

Ruff

Record Number: 95-15

1 Apr 1995

Classification: A-D

Riverton A., Fremont Co., IA

\*Fuller, \*Silcock, \*Kent

IBL 65:73, 66:96

#### DOCUMENTATIONS

Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240

Ross Silcock, P.O. Box 300, Tabor 51653

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

#### REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:73

Records Committee: IBL 66:96

#### VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, The date makes me hesitate but leg color and tail/rump description are diagnostic.

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

95-15

SPECIES: Reeve

LOCATION: Riverton Area (Fremont County)

DATE & TIME: 1 April, 1995 (7:35-8:20 AM)

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

OTHERS: Discovered by Tim Schantz. Seen at same time as Ross Silcock. Later were Kent, Scheib, E. and E. Armstrong, and P. and R. Allen.

BACKGROUND: Tim Schantz reported a bird of this species to the Iowa Birdline the evening of 31 March. I was there at daylight the next morning and met Ross Silcock. We searched for some time without success, and Tim Schantz showed up, and relocated the bird.

DESCRIPTION: The general size was noticeably larger than the Pectoral Sandpipers with which it was associating. The general appearance was a plump, short tailed, small-headed, brownish-gray shorebird with orange legs. The upperparts were a brownish-gray, and the underparts were white. The head was relatively small, with a dark eye, and the crown was darker than the rest of the head. There was no eyeline or eyering. The bill was mostly dark gray, but the basal portion, especially of the lower mandible was pinkish. And the underside of the basal portion of the lower mandible was quite pink. The bill length appeared to be just slightly greater than the head width. The bill seemed to droop slightly toward the end. The upper breast was mottled brownish-gray, and was cutoff from the white of the lower breast rather sharply (like the Pectorals), but seemed to be at a higher point than on the Pectorals. There were also mottled spots along the flanks, and although they were larger than the spots in this area on a White-rumped Sandpiper, it was still reminiscent of that bird.

The back and folded wing were a darker brownish-gray, with neat white feather edging. The Pectorals had a complete dark streak down the middle of the back, which this bird lacked. The tail seemed very short, as the wing extension and tail extension were the same. This feature also helped make the bird appear to be plump. The legs were a distinctive orange-pink color, much different than the dull yellow of the nearby Pectorals.

In flight, the underwings were whitish, and there was a prominent black-white tail and rump pattern, which appeared to be in the form of a U, with the black down the middle, and the white forming the U. Unlike, the Pectorals, this bird crouched (almost flattened itself) when there was potential danger....once when a Harrier flew over, and once when a flock of Pelicans flew over. No vocalization was heard.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Differences from Pectoral pointed out in description. Yellowlegs have different leg color, breast pattern is more spotted, and the bill is longer and thinner.

CONDITIONS & OPTICS: Viewing conditions were excellent. It was early morning, no clouds at all, with the sun primarily at our backs. Viewing was toward the west and northwest with KOWA TSN-4 telescope (20-60X) at distances from 100-400 feet.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have never seen a Reeve. I saw three Ruffs in Delaware two years ago in late July.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: All field notes were made immediately after returning to car. National Geographic and Shorebird Field Guides were viewed that evening. This form was typed on 4 April.

95-15

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING FOR IOWA

Species: RUFF, female

Date: April 1, 1995

Location: Riverton GMA, Fremont County; Dawn to about 8.30 am.

Observer: Ross Silcock, PO Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653

Other observers: Tim Schantz, Jim Fuller at same time

Habitat: standing surface water with adjacent corn and bean stubble; bird spent most time in relatively dry bean stubble with Pectoral Sandpipers

Light: Perfect conditions, with no heat haze just after dawn and around sunrise on a clear day. We were looking away from the sun.

Circumstances: Tim Schantz found this bird late on 31 March and notified me that evening. I was present, with Jim Fuller, at dawn on 1 April. Jim and I were not able to locate the bird until about an hour later, when Tim rediscovered it near where he had first found it.

Description: The bird was in the company of a 6 Pectoral Sandpipers in alternate plumage. It was noticeably larger, about 150% so, but did not dwarf the Pectorals and its proportions were similar. Coloration of mantle was a similar mid-brown to the Pectorals, with prominent pale buffy feather edgings. Tertiaries and scapulars were prominent. The bird was somewhat chunky, accentuated by minimal or no primary extension past the end of the tail. The blackish, medium-sized bill with a slight droop near the tip was similar in shape and color to the Pectorals, but at a suitable angle, although difficult to see, the base of the lower mandible was orange-red. The head was brownish, with no obvious markings. The nape and upper back was finely streaked with blackish longitudinal marks. The throat and upper breast were brownish, somewhat like the Pectorals, although streakiness was not obvious. The rather sharp demarcation between this "bib" and the lower breast was higher than that on the Pectorals. Remainder of underparts were white except for an area of rather coarse streakings along the flanks below the lower edge of the folded wings. The most striking feature of the bird when not in flight was the bright bubble-gum pink legs. In flight, it appeared noticeably larger than the Pectorals, with no obvious wing stripe, but a striking "U"-shaped white marking made up of the sides and distal part of the rump.

Identification: The combination of size, leg color, and white "U" in flight eliminates all other species. This bird lacked any black markings in the breast area as shown for most females in reference materials.

Previous experience: Have seen only 1 Ruff prior, a juvenile male.

## DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

**Species:** Ruff; **Number:** 1 female

**Location:** Riverton A., Fremont Co., IA

**Date:** 1 April 1995; **Time:** 12:45 to 1:00 p.m.

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

**Others before/with/after:** Found by Tim Schantz on 31 March; he was also there when I saw the bird. Others in the a.m. of 1 April included Jim Fuller and Ross Silcock

**Habitat and circumstances:** Shallow pools with mud flats.

**Description of bird:** The large group of shorebirds (yellowlegs, pectorals, Baird's, least) flushed and when they landed Tim picked out the reeve. She was slightly larger than adjacent Lesser Yellowlegs (more bulky too) and about twice the overall size of Pectoral Sandpipers in the same field of view. The proportions of the bird were more like a yellowlegs than a pectoral, although thicker and shorter necked than a yellowlegs. The legs were bright orange. The bill was long, straight, and thin. It was black except for some paleness of the proximal lower mandible. The head, neck, chin, and upper breast were smudged gray, but somewhat lighter on the sides of the face. The scapulars and wing coverts were edged with light gray. The lower margin of the wing was darker, but some of this could have been on the flanks. The rest of the underparts were very light gray. The tail have a very prominent white V pointing distally, which was seen when the bird preened or flew. The bird flew short distances several times, giving good views of the tail. The underwing was white/light gray, which contrasted with the medium tones of the upperwing.

**Voice:** Not heard.

**Similar species:** Yellowlegs comes the closest. The tail pattern, leg color, and gray throat area, among other features, were quite different from yellowlegs. The bird is considered a female based on size and lack of prominent black markings. The bird did not appear dark enough to be in full alternate plumage.

**Any one have reservations?:** No.

**Light:** clear, side lighting; **Distance:** 40 yards (est); **Optics:** 20x scope, 10x binocular.

**Previous experience:** have seen Ruffs in Iowa, California, Delaware, and Alaska in various plumages.

**References before/after viewing:** looked briefly at National Geographic Guide on way to bird.

**Time of notes:** while viewing; **Final typing:** 3 days.