

Western Sandpiper 1  
13 Oct 1990  
Coralville Res., Johnson Co., IA  
T. Kent  
IBL 61:20, 62:21

Record Number: 90-28  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Thomas H. Kent

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 61:20  
Records Committee: IBL 62:21

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D: Excellent bird, a bit out of range but not unexpected.

A-D: Bill size and shape, black legs, and basic plumage timing (at least according to Kaufman) seem pretty convincing.

A-D: Good study. I believe Semipalmated Sandpiper has adequately been eliminated.

A-D: Size and bill shape pretty well eliminate all other regular NA peeps but Semipalmated, and the extent of the bill droop appears to eliminate that species as well. I was a little surprised that no rusty coloration, especially in the scapulars, but an excellent photo of a late Sept. bird in North Atlantic Shorebirds (Chandler, p. 95) shows just such a bird. This is a convincing record late date.

A-D: Excellent documentation. I think Kent's comment on bill size versus Semipalmated is right on target. It's been my experience that overlap birds make up a smaller percentage of the Westerns and Semis than most publications would lead you to believe.

A-D: Very good study excludes any other species.

A-D: Good descriptions, comparisons, and documentation.

## DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Western Sandpiper, 1 juv, 13 October 1990  
Babcock Access, Coralville Res., Johnson Co. Iowa.

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

Other observer with me: Dick Tetrault

Time: 10:15 to 10:20 a.m.

Habitat: mud flats with shallow pools

Description:

"Three small shorebirds flew in while I was watching a Greater and two Lesser yellowlegs. I moved the car over to get better light and scoped from the car window. One of the birds was smaller and shorter; the other two birds were Baird's Sandpipers. The smaller bird was overall gray and white with black legs. The bird appeared relatively long-legged as it stood in a small pool and the Baird's were on the mud. The bill was noticeably long and drooped distinctly at the tip [distal third]. The bill was thin from the mid point to the tip [not bulbous]. The bill was about as long as the head and about 15% longer than the bill of the Baird's in the same field of view [actually side by side]. There was an indistinct superciliary line. The underparts were all white. The scapular and wing feathers were gray without distinct feather edging. I did not see any rufous, although the bird was facing me much of the time."

Song: not heard

Behavior: At first walking with Baird's Sandpipers, then standing in small pool, and finally the birds froze for a minute or so with bird facing me and turning its head once in a while. After freezing the birds flushed and were not seen again.

Conditions: Sun was at about 120 degrees (to my right with slight back lighting; the bird was close (about 20 yards) and viewed with 20x scope.

Similar species: The size and shape in comparison with Baird's Sandpiper establish this bird as a peep. The black legs, gray color, and lack of bib exclude Least Sandpiper (several of which were seen earlier). The distinction from Semipalmated Sandpiper is based on the bill and apparent molt to basic plumage. Five minutes earlier I had seen two Semipalmated Sandpipers running on the other side of the area; they had short straight bills and had all feathers of the upper parts edged with buff (juvenile plumage). I had seen a number of Semipalmated Sandpipers with longer and slightly drooped bills this fall, but none approached the length, thinness, and droop seen on the current bird. According to Kenn Kaufman's *Advanced Birding*, Semipalmated Sandpipers wear their juvenile plumage until they reach wintering grounds, and juvenile Western Sandpipers gradually molt from juvenile to basic plumage from August to October with some retaining rusty scapulars. I assume, based on date, that this bird was probably a first-year bird, and that it had either completely molted to basic plumage or had some rusty scapulars that I did not see. I did not consider any of the Eurasian stints, which would be exceeding unlikely and have bills more like a semipalmated or have yellow legs.

Agreement: Dick observed the long bill with binoculars.

Previous experience: Have studied many semipalmateds and seen Western several times in various plumages.

References/time used: NGS guide and Kaufman after observation.

Time of notes/typed: 7 hours/next day