

Whimbrel
12 May 1984
Hendrickson Marsh, Story Co., IA
*S. Dinsmore, *P. Martsching
IBL 54:45,82; 55:57; Dinsmore 1985

Record Number: 84-08
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore (May 12)
Paul Martsching (May 13)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 54:45, 82
Dinsmore, S. 1985. Whimbrel in Story County. IBL 55:32.
Records Committee: IBL 55:57

VOTE: 7-III

III, description by Dinsmore excellent.
III, Note: I distrust absolute sizes in descriptions. Easier to get from books than birds. If accurate they must be from comparison with other birds, so why not use the less official sounding, but more real, descriptions like 'slightly smaller than' or 'same size as'?

84-08

Dinsmore, S. 1985. Whimbrel in Story County. Iowa Bird Life
55:32.

Whimbrel in Story County — At approximately 12:30 p.m. on 12 May 1984, Gordon Brown, Mark Dixon, and I, all of Ames, saw a Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) at Hendrickson Marsh, Story County. The shorebird profile, large size, brown upperparts contrasting with whitish underparts, strongly marked head with dark eyeline, and decurved bill identified the bird as a Whimbrel. The bird was in the company of Willets (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) and numerous peeps, all feeding on a mudflat adjacent to a grassy field. Hendrickson Marsh was being drained, a fact which attributes to the extensive mudflats on which the Whimbrel was feeding. We viewed the bird until about 2:00 p.m. and left without flushing it. The bird was seen the next day (13 May) by Paul Martsching of Ames but not thereafter. This represents the second recent sighting of a Whimbrel at Hendrickson Marsh, the last being 4 May 1983 (I.B.L. 53:50). This record fits the general pattern of most recent Iowa records of Whimbrels being from mid-May (Dinsmore et al., Iowa Birds, Iowa State Univ. Press, 1984:142). Steve Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50010.

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

by the Records Committee
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: WHIMBREL
DATE SEEN: May 12, 1984
SITE OF OBSERVATION: Hendrickson Marsh, Story County
OBSERVERS: Steve Dinsmore, Paul Martsching
DATE OF REVIEW: 1984
METHOD OF REVIEW: Circulation to Committee by mail
CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: III
COMMENTS:

This bird (presumably the same bird) was very well-described by the observers, leaving no doubt in the Committee's mind as to its identity.

The only adverse comment was regarding the use of absolute sizes in describing field observations ("estimated 16-18"). It was suggested that comparisons be made to other birds nearby.

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.

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

8488

What species? Whimbrel How many? 1Location? NW corner of Hendrickson Marsh, Story Co.Type of habitat? drained area of marsh adjacent to a grassy fieldWhen? date(s): May 12, 1984 time: 12:30 AM to 2:00 P.M.Who? your name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, Ia. 50010others with you: Gordon Brown and Martin Dixon, Amesothers before or after you: Paul Mutschinski, Ames

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 was clearly a shorebird; long legs and long neck. The bird stood an estimated 16-18" when compared to nearby Willets, Godwits and numerous peeps. The bird continued to feed quite actively while we observed it. The bird did not call while we were observing it.

The bird's neck, back, wings and tail were all a uniform mottled brown in color. The breast, belly and throat were mostly white with some brown streaking extending down to the legs and below the wings. The legs were black in color and were an estimated 7-8" long. The bird's bill was also black and was at least twice the length of the head. The bill was distinctly downcurved. From the base of the bill, a dark stripe extended through the eye and to the back of the head. Below the dark eye stripe was a white cheek patch. Above the dark eye stripe was a white stripe extending to the back of the head. The bird had a dark brown crown divided by a narrow white stripe down the center of the crown.

Similar species and how eliminated: Separated from Godwits and Willet by the long downward curved bill and the distinct head pattern. Separated from Ibis by the strongly marked head and the mottled brown color of bird. Separated from Long-billed Curlew by much shorter bill and the strongly marked head.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
 Lighting was good. Bird was viewed at distances ranging from 50 to 200 ft. estimated.
 Optical equipment consisted of Bushnell 7x35 Binoculars and a Bausch and Lomb 20x telescope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

I have seen Whimbrels on the East coast before. I have seen quite a few Godwits and Willets in Iowa and I have seen Ibis before.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes made? 1 day this form completed? 8 hours

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

Middlewestern Prairie Region
(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

84-18

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Whimbrel 2. Number: one
3. Location Hendricksons Marsh, Story County, Iowa
4. Date: 13 May 1984 5. Time Bird seen: 7:15 to 7:45 PM CDST
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):
Brown; size of Willet (Willet and Whimbrel walked past each other several times); bill long, first 2/3 slightly down turned, last 1/3 sharply downturned; brownish streak thru eye, a much heavier streak from bill up over eye; light "gap" on crown between the heavy stripe on either side of top of head.
7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard
8. Description of behavior: walking around probing in mud
9. Habitat - general: marsh & shallow lake
specific: spent most of time in mud flats; eventually went into shallow water
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Marbled & Hudsonian Godwits bills turn up instead of down
11. Distance (how measured)? 100 ft at closest; guess 12. Optical equipment:
20 x 80 binoculars
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
sun to west, bird north of me clear
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
saw Whimbrel in same area last spring
15. Other observers:
seen by Steve Dinsmore previous day; heard that others saw it next day.
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
A Field Guide to the Birds - Peterson
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 1 hour

Signature

Date: 27 May 1984

Address: 1120 Marston
City, State: Ames, Iowa

(over)