

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 1
14 Oct 1990
Coralville Res., Johnson Co., IA
T. Kent, et al.
IBL 61:20, 62:21, Kent 1991 x 2

Record Number: 90-29
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Thomas H. Kent
Ann Johnson
Jim Fuller
Carol Thompson
Randy Pinkston

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 61:20
Records Committee: IBL 62:21
Kent, T. H. 1991. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Coralville
Reservoir. IBL 61:122-123.
Kent, T. H. 1991. A county big year. IBL 61:65-68.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D: Acceptable documents, sorry I could not locate the bird.
Another report of a Sharptailed at about the same time in
Illinois.

A-D: Beautifully documented record; sketches were very nice.

A-D: A careful study of all field marks by multiple observers.

A-D: Excellent documentations confirm this remarkable find.

Lack of distinct bib, descriptions of superciliary, buffy breast,
bright rusty cap and other details eliminate the only other
possible contender. Nice drawing by Pinkston.

A-D: Excellent documentations which support each other. The
Sharp-tailed's more distinct eye ring is the only key field mark
used to separate Pectorals and Sharp-taileds that is not
mentioned.

A-D: Excellent group of documentations makes this record well
beyond doubt.

A-D: A number of excellent documentations with very good
details were provided of a wonderful bird that many got to see.

bird with a Swift scope at 30 power. Louise used a Questar. The bird was about 100 meters away with the sun directly behind us. The bird was seen several days later by Jim Fuller.

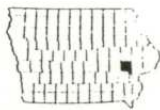
Illinois had eleven records of the California Gull through 1987 (Bohlen, H. D. *The Birds of Illinois*. 1989) and two more for the fall of 1989, one on 12 August-6 September at Rice Lake Conservation Area near Canton and another from 20 October-7 December at Carlisle Lake (*Illinois Birds and Birding* 6:44, 1990). Several earlier Iowa sightings were not accepted by the I.O.U. Records Committee. Late fall gull concentrations should be checked carefully for vagrant California Gulls.

235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA 52803

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER AT CORALVILLE RESERVOIR

THOMAS H. KENT

On 14 October 1990, I went to the Coralville Reservoir area in Johnson County to look over the many shorebirds I had seen the day before just in case something unusual had come in. At 9:20 a.m., I was scoping a large number of snipe, pectorals, and Killdeer that were in shallow pools and low wet grassy areas on the Swan Lake Road west of Greencastle Avenue when I first found the juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. I made the following notes at 10:05 a.m.: "As large as largest pectoral. Overall shape and behavior like a pectoral. First noticed that the bird had a neat rufous cap and prominent white superciliary line. Then noticed buffy color to breast. Bird darker on back and scapulars than pectorals and more rufous overall. Tertiaries neatly edged with rufous, and scapulars and coverts more rufous than any pectoral."



The shorebirds flew to a nearby pond. When I relocated them at 9:55 a.m., I was able to pick the bird out easily and get better looks: "The white line over the eye dips behind the eye, widens, and appears to go to the nape. Black line in front of eye (lores) but not prominent behind the eye. I did not see any color in the eye line nor did I detect an eye ring. I got an excellent look at the breast -- soft reddish-buff with no streaks and no bib line. Breast color tapers off at belly and throat is lighter. Rest of underparts white. Bill all dark. Legs dirty yellow."

I went home and called people. A crowd gathered after noon, but the bird was not relocated until late afternoon. It was with a large flock of pectorals and was seen intermittently. At 6:30 p.m. I made notes of the following additional observations: "Saw fine streaks on sides of breast. Supercilium extended in front of eye but thinner. Saw under rump where there was an indistinct gray smudge."

The sky was overcast in the morning, but mostly sunny in the afternoon. Most sightings were at an estimated 30 to 40 yards with a 20-power Bushnell telescope or through a Kowa telescope with zoom eyepiece.

The only other species it could be confused with was Pectoral Sandpiper. The most distinctive feature of the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was the plain, cinnamon-buff breast without bib line or streaking centrally. The soft breast color shaded off evenly to the lower belly and throat. Some pectorals had very weak breast markings, but on close inspection all had streaks and a sharp bib line. The solid rusty cap differed from any pectorals; some pectorals appeared a bit rusty on the cap, but some streaking was seen on such individuals. The eye line appeared white, and it dropped and widened

posteriorly. Some pectorals had light eye lines but they were off-white, less distinct, and straighter. The juvenile feathers of the upper parts were edged with rufous; this was especially prominent on the tertiaries. Some pectorals appeared to have rusty edging on the tertiaries, but this was dependent on lighting and at least one rufous appearing pectoral had the color more in the center of the feathers with grayer edging. The gray smudging on the undertail coverts I saw once. I only had a glance at a nearby pectoral for comparison, so I was not very confident of this mark.

Sharp-tailed Sandpipers nest in north-central Siberia and migrate through eastern Asia to Australia and New Zealand. Vagrants are noted on the West Coast of United States and to a much lesser extent in the Midwest and the East. They are almost all juveniles found from September to November but there are a few spring records. This is the third record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in Iowa. The first, on 3 October 1974, was within one mile of the present location (Halmi, N. S. 1974. Sight record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper near Iowa City. *Iowa Bird Life* 44:106). The second was at Credit Island in Scott County on 30 September 1988 (Petersen, P. C. 1989. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Davenport. *Iowa Bird Life* 59:90-91).

211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

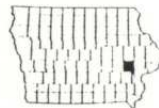
WILD TURKEY SWIMMING IN LAKE MACBRIDE

RICHARD JULE HOLLIS

Carol Thompson and I saw a Wild Turkey swimming in Lake Macbride on the morning of 2 December 1990. This particular bird clearly did not intend to swim. But after flying across the south arm of the lake, more or less parallel to the causeway and gradually losing elevation, the bird probably had no choice as it had been airborne for between a quarter and half a mile. It splashed down about 10-15 feet short of the shore. It swam reasonably strongly and buoyantly until it reached shore, climbed up the bank, shook off its feathers, and trotted away.

I have not seen a turkey swimming before nor am I aware of other records such as this. Although records of various land birds swimming are not unusual, this record of such a large land bird being able to swim seems to me to be quite unusual.

3351 Lower West Branch Road, Iowa City, IA 52245

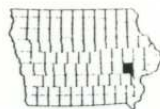


FIRST-WINTER CALIFORNIA GULL AT CORALVILLE RESERVOIR

THOMAS H. KENT

On 27 October 1990, at Babcock Access, in Johnson County I scanned the hundreds of gulls and shorebirds for about an hour and was about to leave when I saw a dark brown, first-year gull that I thought would be my first Herring Gull of the fall.

The bird was slightly larger than all the Ring-billed Gulls. The brown was not as dark as the usual juvenile Herring Gull that is seen at this time of year. I noted the light-colored bill. Later I saw a flesh-pink bill with small dark black tip. The wings



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FRONT COVER: Mississippi Kite, Clive, Polk County, July 1991. Photo by Reid Allen.

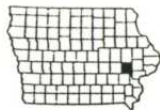
INSIDE BACK COVER: Editorial Staff, Subscription/Membership Information, Instructions to Authors, Officers, Board of Directors, Standing Committees.

BACK COVER: Meeting Dates, Report Deadlines, Birdline, Materials Available.

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A COUNTY BIG YEAR

THOMAS H. KENT



Many birders like to play games that involve finding species of birds in defined areas over defined periods of time. Games are a strong motivator of human behavior and tend to stimulate research, planning, and intensive activity. Personally, I get much more out of my birding activities if I have a plan or game involved. For 1990, I chose a project for which I could make maximum use of the time available and for which I could best use my own abilities. I set out to find as many species as possible in Johnson County in one year.

My first step in planning was to divide potential species into four categories and then estimate the number of each that I was likely to find: (1) expect to see, most without any special effort (181 species, all of which I should see); (2) good chance to see (35 of 52 species); (3) possible, but unlikely (10 of 46 species); (4) outside possibility (2 of 15 species). My goal was set for 228 species. Next, I plotted my available time against the dates that I could look for the 98 species in categories 2 and 3. This gave me a month-by-month plan for species to look for. In order to add additional intensity to my efforts, I planned for a Big Day each month (two in May) and a week's vacation in May at the peak of migration. After the year began I added an additional goal: to drive all of the roads in the county.

January started out well. On a Big Day, alone, I found 45 species including six owls, six waterfowl, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Harris' Sparrow. During the rest of January and February, I covered about three-fourths of the roads and was rewarded by finding Northern Goshawk, Northern Shrike, and Gray Partridge. The latter species turned out to be present in all quadrants of the county. Intensive efforts to find Common Redpoll failed, but others (Tom Shires, Chuck Fuller) discovered Red and White-winged crossbills near my office in the Medical Laboratories.

March also started out with a bang when I found a Ross' Goose with Greater White-fronted Geese near the Coralville Reservoir dam. Late in the month, high water brought large concentrations of waterfowl including Tundra Swan, American Black Duck, and Greater Scaup. An early Franklin's Gull and Lesser Golden-Plover were a welcome sight, and a large flock of Smith's Longspurs returned to the same field they were in the previous two years.

After a Big Day on 31 March, I went out on the afternoon of 1 April to look for and found Loggerhead Shrike and Brewer's Blackbird, the latter a difficult bird to find in Johnson County. On 7 April, I took a long, dull walk to Sand Point and was rewarded when a Sandhill Crane flew over. On 14 April, I finally flushed a Winter Wren after many hours of searching. On 15 April, my son-in-law's two dogs helped me flush a Le Conte's Sparrow from a grassy field. I usually find the sparrow in late April, but this year I would be birding in Texas at that time. On 16 April, it was raining when I got home from work, but I went out anyway and was rewarded with my first Osprey, American White Pelican, and Cattle Egret. My sister called about a wounded Cooper's Hawk the day before I was to leave for Texas, so after checking it out, I took her to the reservoir where we found 14 American Avocets and to Lake Macbride where we found three Eared Grebes.

May is usually my big birding month, and this year was no exception. I found 192 species in the county during the month. Some of the more unusual ones were

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Western Grebe, Clay-colored Sparrow, Northern Mockingbird (several locations), Ruddy Turnstone, Mississippi Kite, Alder Flycatcher, Connecticut Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and Peregrine Falcon. By the end of May, my year's list for Johnson County stood at 234 species, 6 more than my original goal. I set a new goal of 240 and reset my time priorities for the species that remained.

Summer is usually slow for new species, and I have less birding time. I added no new species in either June or July and only one in August, Little Blue Heron on the first. Water levels, which had been at flood levels in June and July, began to fall in August, leading to excellent fall habitat for shorebirds and herons.

Birding picked up in September, which turned out to be spectacular even though I took an 8-day birding trip to Newfoundland. Francis Moore and I found 104 species on 1 September, including Sanderling, which was new for the year. On the 2nd, when a passing car disturbed my shorebird watching, I noticed warblers moving in the roadside bushes. The first one in my binocular was a Black-throated Blue Warbler, only my second one for the state (another was in my yard later in the month). Encouraged by the warbler movement, I went to Oakland Cemetery to look in the conifers for Cape May Warbler. Just as I was about to leave, I found two of them when I stopped to look at a flock of Chipping Sparrows. Later that same day, Jim Fuller reported Buff-breasted Sandpiper, which I was able to find the next morning. On the 8th, I added Snowy Egret, Red-necked Phalarope, and American Bittern at the Coralville Reservoir; a Merlin was there early the next morning. On the 22nd, I finally found my first American Pipit. One afternoon Jim Fuller suggested that we look for Sharp-tailed Sparrow. I picked the spot that seemed most likely and sure enough, it was there along with my two missing sure-fire species (Virginia Rail and Sedge Wren) as a bonus. Twelve new species for September brought my total to 246. Was 250 possible?

In October I had planned to look for rare diving ducks at the end of the month, but the warm weather delayed the migration to November. The excellent water conditions at the Coralville Reservoir, however, produced the most spectacular finds of the year. After a Big Day on the 13th, which included a Western Sandpiper, I went out on the 14th to look over the Pectoral Sandpipers with the remote hope of finding a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Much to my surprise, I found a likely candidate and confirmed the field marks after it flew to a nearby pond. Fortunately, it was relocated late in the day and seen by many people. On the 27th, I listened to the second half of the Iowa football game while watching gulls at Babcock Access. I was about to leave when I saw a first-year gull that I thought would be my first Herring Gull of the fall, but repeated study over the next two hours convinced me that it was a first-year California Gull, a species that I had been able to study the week before in California. The bird was seen by many the next day. I was now at 250 for the year.

The first weekend in November produced one of the most spectacular fall fronts that I can remember. On Friday the 2nd, Dick Tetrault and I did a Big Day and found 10 shorebird, 10 sparrow, and 12 waterfowl species, the later heralding the first big influx of the fall. The front was stalled on Saturday with more waterfowl present. I anticipated Sunday would be better. The morning started out unexpectedly with a Red-throated Loon at the Coralville Lake dam area, and an hour later I found three White-winged Scoters at Mehaffey Bridge. The thousands of scaup were accompanied by many mergansers of all three species and all of the other common waterfowl. Even more impressive to me were 210 Common Loons in one sweep of the scope at Jolly Roger. This day also produced my luckiest bird of the year. Late in the afternoon, I was trying to relocate the Red-throated Loon for Ann Johnson and Beth

Brown, when Jim Scheib came by and told us of a Varied Thrush found by Jim Fuller at the Macbride Nature Recreation Area. After driving around and re-evaluating the directions we had, I flushed the bird off the road, but it soon flew and was not seen again. Although the rest of November had nice weather, and I searched intensively, the only other new bird for the year was Snow Bunting.

In December I continued searching for a few missing species, but was only able to add Glaucous Gull, a bird that I found at Babcock Access by watching the gull flock for several hours. That brought my year's total for Johnson County to 255 species, 27 more than I had predicted. I finished the month driving the remaining roads that I had missed.

For the year, I found all of the 181 species that I had listed as expected. More surprising was my finding 49 of 52 species that I had listed as good possibilities. These are birds that I do not encounter every year, but with intensive effort and good water conditions I was able to find almost all of them. Among the possible, but unlikely species I found 19 of 46. As predicted, I got 2 of 15 outside possibilities (Varied Thrush, Prairie Warbler), but also added four accidental species that I had not listed (Mississippi Kite, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, California Gull, and Red-throated Loon).

There were 30 species that I saw only once (or the same bird over 1 to 3 days). Eight of these were found during my many trips (sometimes two or three in one day) to Babcock Access and would have been missed without persistent coverage. Several of these single sightings occurred when I made an attempt to overcome negative thinking. "There is nothing at Sand Point and it is a long walk" (Sandhill Crane). "Sandy Beach is a long drive and it is almost supper time" (Western Grebe). "I have not seen anything at Macbride lately" (Eared Grebe). Other sightings were due to a strong hunch and previous experience: White-winged Scoter with first big influx of diving ducks, Alder Flycatcher and Connecticut Warbler in Hickory Hill Park in late May, Cape May Warbler in conifers in fall. Some, but relatively few species were found by others (both crossbills, Prairie Warbler, Varied Thrush).

I was lucky to have an excellent year for shorebird and waterfowl habitat and good waves of warblers in both spring and fall. The year was only average for winter finches and rare waterfowl. I covered several large wooded tracts in an effort to find several species known to nest in wooded areas near Johnson County (Amana Woods and Palisades-Kepler State Park), but I could not find Acadian Flycatcher, Worm-eating Warbler, and Hooded Warbler and had only single sightings of Cerulean Warbler and Louisiana Waterthrush. My biggest miss was Yellow-breasted Chat, a bird often found in Hickory Hill Park. A pair was found at William's Prairie by Jim Fuller, but when I got there they were gone.

The biggest side effect of my Big Year in Johnson County, besides having a lot of fun in a relaxed atmosphere, was creating some new lists. I reviewed all my daily field lists back to 1949 and my father's notes (F. W. Kent kept a birding diary from 1949 to 1973) in order to create my county list, my list of early and late dates for Iowa, and my newly created monthly lists for Iowa. In Johnson County in 1990, I added two species to my state list (Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, California Gull). Five of 7 new species for my Johnson County list appear to be first records for the county (Red-throated Loon, Ross' Goose, Mississippi Kite, California Gull, and Varied Thrush). I saw 44 birds in months that I had not seen them before in Iowa. Personally for the state, I had 9 new early and 19 new late spring dates; 18 new early and 30 new late fall dates; and 24 new first calendar and 44 last calendar dates. Record early or late dates for the state included 3 first, 6 second, and 1 third.

County birding can be a lot of fun. Time can be used efficiently, because distances are not great. I can get to the best birding spots in 5 to 20 minutes. This makes early morning and late evening birding feasible. One of the most satisfying aspects of a county Big Year was that I found almost all of the birds myself. Included were many species I consider rare in the county and four accidental species. Although I have birded Johnson County all of my life, I found some good spots that I was unfamiliar with or had not visited in many years.

Dick Tetrault was my most frequent companion, especially on Big Days. Jim Fuller got me out several afternoons and kept me informed of what others were finding. Carl Bendorf and Francis Moore helped me with Big Days. Ken Lowder (an audiologist) lent me his ear in the deep woods for a couple of important finds. I thank these people and others who I met in the field during the year. My wife Ann was very supportive on the home front. The combination of goal setting and ease of access to local birding spots got me into the field a lot for relaxed, enjoyable birding that produced a number of good finds.

211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

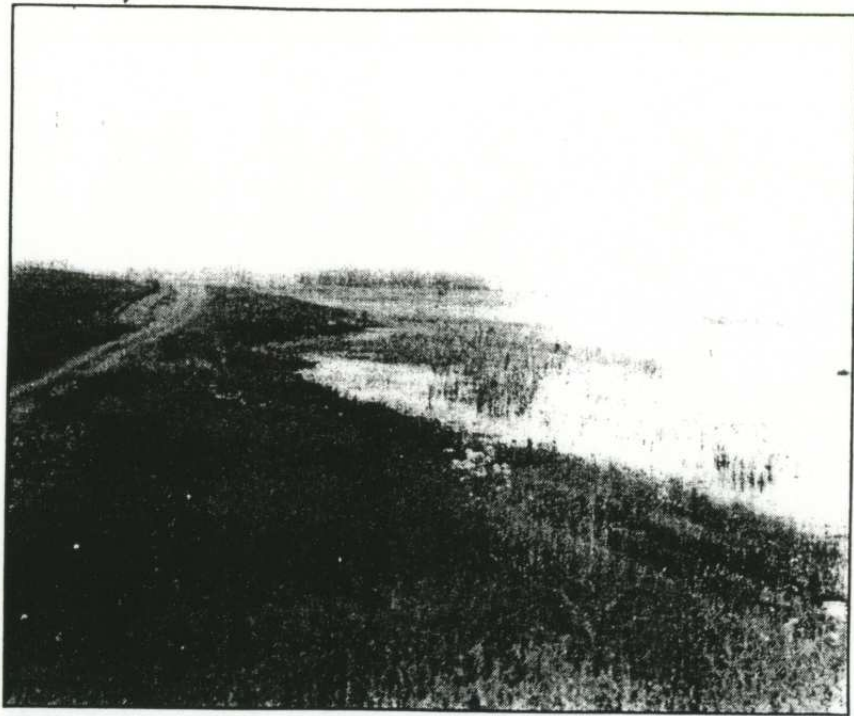


Figure 2. Road along the west side of Little Wall Lake. The road is now Highway 69 and the trees in the background are in the Hamilton County park. Photograph taken in 1916 and currently in photo collection at the Iowa Department of Transportation, Ames.

BIRDING LITTLE WALL AND ANDERSON LAKES AND TEIG'S MARSH

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE AND HANK ZALETEL

Little Wall and Anderson lakes in Hamilton County and Teig's Marsh in Story County are typical of the prairie pothole habitat that covered central and north-central Iowa before this region was settled. These areas are not home to a great diversity of birds, although more than 230 species have been recorded here in the last 10 years. Some of the better finds include Pacific Loon, Red-necked and Western grebes, Little Blue Heron, ibis species, Oldsquaw, Black Scoter, Common Moorhen, Sandhill Crane, Pine Warbler, and Prothonotary Warbler.

Begin at the intersection of highways 69 and 175 in the center of Jewell (see Figure 1). Drive east on highway 175 for approximately 1.0 mi and turn left (north) on the first gravel road. Continue north on this road for 0.4 mi. Anderson Lake (1), formerly known as Goose Lake, is west of the road. The best viewing is from the

shoulder of the road. This is a 135-acre, privately owned marsh and trespassing is not permitted. Migration is the best time to visit this area. Summer birding is best when water levels are high. Breeding species include Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern, Green-backed Heron, American Coot, Marsh Wren, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Sora, Virginia Rail, Ring-necked Duck and Common Moorhen nest here some years. For a better view of the south end of the marsh, return to the railroad tracks located immediately north of Highway 175 (2). You can park along the shoulder of the road and follow the tracks west for approximately 0.2 mi. This is the best place to see migrating waterfowl and herons. American White Pelican and Virginia Rail are seen here occasionally. When water levels are low (usually every 2-3 years), a wide variety of shorebirds may be seen here, including Black-bellied Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, and Wilson's Phalarope. Bell's Vireo may breed in the scrubby areas along the railroad tracks. Winter birding is often very slow, although Short-eared Owl may occasionally

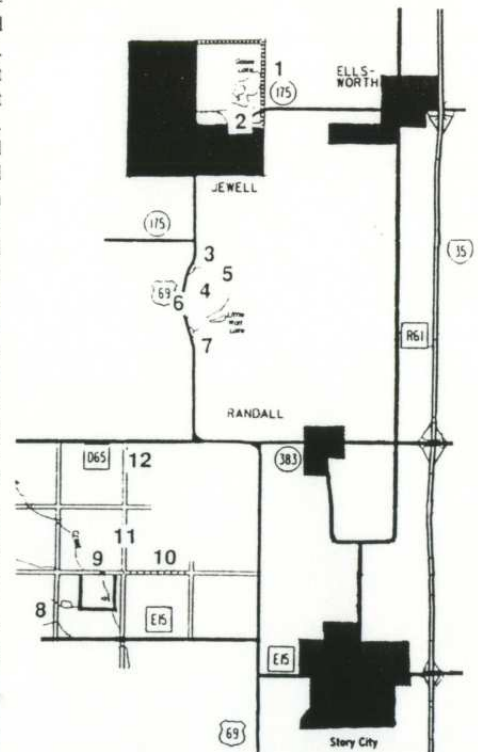
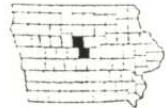


Figure 1. Map of the Little Wall and Anderson lake area. Numbers refer to areas discussed in text.

90-29

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 1 juvenile

14 October 1990

w. of Greencastle corner, Coralville Res., Johnson Co., Iowa

Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

Other observers in afternoon: John Cordell, John Daniel, Jim Fuller, James Huntington, Ann Johnson, Mary Noble, Ken Lowder, Randy Pinkston, Jim Sandrock, Tim Schantz, Carol Thompson.

Time: 9:20 to 9:25 a.m., 9:55 to 10:00 a.m., and 4:15 intermittently to 5:00 p.m.

Habitat: wet marshy area with low vegetation and mud flats.

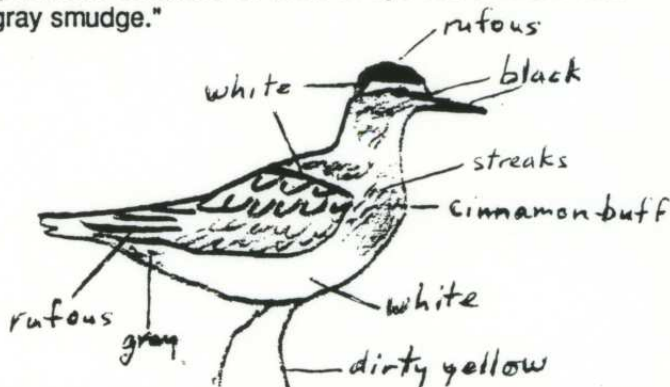
Description: I was scoping a large number of snipe, pectorals, and killdeer that were in shallow pools and low wet grassy areas when I first found the bird. I made the following notes at 10:05.

"As large as largest pectoral. Overall shape and behavior like a pectoral. First noticed that bird had a neat rufous cap and prominent white superciliary line. Then noticed buffy color to breast. Bird darker on back and scapulars than pectorals and more rufous overall. Tertiaries were neatly edged with rufous and scapulars and coverts were more rufous than any pectoral. The birds flew to a nearby pond. When I relocated them [at 9:55], I was able to pick this bird out easily and got better looks. The white line over the eye dips behind the eye, widens, and appears to go to the nape. Black line in front of eye (lores) but not prominent behind the eye. I didn't see any color in the eye line nor did I detect an eye ring. I got an excellent look at the breast--soft reddish-buff with no streaks and no bib line. Breast color tapers off at belly and throat is lighter. Rest of underparts white. Bill all dark. Legs dirty yellow."

I went home and called people. A crowd gathered after noon, but the bird was not relocated until late afternoon. It was with a large flock of pectorals and was seen intermittently. At 6:30 p.m I made notes of the following additional observations:

"Saw fine streaks on sides of breast. Supercilium extended in front of eye but thinner. Saw under rump where there was an indistinct gray smudge."

The drawing represents the field marks seen, but was not made in the field.



Song: not heard

Behavior: no different than pectorals.

Conditions: overcast in a.m., mostly sunny in p.m., most sightings were at an estimated 30 to 40 yards, used 20x scope with some views through Kowa with zoom.

Similar species: The only other species worthy of consideration is Pectoral Sandpiper. The most distinctive feature is the plain, cinnamon-buff breast without bib line or streaking centrally. The soft breast color shaded off evenly to the lower belly and throat. Some pectorals had very weak breast markings, but on close inspection all had streaks and a sharp bib line. The solid rusty cap differed from any pectorals; some pectorals appeared a bit rusty on the cap, but some streaking was seen on such individuals. The eye line appeared white, and it dropped and widened posteriorly. Some pectorals had

light eye lines but they were off-white, less distinct, and straighter. The juvenile feathers of the upper parts were edged with rufous; this was especially prominent on the tertials. Some pectorals appeared to have rusty edging on the tertials, but this was dependent on lighting and at least one rufous appearing pectoral had the color more in the center of the feathers with grayer edging. The gray smudging on the undertail coverts I saw once and only had a glance at a nearby pectoral for comparison, so I am not very confident of this mark.

Agreement: In the field, all those who saw the bird expressed agreement.

Previous experience: I have seen one alternate-plumaged bird in Alaska.

References/time used: I looked at the National Geographic Society guide and Kenn Kaufman's Advanced Birding between the first two observations.

Time of notes/typed: notes made five minutes after second observation and 1.5 hours after last observation. Typed next day.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

Location: Coralville Reservoir, Johnson Co., Iowa

Habitat: marshy area with combination of vegetated areas and mud flats

Date: 14 October 1990

Time: 4:50 to 5:30 pm

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

Other observers: Tim Schantz, Tom Kent, Carol Thompson, Jim Fuller, et al

Description of bird: This bird was obviously a shorebird by shape and feeding habits. It was feeding with a number of Pectoral Sandpipers and appeared to be about the same size. My perception was that it was a bit chunkier looking and had a slightly shorter bill than the majority of Pectorals. The dark bill was somewhat decurved but, perhaps because of its length, seemed a bit straighter than the Pectorals. At a distance the bird was difficult to pick out from the Pectorals, but at closer range the most notable feature initially was the bright buffy breast. The bird had very little marking on this buffy wash, certainly not the distinct streaking seen on all the Pectorals, although there was more streaking on the sides of the breast than in the middle. The belly was white. The legs looked dark but color was difficult to determine because of the mud in the area. The head had a bright rusty colored cap and a well-defined white superciliary line which broadened slightly toward the rear. The eye was dark and the throat white. The back was pretty scaly, showing feathering which was dark with lighter edging, not totally unlike the Pectorals. Some of the feathers, however, showed quite a bit of rusty/red coloring-the tertials in particular. The red on the back helped in locating the bird when scanning the group. The undertail coverts were white with some light gray smudges which were difficult to see and not very distinct. In flight the bird showed a white rump with a dark bar running vertically through the middle, not unlike the Pectorals. If the bird called in flight, which was certainly a possibility, I did not pick it out from the Pecs.

Similar species and how eliminated: Most shorebirds, even those where feathering may be somewhat similar, were eliminated through combination of shape and size. The only shorebird that would come close to being confusing would be the Pectoral Sandpiper. The primary detail for eliminating the Pectoral was the lack of streaking in the central part of the breast. Supporting details include: brighter buff colored (nearly gold) breast; very bright rusty cap; distinct (more so than juvenile Pecs), white superciliary; shorter, straighter bill; lack of white "V" from feather edgings on the back; and considerably more reddish feathering on the back. I think the most surprising thing to me, after hours of looking for a Sharp-tailed among numbers of Pectorals, was how distinctly different the bird looked when viewed in good light at a reasonably close distance. Although they are certainly similar, the differences are outstanding.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics):

The bird was observed at distances of from approximately 25 to 50 yards. We were able to move around enough to get good lighting on the bird in both locations of observation. Although we were 40 to 50 yards away on first sighting, the sun was almost directly behind us which enhanced the bright buffy breast. Optics consisted of a scope at approximately 20x to 35x.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Life bird; much experience with other shorebirds

References and persons consulted before writing description: Field marks were discussed with various people during observation. References consulted prior to completing documentation include: National Geographic Society's Birds of North America; Hayman, Marchant and Prater's Shorebirds; Chandler's North Atlantic Shorebirds; Audubon Society's Master Guide.

How long before field notes made? A few notes were dictated after observation
How long before this form completed? This documentation was written the evening of observation.

What species? SHARP TAILED SANDPIPER How many? 1 JUVENILE

Location? CORALVILLE RESERVOIR 90-29

Type of habitat? GRASSY AREA FLOODED WITH SHALLOW WATER

When? date(s): 14 OCTOBER, 1990 time: 4:15 PM to 4:45 PM ^{WAST ON} FOR 30 MINUTES

Who? your name and address: JIM FULLER 6 LONGVIEW KNOLL, IOWA CITY

^{HUNTINGTON, CORDELL}
others with you: KENT, MINKSTON, THOMPSON, LEWDER, DANIEL A. JOHNSON, SCHAM

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.

THE BIRD IN QUESTION WAS WITH COMMON SNIDE AND WITH PECTORAL SANDPIPERS, WHICH IT MATCHED ALMOST EXACTLY IN GENERAL SIZE AND SHADE. THE FEATURES WHICH DIFFERED FROM THE PECTORALS WERE: (1) A VERY RUSTY CAP - ALMOST RED IN THE RIGHT SUNLIGHT. (2) A MORE PROMINENT WHITE SUPERCILIARY STREAK, WHICH CURVED DOWNWARD BEHIND THE EYE. (3) A RICH ORANGE-BUFFY AREA ON THE CHEST WHICH DIFFERED FROM THE DARKER BROWN OF THE PECTORAL; WAS WITHOUT LINES LIKE THE PECTORAL (EXCEPT FAINT LINES AT SIDE OF NECK) AND FADED OUT RATHER THAN ENDING ABRUPTLY LIKE THE PECTORALS. (4) THE SCAPULARS ON THE ^{side} BACK HAD A DISTINCT REDDISH FEATHER EDGING - IN FACT, EACH TIME THE BIRD FLEW AND SETTLED BACK DOWN WITH PECTORALS I PICKED IT OUT BY THIS TRAIT. (5) THE LEGS WERE LEGS YELLOW THAN THOSE OF THE PECTORALS. OTHERWISE, THE BILL WAS ABOUT THE LENGTH OF THE HEAD WIDTH, WAS BLACK IN COLOR, AND APPEARED STRAIGHT (I COULD SEE NO DROOP).

Similar species and how eliminated:

PECTORAL SANDPIPER - COMPARED ABOVE

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

LATE AFTERNOON - MOSTLY SUNNY. LOOKING NORTH AND NORTHEAST - LIGHT WAS EXCELLENT. USING KOWA TSN-4 TELESCOPE WITH 20-60X EYEPiece.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

NEVER SEEN BEFORE

References and persons consulted before writing description: NAT'L GEOG. GUIDE

How long before field notes made? IMMEDIATE this form completed? 6 HOURS

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

What species? Sharp-tailed Sandpiper How many? 1Location? Hawkeye Wildlife Area, Johnson Co.Type of habitat? Flooded fields & grasses, weedsWhen? date(s): Oct 14, 1990 time: ~ 3:30 to 5:00 PMWho? your name and address: Carol Thompson 1116 Muscatine Iowa City 52240others with you: Jane Huntington, Jim Sandrock, John Cordell, Tom Kent, Ann Johnsonothers before or after you: Jim Fuller others Tom Kent

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.

Small shorebird flock ~~about~~ ranging from 5-30 birds, mostly pectoral sandpipers. The sharp-tailed sandpiper was in juvenile plumage. The upper breast was noticeably buffy and lacked striping. This feature was very noticeable in flight

~~was~~ making the bird stand out from the Pectorals. The bird had a prominent white eye line and the cap was very rusty contrasting noticeably from the eye line. The scapulars were very dark brown to black with rufous edging with some white. The bird appeared somewhat more chunky than the Pectorals.

Similar species and how eliminated: Pectoral Sandpiper - by buffy non-streaked breast, more distinct eye-line, and bright rufous cap.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Broken clouds, mostly sunny, good lighting - sun behind viewers

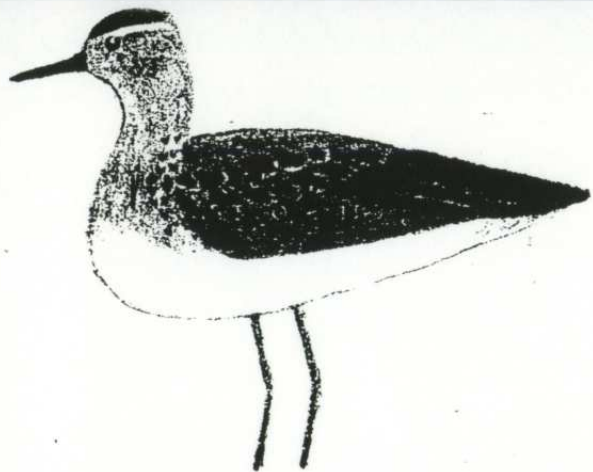
Distance 100-400 yds, Scopes - Bushnell, Nowa 20-60x

Previous experience with species and similar ones: New bird

References and persons consulted before writing description: NGS guide & Shorebirds
referred before the bird was seen

How long before field notes made? 1 hr this form completed? 4 hrs

90-29



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (Calidris acuminata), juvenile

Date: 14 October 1990

Time: 16:00-17:30. Initially discovered by Tom Kent at 10:30.

Location: Coralville Reservoir, Johnson Co., Iowa (see back)

Habitat: Flooded grassy field and shallow marsh

Description (refer to illustration)-

General: Medium-sized, long-necked sandpiper. Not remarkably different in size/shape from accompanying Pectorals. A somewhat tough call, requiring close study and scrutiny to distinguish from Pectoral Sandpipers. For this reason, observation and identification of this Asiatic lifer were satisfactory but not greatly satisfying.

Head: Distinctive light buff superciliary stripe above and behind eye defined sharply above by black-streaked bright rust cap. Superciliary stripe not noticeably widened behind eye contrary to NGS field guide. Remainder of head streaked brown.

Eyes: Not studied well. Appeared dark.

Bill: Like Pectorals' in size and shape. All black.

Underparts: Neck buff. Chest a rich orangish-buff, especially warm at sides near bend of wing, the color fading into white of belly more cephalad than on Pectorals'. Fine darker brown spotting limited to sides of chest with no "bib" effect so distinctive on nearby Pectorals. Lower breast and belly white: Undertail coverts studied briefly and thought to show a smudged pattern (not distinct).

Upperparts: Strongly patterned like nearby Pectorals', remarkable for overall rustier tone particularly on tertials with edgings of bright rust.

Tail: Not seen.

Legs: Pale, greenish-yellow in color. Not remarkably different from Pectorals'.

Flight: Individual not identified in flight.

Voice: Not discerned among calls of many Pectorals.

Behavior: Always in company of Pectoral Sandpipers. Flock easily startled. Initially discovered in group of perhaps 30 individuals actively feeding in mud under dried fallen stubble. Group then took off and disappeared. Bird relocated later in a group of 10 individuals standing in shallow water.

Conditions: Clear to partly cloudy skies, sunny. Observed looking north to northwest with afternoon sun from west. Cool, breezy. Observed from 40-50 meters on two occasions as described for a total of perhaps 2-3 min. observation time with various spotting telescopes (power?).

Similar species: Pectoral Sandpiper can be eliminated by largely unpatterned orangish-buff breast (no "bib" effect), more distinct superciliary stripe, much brighter rust cap and tertials, and perhaps the patterned undertail coverts (a weak point).

Previous experience: No previous experience with Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Approximately 13 years experience with migrant Pectoral Sandpipers in Texas and Arizona.

--Randy Pinkston



(over)