

Whimbrel
27 May 1994

Record Number: 94-12
Classification: A-D

Coralville Res., Johnson Co., IA
*Edwards, *J. Fuller, *Scheib, *Pinkston
IBL 64:75; 65:81, Edwards 1994

DOCUMENTATIONS

Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty 52317 [19 Aug 1994*]
Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240 [19 Aug 1994]
James Scheib, 10 Longview Knoll, Iowa City 52240 [19 Aug 1994]
David L. Dankert, 806 15th Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids 52404

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 64:75
Records Committee: IBL 65:81
Edwards, C. 1994. Whimbrel at Coralville Reservoir. IBL 64:118-119.

VOTE: 7 A-D

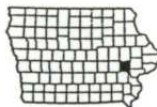
A-D, Ring-billed Gull size, crown stripes, long decurved bill are all convincing. Danker's observation of the bird in flight leaves no doubt to the ID.

A-D, The few alternative are adequately eliminated.

WHIMBREL AT CORALVILLE RESERVOIR

CHRIS EDWARDS

At 3:30 p.m. on 27 May 1994 I drove to Sandy Beach Recreation Area on the north side of the Coralville Reservoir to look for shorebirds. On the previous day the mudflats there had attracted several species including Ruddy Turnstone and Hudsonian Godwit. As I was scanning with binoculars I noticed a large shorebird walking and foraging in shallow water along the shoreline. I immediately noted its long decurved bill and striped crown and realized I was viewing my first Whimbrel. In a few moments the bird stopped near an American Golden-Plover and two Black-bellied Plovers. Over the next hour I used a telescope to study it carefully, gradually moving to within 50 yards of the bird.



The Whimbrel was almost twice the size of the nearby American Golden-Plover. It had a small head with a relatively long neck, a plump body, and long legs. Its bill was black, decurved, and 2.5 times as long as the head. Its head was strikingly patterned, with a thin, light median-crown stripe; wide chestnut-brown lateral crown stripes; light eyebrows; and dark-brown eyestripes, which were more pronounced between the eye and the bill. The eyes were black. The bird's head, neck, and breast were lightly streaked with brown, and its sides were white with very light brown barring. The belly and undertail coverts were white. The back, scapulars, wing coverts and tertials were medium brown with some light speckling. On the standing bird, the primaries appeared very dark brown or black, and the outer tail feathers were alternately barred with medium and dark brown. The underside of the wings, seen briefly while the bird was preening, were white with light brown or gray speckling. The legs appeared dark gray.

The Whimbrel spent most of this time loafing, but I also observed it bathing and preening. No vocalizations were heard. When I departed the bird was still resting, and within minutes I notified the Iowa Birdline. That evening the bird was observed in the same location by Jim Fuller, James Scheib, and David Dankert. At 7:45 p.m. it flew across the lake and was not seen again.

The Whimbrel is a casual spring migrant in Iowa. Spring records range from 22 April to 27 May, with most seen in mid- to late May. There are also one summer and three fall records. Whimbrels are known to migrate in small groups, but the majority of Iowa sightings have been of single birds, with the most being 15 on 23 May 1973 at Red Rock Reservoir (Brown 1973). Whimbrels have been recorded in all areas of the state.

There are two populations of the North American subspecies of the Whimbrel. Iowa birds most likely are strays from the eastern population, which in spring migrates from the Atlantic coast northwesterly across the Great Lakes to nesting areas west of Hudson Bay (Dinsmore et al 1984). Fall migrants follow a more easterly course via the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Richards 1988), which may explain why there are few fall records for Iowa. The western population migrates along the Pacific coast and nests in Alaska and northwestern Canada. Whimbrels winter along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts from the southern United States to Brazil and Chile (Stout 1967).

LITERATURE CITED

- Brown, W. 1973. Field reports. *Iowa Bird Life* 43:74-77.
Dinsmore, J. J., T. H. Kent, D. Koenig, P. C. Petersen, and D. M. Roosa. 1984. *Iowa Birds*. Iowa State University Press, Ames.
Richards, A. 1988. *Shorebirds: A Complete Guide to Their Behavior and Migration*. Gallery Books, New York.
Stout, G. D. 1967. *The Shorebirds of North America*. The Viking Press, New York.

85 Whitman Avenue, North Liberty, IA 52317

I.O.U. BUSINESS FALL BUSINESS MEETING

Pella, 29 October 1994, 4:30-5:00 p.m.

MARY KUHLMAN, SECRETARY

On behalf of the I.O.U., President Ann Barker thanked Ann Johnson, Tim Schantz, Roy Godwin, and Doyle Woods for their work on local arrangements for the meeting. It was moved (Bud Gode, seconded by Carol Thompson) to approve the minutes of the spring business meeting as published in *Iowa Bird Life*. Motion carried.

Reports

The treasurer's report indicated that the organization is in good financial shape. Membership is down slightly, and members were encouraged to distribute membership brochures to potential members. The 1995 budget will be considered at the Board of Directors meeting on 6 November. Barker requested that all budget information and requests be given to her or to Pam Allen immediately.

Records: No report. Barker commended the committee for their continued review of old records.

Membership: No report.

Publications: No report. Comments are welcome from members concerning publications.

Library/Historical: No report.

Breeding Bird Atlas: Half of the accounts are now with the editor. The University of Iowa Press will publish the atlas and D.N.R. employees will probably do the layout. A list of photos still needed was distributed. D.N.R. money will be used to keep the price of the atlas down and for distribution of the book to schools.

Big Day: The membership was asked if Big Day should continue. Only five teams participated. It will be discussed by the Board of Directors.

Educational Booklet Promotion: Plans are continuing to reprint the booklet. A few additions and corrections are planned.

Spring Count: Fourteen counties participated in 1994, twice as many as in 1993. Results will be reported in the first 1995 issue of *Iowa Bird Life*. The 1995 Spring Count will be on 13 May. Members were encouraged to participate. Iowa results are reported for the national compilation.

Field Trips: A trip to southwestern Iowa is planned for 12 November. Future field trips will be announced in the newsletter.

Nominating: Harold White, chair, Mark Proescholdt, and Reid Allen have been appointed to this committee. They will prepare a slate willing to serve, if elected, for the offices of president, vice president and three board of directors positions. The committee will report to the board at its early spring meeting. The slate will be published in the newsletter.

Bird Line: No report.

Old business

The Board of Directors proposed a constitutional change to clarify term eligibility and the election process. It was moved (Jim Dinsmore, seconded by Hank Zaletel) that under ARTICLE IV--OFFICERS, Section 2, replace the second sentence with:

After serving two consecutive terms (excluding partial terms), a member is not eligible for reelection to the same office until one full term has elapsed.

94-12

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What Species? Whimbrel
How many? 1
Location? Sandy Beach, Coralville Reservoir, Johnson Co., IA
Type of Habitat? Shoreline of reservoir
When? May 27, 1994, 3:30 PM to 4:40 PM
Who? Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317
Others with you: None
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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

In size almost twice as long as nearby American Golden Plover; small head, long neck when elongated, plump body, long legs; bill very long, approximately two and one-half times as long as width of head, downcurved, and entirely black; thin light median crown stripe; wide chestnut brown lateral crown stripes; light eyebrow; dark brown eyestripe, more pronounced between eye and bill; eye black; head, neck and breast lightly streaked with light brown; sides white with very light brown barring; belly and undertail coverts white; back, scapulars, wing coverts and tertials medium brown with some light speckling; on standing bird, primaries very dark brown or black; outer tail feathers barred with medium and dark brown; undersides of wings white with light brown or gray speckling; legs dark gray.

When first observed the bird was walking and feeding in the water along the shoreline; during the following hour it was observed bathing, preening and loafing in shallow water near several terns, gulls and plovers. No vocalizations were heard.

Similar species; how eliminated: Long-billed Curlew lacks the crown stripes, has a buffy underside and wing linings, is larger and has a longer bill.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? N/A

Viewing conditions: Bright sunlight with the sun behind my back; approximately 50 yards; viewed with 8x42 binoculars and 15x-45x telescope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: No previous experience this species; minimal experience with Long-billed Curlew.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson and National Geographic field guides.

How long before field notes made? 20 minutes
How long before this form completed? 30 minutes

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Whimbrel

LOCATION: Sandy Beach Area of the Coralville Reservoir

DATE & TIME: 27 May, 1994 (6:15-27 PM)

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

OTHERS: Bird was found by Chris Edwards. With me was Karole Fuller. Seen later by David Dankert.

BACKGROUND: This species was reported to the Iowa Birdline about 5PM. I received word about 5:30, and arrived a little before 6:15. After scoping the area where the creek enters the reservoir at the Sandy Beach Area, I located the bird near a group of a dozen Ring-billed Gulls and about 600 feet away. I walked to within 125-150 feet, and watched the bird through the telescope for a little less than 15 minutes.

DESCRIPTION: This was a large shorebird. The only comparison was with Ring-billed Gulls, and although it was not the same shape, it was pretty much the same general size. The bird was generally brown and white. The most interesting feature was its bill, which was curved downward, colored jet black, and was long (its length estimated to be about twice the width of the head). The eye was dark. There was a dark eyeline, and a light supercilliary line. The crown was brown and broken on top by a light line. The upperparts were brown with light feather edgings, and the end of the folded wing appeared to be quite dark. The underparts were white with brown streaking on the neck, and brown barring on the belly. The legs were gray. It did not feed while I watched it, rather it just stood there, and occasionally preened. No vocalization was heard.

SIMILAR SPECIES: The only other bird with a similar size and similar sized downturned bill is Bristle-thighed Curlew, which has never been seen in the Midwest and has a rufous rump.

OPTICS & CONDITIONS: It was late in a sunny day, and I was looking east with the sun directly behind me, Viewing conditions were excellent. I used a KOWA TSN-4 telescope 20X, and the distances were from 600 down to 125-50 feet. Most of the viewing time was at the closest distance.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen this species several times before, including in migration this time of year on the Door Peninsula of Wisconsin.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes were written down in the car, as Karole drove home, and this form was typed on 29 May. No field guides were consulted until later that same evening.

94-12

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

**Whimbrel 5/27/94 SANDY BEACH, JOHNSON CO

What species? Whimbrel How Many? one

Location: Sandy Beach, Coralville Res., Johnson Co.

Type of habitat?: Lake

When? Date(s): Friday, May 27, 1994 time: Approx. 6:30 pm to 6:35 pm

Who? your name and address:

James Scheib, 10 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, IA 52240-9148

Others with you: no one.

Others before or after you: Chris Edwards, Jim Fuller

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.

Viewed from the Twin View Heights area with Kowa TSN4 20-60 zoom lens in evening light looking west. I had been told the bird was there and raced out to see it before a dinner appointment. Having a tight schedule I went to the Twin View Heights area which was closer. I found the bird across the water on the edge of the beach with binoculars. The scope showed a brown bird the size and shape of a Whimbrel with a long down-curved bill. No details could be seen from that distance.

Thus, knowing that a Whimbrel was reported there, I was able to see the size and shape consistent with that identification; but that is all.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen Whimbrels close up in California. It looked like a Whimbrel to me.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Second edition of the National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

94-12

What species? Whimbrel How many? 1

Location? Sandy Beach Recreational Area on Coralville Res. Johnson Co.

Type of Habitat? mud and sand lake shore

When? date(s): 27 May 1994 time: 7:30 pm (est.) to 7:45 pm

Who? your name and address: DAVID L. DANKERT 806 15th AVE. SW Apt 5 Cedar Rapids, IA. 52404

Others with you: NONE

Others (before) or after you: Chris Edwards, James L. Fuller

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.

In response to a phone call tip from Jim Fuller, I hurriedly drove to Sandy Beach. Upon arrival, I immediately saw a large, brownish bird with a decurved bill standing motionless in the shoreline grass approximately 8 feet from the waters edge. This bird was about the same size as the Ring-billed Gulls that were standing to the right, but with a much slimmer build. Viewing the birds left front and with the sun behind me I obtained details. The bill was black, decurved and long; at least twice as long as the length of the head. There was a distinct black eyeline which extended through the lores to the base of the bill. The eyebrow was noticeably white and the crown of the head was dark brown with a white line extending through the forehead. These markings gave the head a "striped" appearance. The cheek, chin and throat were white. The front of this bird's long neck and breast were a buff & brown. The back of the neck, the back, and the secondary feathers of the wing were a darker brown. I could not see the legs but it seemed to be standing on "stilts."

Approximately 10 minutes elapsed and then the bird preened its breast feathers while opening its wings, flashing black primary feathers. Suddenly, it took flight across the lake away from me in a eastward direction, giving 6 or 7 single pitched whistles in flight. I did not see any distinguishable markings in flight.

Jim and Joyce Durbin of Marion, Ia arrived a few minutes later and we tried until almost sundown to relocate the bird. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful.

Similar species; how eliminated:

The bill was too short and too dark for a Long-billed Curlew.
I noticed no bright rusty rump and that eliminated the Bristle-thighed Curlew.
The population of the Eskimo Curlew is so low that I didn't considerate it.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? NO
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
Clear 80-100 yards Leica 8x42 BA binoculars
(estimated) Bausch and Lomb Zoom Telescope

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

This is a "Life" bird for me.

References and persons consulted before writing description:
Birds of N.A. (Golden), Birds of N.A. (N.G.S.), Eastern Birds (Peterson)

How long before field notes made? _____ this form completed? 18 hrs.
during observation

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).