

Ruff

Record Number: 95-63

21 Aug 1995

Classification: A-P

Coralville Res., Johnson Co., IA

*T. Kent

to 26 Aug; P-0463, IBL 66:21, 96; Kent 1996

DOCUMENTATIONS

Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246 [*3/24/96]

Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240

Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty 52317 [3/24/96]

PHOTOGRAPH

Thomas H. Kent, 21 Aug 1995, P-0463

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:21

Records Committee: IBL 66:96

Kent, T. H. 1996. Ruff at Coralville Reservoir. IBL 66:112-113

VOTE: 6 A-P, 1 A-D

A-P, (Photo of marginal help in i.d.) Documentations could stand on their own.

A-P, While I do not feel that this photo is independently indicative of Ruff (I thought it was a duck at first), as I recall, we are to consider AP designations in conjunction with written descriptions. The written documentation clearly indicates, at the very least, a shorebird. The photo shows the unique tail pattern of Ruff.

A-P, Pattern of rump appears to be diagnostic.

A-D, I cannot make out enough detail in the photo to tell beyond reasonable doubt that this is a Ruff, it looks like it could just as easily be a Hudsonian Godwit from my perspective of the photo.

A-P, Although without description, photo barely adequate.



Ruff P-0463
Coralville Res., Johnson Co.
21 Aug 1995 T. H. Kent 95-63

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Spirit Lake still had a lot of open water, but cold to the north would change that overnight. I stopped first at Marble Beach but found nothing unusual. I worked around the north shore of the lake without success and pulled into Shore Acres drive to check Trickle Slough and Angler's Bay.

There were no ducks bobbing on the rough water of the bay, but as I turned north I noticed a sandpiper-shaped bird swimming in loose circles in the quiet water along the point. Training the scope on the bird, I saw the dark, stout bill; the receding dark crown extending to the nape of the neck; and the solid, light gray back to distinguish it as a Red Phalarope. It was the first for northwestern Iowa and for me.

I ran back to the truck for my camera and although the phalarope cooperated, the best of the resulting photos was barely adequate as support for my documentation of the bird. The dismal photographic effort also served to reinforce my need to try field sketches.

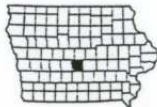
Cold weather froze the water of Angler's Bay that night, and the Red Phalarope could not be relocated the next day. As for me, missing the Oldsquaw just provided a good opportunity for a search on another day.

518 West 4th St., Spencer, IA 51301

SABINE'S GULLS AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 14 September 1995, I saw a juvenile Sabine's Gull above the dam of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. I watched the bird from 9:40-10:30 a.m. as it rested on the water with a small flock of Ring-billed Gulls and later flew around the south end of the lake. The upperparts, shoulders, back of the neck, and crown were brown. The forehead was white. The bill was black and straight, and much smaller than the bill of a Ring-billed Gull. The eye was dark. In flight, the wing pattern was striking: outer primaries black, secondary coverts brown (same color as mantle), and the remainder of upperwing white. The underwing was pale. The tail was forked with a narrow black terminal band. The legs were dull flesh-colored. I saw two juvenile Sabine's Gulls here on 19 September, and at least one juvenile remained through at least 8 October. This is about the 13th record of a Sabine's Gull in Iowa. The vast majority are juveniles and are seen in September and October. At least five juveniles were seen in Iowa in fall 1995 (*IBL* 66:22).

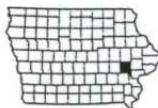


4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014

RUFF AT CORALVILLE RESERVOIR

THOMAS H. KENT

On 21 August 1995, I was at the north end of Half Moon Lake on Greencastle Avenue near the old DuPont Bridge at the Coralville Reservoir in Johnson County when a flock of shorebirds landed on a spit 30 yards in front of me. One was larger. It had bright orange legs and a black smudge across the upper breast. At that point I knew I was looking at a reeve (female Ruff). It was 25 percent larger than Pectoral Sandpipers, and slightly larger and bulkier-bodied than



Killdeer and Lesser Yellowlegs. Shape and posture was most similar to Lesser Yellowlegs. The thin, straight, black bill was about as long as the head. The lower face was pale gray compared to the darker cap and nape. In addition to the smudged black across the breast, there was some fine barring around the throat. The lower breast, belly, and undertail coverts were white. The upper parts were dark due to black feathers, some of which had white or buff fringes at their tips. There were scattered gray feathers in the scapulars. Upon flushing the bird, I observed and photographed a V- or U-shaped white patch on the upper tail that pointed to the tip and had a black center proximally. The wings were plain except for a thin white wing bar. Jim Fuller and Chris Edwards noted that some of the back feathers were ruffled, and they saw chevrons on the sides extending to the legs.

I judged the bird as a female based on size and plumage and the plumage as mostly alternate based on the distribution of black and feather wear. The underparts would have more black in fresh spring plumage. This bird was seen by many birders and remained until at least 26 August. This is the third and earliest fall record of Ruff in Iowa. The others were juveniles east of Tabor that pointed to the tip and had a black center proximally. The wings were plain except for a thin white wing bar. Jim Fuller and Chris Edwards noted that some of the back feathers were ruffled, and they saw chevrons on the sides extending to the legs.

LITERATURE CITED

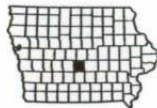
Martsching, P. 1986. Ruff in Story County. *Iowa Bird Life* 86:64.
Silcock, W. R. 1983. A Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) in southwest Iowa. *Iowa Bird Life* 53:87-90.

211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

RED PHALAROPES AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 19 September 1995 I arrived at Jester Park to look over the extensive mudflats at the north end of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. At 2:10 p.m., I noticed a phalarope swimming along the edge of the mudflat near several Killdeer. The bird was nearly as large as the Killdeer, although it was shorter legged. I watched the bird until 2:23 p.m. and noted the following. In general, it was a pale, stocky, plump, short-legged shorebird. The black bill was short, thick, blunt-tipped, and roughly equal to the length of the head. The head was white, except that the crown and back of the neck were black and there was a black spot around each eye. The underparts were entirely white. There was some very faint buffy color on the sides of the neck and shoulder. The mantle and scapulars were light gray with several small black patches. In flight, a clear white stripe extended across the bases of the flight feathers. The tail was dark, and the legs were black. Based on the mantle pattern and buffy color on the neck, I concluded the bird was in first-basic plumage.



On 22 October 1995, I was once again scanning the mudflats at the upper end of the lake when I saw another Red Phalarope. I watched the bird from 9:35-10:15 a.m. Initially, the bird associated with three Sanderlings. The head, neck, underparts, and vent were white except for a black cap and a black spot around each eye that extended posteriorly a short distance, and pale gray color extending up the back of the neck.

95-63

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Ruff; **Number:** 1 female, alternate plumage

Location: Coralville Reservoir, Johnson County, Iowa

Date: 21 August 1995; **Time:** 9:10 to 9:40 a.m.; 4:30 to 4:40 p.m.

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

Others before/with/after: I found the bird. Jim Fuller, Dick Tetrault, and others saw it later.

Habitat and circumstances: mud flats on old oxbow

Description of bird: A flock of sandpipers flew in to a spit on the backwater area at the north end of Half Moon Lake on Greencastle Avenue near the DuPont Bridge. One was larger and had light orange legs and smudged black across the upper breast. At that point I knew I was looking at a reeve. It was about 25% larger than Pectoral Sandpipers. Later in the afternoon I saw it with Killdeer and Lesser Yellowlegs. It looked slightly larger than those two species, mostly due to a more bulky body. The overall shape and posture was most similar to Lesser Yellowlegs. It had a relatively thin, straight, black bill which was about as long as the head length. The lower face was pale gray; the cap and nape were slightly darker, but still much lighter than the rest of the upper parts. The eye appeared small and black. The lower breast, belly, and rump were white. The upper parts were dark due to black feathers, some tinged at the tip in white and buff. There were scattered gray feathers in the scapulars. In addition to the smudged black across the breast, there was some fine barring around the throat. When I flushed the bird, I saw a wide V or U of white on the tail pointing to the tip with a black center proximally. The wings were plain. The bird feed in shallow water and picked at some vegetaion. It returned to the spit after being flushed.

Voice: not heard.

Similar species: Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Stilt Sandpiper were present for comparison. This bird was quite distinctive in terms of the orange legs, black smudge across the breast, blackness of the upper parts, and white V in the tail. I judged the sex as a female based on size and plumage, and the plumage as alternate based on the distribution of black and the feather wear. More black on the underparts might be expected in fresh spring plumage.

Any one have reservations?: No.

Light: sun behind me in a.m.; **Distance:** as close as 30 yards; **Optics:** 10x binocular; 20x scope.

Previous experience: I have seen 2 others in Iowa, and individuals in California, Alaska, and Delaware; but only 1 reeve in alternate plumage -- on St. Paul Island in Alaska in June.

References before/after viewing: I looked at National Geographic Guide while viewing.

Time of notes: During observation in a.m.; **Final typing:** 1 day.

SPECIES: Reeve (Molting from Alternate to Basic Plumage)

LOCATION: Mudflat along Greencastle Avenue at the Coralville Reservoir (Johnson County).

DATE & TIME: 21 August (12:05-12:30 PM) and (5:05-6:30 PM), 22 August (1:30-45 PM), 23 August (8:20-30 AM).

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

OTHERS: Discovered by Tom Kent. Others later that day: Jane Fuller, Chuck Fuller, John Rutenbeck, Chris Edwards, Chris Caster, Dick Tetrault, Carl Bendorf.

BACKGROUND: Tom Kent called me at my office to report a bird of this species at this location about 10AM on 21 August. With Jane Fuller, I was at the location about 11:30 AM, and located the bird a little after noon. It stayed behind a ridge most of the time and it was difficult to determine field marks. I had much better views of the bird that evening when it was in the open and only about 100-125 feet away.

DESCRIPTION: The general size was larger than a Pectoral Sandpiper, and about the same length as a Lesser Yellowlegs, but much wider (plumper). In general appearance, it was a dark, small-headed, long-legged, short-tailed, and plump medium-sized shorebird. The upperparts were quite dark (dark grayish-brown) with light feather edging on the scapulars. Not significant in the identification, but helpful in relocating the bird were ruffled feathers on its back, which stuck up in the air. The head was small, had a light side of the face, and a dark line behind the eye. The cap was a little dark and somewhat streaked. The eye was dark. The bill was black, pointed at the end, had a slight droop, and its length was approximately equal to the head width. The throat was light, but the upper breast was a mottled dark gray. The rest of the underparts were white. There were also what appeared to be remnants of chevrons on the side of the belly immediately beneath the wing. The tail seemed short, and was the same length as the wing tips. The legs appeared long, and were bright orange, maybe even a little red-orange.

In flight, the underwings appeared light, and the rump showed large white patches on either side of a dark central area. Its feeding behavior was picking into the shallow water at the edge of a mudflat. It did not appear to poke its bill into the mud. No vocalization was heard

SIMILAR SPECIES: Size larger, legs orange, and breast pattern differ from Pectoral Sandpiper. Much plumper, orange legs, droop to bill differ from Lesser Yellowlegs.

OPTICS & VIEWING CONDITIONS: All viewing times were sunny. Distances ranged from 100-300 feet looking west and northwest with a KOWA TSN4 telescope (20-60X).

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen 3 previous Ruffs in Delaware, and a Reeve at the Riverton Area on 1 April, 1995.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes were written at the time of the evening viewing on 21 August, and this form was typed on 25 August. Field guides noted were National Geographic and "Shorebirds".

DOCUMENTATION FORM FOR IOWA BIRD SIGHTINGS

Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Avenue, North Liberty, IA 52317

What Species? Reeve (female Ruff)**How many?** 1**Location?** Hawkeye Wildlife Area (Coralville Reservoir), Johnson Co.**Type of Habitat?** Muddy shoreline.**When?** August 21, 1995, 12:50 p.m. - 1:20 p.m., 5:25 p.m. - 6:45 p.m.;
August 25, 1995, 6:45 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.**Who?** Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317.**Others with you:** Jim, Chuck, and Jane Fuller, John Rutenbeck, Jim and Joyce Durbin.**Others before or after you:** Before - Tom Kent, Ken Lowder.**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.**

Approximately same length but much plumper than Lesser Yellowlegs. Larger, plumper, and longer-legged than Pectoral Sandpiper. Bill black and pointed with very slight droop; approximately same length as width of head. Eye black. Crown, nape, and back of neck medium-brown. Eyebrow stripe, cheeks, and throat whitish. Back, wing coverts, tertials, and visible wing feathers dark-brown with black, medium-brown, and white speckling. Many of the back feathers were ruffled. Wings and tail approximately same length. Upperside of tail mostly white; narrow dark-brown central stripe, wider at the base; dark-brown and medium-brown barred terminal band. Breast heavily mottled and barred with dark brown and black, extending farthest on the sides, which were marked with dark brown bars and chevrons extending to the legs. Underwings, belly and undertail coverts white, with several small dark marks in vent area. Legs bright yellow-orange and long. I presume the bird was molting from breeding to non-breeding plumage.

The bird was observed walking back and forth along the shoreline in shallow water and probing in the water with the tip of its bill. It was seen bathing and preening and was observed briefly in flight. No vocalizations were heard. There were many other shorebirds present.

Similar species; how eliminated: Both Lesser Yellowlegs and Pectoral Sandpipers were seen in close comparison to the bird. Lesser Yellowlegs is much slimmer and lighter brownish-gray on the upperparts and breast. Pectoral Sandpiper is smaller, slimmer, shorter-legged, and its breast is more uniformly marked.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? No.

Viewing conditions: Full sunlight, 40 - 50 yards away. Viewed with 8 x 40 binoculars and 15x - 45x telescope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: No experience with Reeve; much experience with common Iowa shorebirds.

95-63

DOCUMENTATION FORM FOR IOWA BIRD SIGHTINGS

Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Avenue, North Liberty, IA 52317

References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America.

How long before field notes made? During observation.

How long before this form completed? Thirty minutes.