile north of Swan Lake in northwest Johnson County. Several hundred yards to the west I spotted a very large shorebird flying low over the water. After it landed I was able to see that it was generally light brown in color with a strongly marked head and a very long decurved bill. These details indicated that I was observing a Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*).

As the bird stood on the muddy shore of the field it allowed me to approach within 20 yards. With a 20X telescope I noted the following marks:

Large shorebird profile with relatively long legs and neck. The posture was erect with an estimated standing height of 12 to 16 inches as compared to nearby weeds. The throat, neck, back, wings, and tail were all a fairly uniform mottled and streaked light brown color. The belly was whitish with some flecks of brown on the sides below the folded wings. The bill length was at least twice the length of the head and was distinctly downcurved. The bill was black with a greyish cast at the base. The head was very strongly marked with a dark brown stripe through and behind the upper half of the dark eye, a lighter superciliary stripe, and a dark brown crown divided with a thin light median stripe. The legs were blackish.

I studied the bird for perhaps ten minutes and left without flushing it. About half a dozen other area birders were able to relocate the Whimbrel during the afternoon. At about 3 p.m., a heavy thunderstorm began to build and the Whimbrel started to flinch with each loud crack of thunder. At the sound of an extra loud thunderclap the Whimbrel startled into the air and flew directly out of sight to the north. CARL J. BENDORF, 825 7th Ave., Iowa City, IA. 52240.

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

by the Records Committee
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: WHIMBREL
 DATE SEEN: 24 May, 1983
 SITE OF OBSERVATION: Johnson County
 OBSERVERS: C. Bendorf; J. Sandrock
 DATE OF REVIEW: 1983
 METHOD OF REVIEW: Mailing to Committee
 CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: III (see explanation below)
 COMMENTS: The description presented was excellent, by both observers. As noted by the Committee, the head striping is diagnostic in this area. The possibility of Eskimo Curlew occurring in Iowa was raised, of course not a possibility in this case.

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

What species? Whimbrel How many? 1Location? Approx 3/4 mile north of Swan Lake, Johnson Co., IA.Type of habitat? Along muddy shoreline of large flooded area. Some weed stubble.When? date(s): 24 May 1983 time: 10:15 to 10:30 AMWho? your name and address: Carl J. Bendorf 825 7th Ave. Iowa City, IA. 52240

others with you: _____

others before or after you: Tom Staudt, Jim Sandrock, James Huntington, Tom Kent
Mike Newlon.

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.

Very large shorebird profile with long neck and legs. Estimated standing height of 12-16 inches, as compared to nearby weeds. Back, wings, neck, and throat were all a uniform mottled brown color. Belly was whitish grey with some brown flecks on sides of bird below the folded wing.

Bill length was twice that of the head length (head and bill together was $1/3$ head and $2/3$ bill). Bill was very distinctly down curved and black in color with the basal $1/3$ somewhat lighter in color.

Basic head color was light brown but was strongly striped with dark brown. One dark stripe started on cheek and ran through upper half of eye and ended behind the eye. Top of head was dark brown with a very thin lighter stripe down middle of head creating a striped effect on top of head. Legs were greenish-grey. Eye was dark

Bird was flying at a distance when first seen and I then approached to within 15 yards as bird stood very still and looked back at me. I did not flush the bird.

Similar species and how eliminated: According to Rebbins, et al., Bristle-thighed Curlew should have a bright rusty tail. This was not observed. Rebbins shows Eskimo Curlew with much more barring on flanks, smaller bill.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? _____

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Full sunlight at my back during observation. Distance estimated at 15-20 yards with 7X binos and 20X scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Saw several Whimbrels in Florida just two weeks earlier

References and persons consulted before writing description: NONEHow long before field notes made? 2 hours this form completed? 1 week

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

83-05

What species? Whimbrel How many? 1Location? W. of Sand Point road - Hawkeye Wildlife Refuge, Johnson County.Type of habitat? Flooded field.When? date(s): 24 May 83 time: 1455 to 1515Who? your name and address: James P. Sandroekothers with you: James G. Huntington; John L. Cordell.

others before or after you: _____

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.

Bird was heavy-bodied large wader with long neck, rather small head, very long, black decurved bill. The bird's body appeared to be a grayish brown color, while the neck was lighter and predominantly gray. A black eye marked by a distinct black eye-line had a white superciliary. The crown had a white median line; the color of crown between the white stripes was, it seemed to me, dark brown with a slight rufous tinge. Scapulars were darker than back which appeared to have a uniform gray-brown color with slightly scaled look. The primaries swept back over tail and appeared black. The tail was barred light brown and white. Neck was, as stated, predominantly gray with mottled appearance. Lower breast and belly were whitish and unmarked. Legs were long and gray. When bird flew the underside of wings were uniformly gray with no particular markings. Bird uttered short, nasal "whistles" very rapidly as it flew. The field guides do not, to my mind, describe this sound adequately. The rather sharply angled wings, the spatulate tail, and the long, curved bill were easily discernible in flight.

Similar species and how eliminated:

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

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Overcast (no shadows); 150 yds (est.), 7 x 35 binoculars; 20x-40x zoom scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: None.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson's Field Guide to Birds East of the Rockies.

How long before field notes made? On site. this form completed? 24 May 83

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240