

Snowy Plover

6 May 1988

Bays Branch, Guthrie Co., IA

*S. Dinsmore, *Myers, *Kent, *Moore

also 7 May, photo by Kent; IBL 58:80, 59:76, Dinsmore and Fix 1988

Record Number: 88-02

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore, 6 May

Bob Myers, 6 May

Thomas H. Kent, 7 May

Francis L. Moore, 7 May

PHOTOGRAPHS

T. H. Kent, 7 May, P-0251 (IBL 58:87)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 58:80

Records Committee: IBL 59:77

Photographs: IBL 58:87 (P-0251)

Dinsmore, S. J., and A. S. Fix. 1988. Snowy Plovers in Central Iowa. IBL 58:86-87.

VOTE: 5 A-P, 1 abstain

A-P. Photo by Kent is diagnostic. Documentations were well done.

A-P. Black bill, legs and auricular patch plus tail pattern on small light plover are diagnostic. I was impressed by short-tailed appearance.

A-P. Photo and documentations leave little doubt that this is a Snowy Plover.

A-P. I have no problem with ID--I saw bird also, but did not document the sighting.

SENT TO: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010; Bob Myers RR2 Box 153, Perry, IA 50220; T.H. Kent 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246; Francis L. Moore 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703

would be no need for a Field Reports Editor and because of your efforts my task is much easier. Most reports were neat, on time, in taxonomic order, and almost everyone provided documentations or details for sightings requiring them.

After putting a lot of work into field reports it is sometimes disheartening for the contributor not to see some sightings listed in *Iowa Bird Life*. These omitted sightings have not been overlooked, but because of size limitations and because of the incredible amount of information that is sent in, all sightings cannot possibly be listed. Editors must try to determine patterns, pick out early and late dates, observe peaks, and draw out other especially useful bits of information from a large group of sight records for each species. This is not always easy. A sight record may also be omitted if details of the observation or a documentation was required and not furnished. Also, because of deadlines, reports received late often cannot be incorporated. I try to list these late reporters along with other contributors, even though I have not used their information in my compilation, so they can at least get some credit for their efforts.

Contributors: keep up the good work!

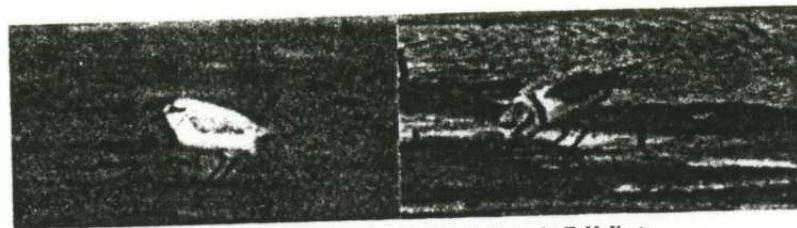
SNOWY PLOVERS IN CENTRAL IOWA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE AND ANDREW S. FIX



Snowy Plover is an uncommon and local species that breeds along the Gulf Coast from Florida to Texas, along the West Coast north to Washington, and locally in the interior north to Kansas, Colorado, Utah, and Oregon (American Ornithologists' Union. 1983. *Check-list of North American Birds, 6th Edition*). Snowy Plovers are vagrants north and east of their range, with most records from April to July. In the last five years, there are records from British Columbia, Saskatchewan (4), Wyoming, Nebraska, Minnesota (2), Illinois (2), Ontario, and Pennsylvania. There are no previous records from Iowa.

At noon on 6 May 1988, Dinsmore noticed a very pale shorebird feeding with other shorebirds at Bays Branch in Guthrie County. The size, posture, and behavior were that of a plover, most likely a Piping Plover. At 1:34 p.m., after approaching closely and observing the bird for several minutes, he identified it as a Snowy Plover. The bird was about the same size and shape as nearby Semipalmated Plovers. The upperparts, including the back, wings, and tail, were pale brown, much paler than the nearby Semipalmated Plovers. The underparts and undertail were white. A black bar, about an inch long, angled forward and downward from each shoulder. The head was pale except for a black patch on the forehead and black auricular patches. The bill and legs were black. The bill seemed slightly longer and slimmer than the bill of a Semipalmated Plover. In flight, the bird had a light wing stripe and the rump was the same color as the rest of the upperparts. Several other birders saw the bird on the afternoon of the 6th and morning of the 7th, but it could not be located after that.



Snowy Plover, Bays Branch, 6 May 1988. Photos by T. H. Kent.

On 22 May 1988, Dinsmore and Fix were doing a Big Day Count in central Iowa. At 2:56 p.m., Fix noticed a pale shorebird feeding with other shorebirds in the southwest corner of Dunbar Slough in Greene County. He initially thought that it was a Piping Plover, but we quickly noticed the dark bill and legs and identified it as a Snowy Plover. We watched the bird until 3:14 p.m. During this time Fix photographed the bird. The bird was similar in appearance to the one at Bays Branch, although we noted that it appeared smaller and slimmer than nearby Semipalmated Plovers.

Dinsmore made an extensive search of the area the next morning. The number of shorebirds was greatly reduced, and the plover was not found. It was, however, reportedly seen briefly on the 25 May by Brian Blevins.

These sightings represent the first reports of Snowy Plover in Iowa. We thought that the birds were different individuals, but this cannot be proven with certainty.



Snowy Plover, Dunbar Slough, 22 May 1988. Photo by Andrew S. Fix

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

CURLEW SANDPIPER AT CORALVILLE RESERVOIR

CARL J. BENDORF AND THOMAS H. KENT



On 13 May, we were doing a Big Day Count with Francis Moore and Dick Tetrault. At 12:55 p.m. we arrived at an old backwater lake, known as Crescent or Half Moon Lake, which lies south of the DuPont Bridge at the west end of the Coralville Reservoir, Johnson County. From the back seat, Bendorf happened to look through the willow trees that ring the edge of water and saw a small duck sitting on a log. He yelled for the car to stop and put his binoculars a Green-winged Teal, a new species for the day. He also noticed a few shorebirds feeding in the grass just behind the teal. They were probing deeply and at least one seemed to have all red underparts. Bendorf mentioned that there seemed to be dowitchers to look at.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Snowy Plover

How Many? 1 ad.

Location? Bays Branch W.M.A., Guthrie Co.

Habitat? feeding on mudflat area with other shorebirds

Date? 6 May 1988

Time? 1:34-1:52 p.m., 2:16-2:35 p.m., 6:15-6:55 p.m.

Observers Name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird: Bob Myers, Eugene & Eloise Armstrong

Description of bird: I was scanning hundreds of shorebirds at Bays Branch when I noticed a very pale shorebird along the shoreline of the lake. The chunky body, short neck and legs, and bill shape identified the bird as a plover. My initial reaction was that the bird was probably a Piping Plover, but nonetheless I approached for a closer view. As I was walking toward the bird the thought of a Snowy Plover entered my mind. I then put my scope on the bird and easily identified the bird as a Snowy Plover. The following description was written with the bird under direct observation.

The upperparts were entirely sandy brown colored and appeared white at a distance. The underparts and undertail coverts were white. The legs were dark and were not just covered with mud. The bill was black, straight, and was heavier than the bill of a Semipalmated Plover. The forehead was white. The bird had five distinct black patches in the head area; a black crown, a black ear patch behind each eye, and a black "slash" along each side of the neck. Each black slash extended from the bend of the wing downward toward the center of the breast (see sketch). The bird had a white eyebrow. In flight the bird had a white wing stripe and a dark tail with white outer tail feathers. The rump was brown. Based on the markings and bright plumage, the bird was probably a male of the nominate (inland) race.

Similar species and how eliminated: The smaller size and relatively small bill eliminated Killdeer and Wilson's Plover. The pale appearance, dark legs and bill, markings on the head, and lack of a dark breastband eliminates Semipalmated Plover. The dark legs and bill, brown (not white) rump, and dark ear patch eliminates Piping Plover.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were very good with the sun behind me for all observations. Estimated viewing distance was about 50 yards at the closest, and was about 100-125 yards for most observations. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope and Nikon 8x23 binoculars.

Previous experience with species: I have seen Snowy Plovers in Florida and numerous Semipalmated and Piping plovers in Iowa and elsewhere. Note that I saw three Piping Plovers at Sioux City, IA on 5 May 1988.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

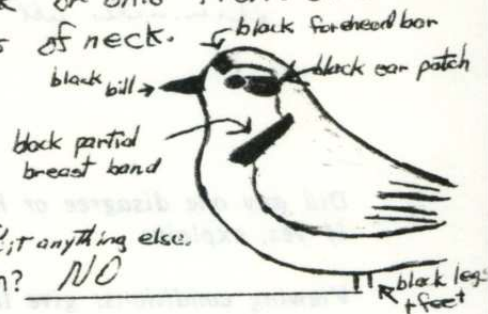
How long before field notes were made? notes written during initial observation of bird

How long before this form was completed? written at 10 p.m. on 6 May 1988

What species? Snowy Plover How many? 1 (adult ♂)?Location? Bays Branch Wildlife Area - Guthrie Co.Type of habitat? mudflatWhen? date(s): May 6, 1988 time: 6:25pm to 6:45pmWho? your name and address: Bob Myers, RR2, Box 153, Perry, Iowa 50220others with you: Steve Dinsmore, Gene and Eloise Armstrongothers before or after you: Steve Dinsmore found bird earlier in day

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.

Shape of this bird was typical for a small plover such as Piping Plover or Semipalmated Plover with this bird being no larger (possibly same size or slightly smaller) than Semipalmated Plovers (also present). Overall color was a pale brownish-gray above (somewhat like Piping) and white below. Top and back of head, back, rump (seen in flight), tail, and wings were this gray-brown color. The forehead, eyestripe (above eye), throat, breast, flanks, and undertail were white. The bill was entirely black and was about 25% longer than Semipalmated Plover's but not as stout. Bill seemed straight. The eye was dark (black). The legs and feet were entirely dark - probably black. Between the white forehead and the brown of the top of the head was a black bar that extended from the white superciliary line above one eye to same on other side. The bird also had a black bar (ear patch) extending from behind eye toward back of head. This bordered the white eye brow stripe on bottom behind eye. The bird had a partial breast band (black slashes on sides of neck). These black marks were slightly wedge shaped being slightly narrower on top than on bottom. They did not extend into hind neck or onto front of breast. These marks were located just in front of wings on sides of neck.



Similar species and how eliminated:

Separated from Piping Plover by bill shape + color, black ear patch, black legs, shape of neck ring, and brown rump.

Separated from Semipalmated Plover by pale dorsal color, bill shape + color, ear patch + breast band marks, and leg + feet color. No combination fit anything else.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Partly cloudy to periods of sunlight. Sun behind us - good lighting at times. Distance = approx. 100-125 yds. (by eye) Used 20x and 45x scopes.Previous experience with species and similar ones: No experience with Snowy but plenty with Semipalmated and Piping Plovers.References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic GuideHow long before field notes made? Made on the spot this form completed? 1 dayMAIL TO: Spring ~~F. L. Myers~~, Field Reports Editor, ~~50220~~, ~~Iowa~~ IA ~~50220~~
Bob Myers, RR.2, Box 153, Perry, 50220

DOCUMENTATION FORM

For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

88-02

What species? Snowy Plover How many? 1Location? Bay Branch, Guthrie Co, IAType of Habitat? mud flats on very low artificial lakeWhen? date(s): 7 May 1988 time: 8⁵⁰ to 10⁰⁰ am (est)Who? your name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52240Others with you: Ross Silcock, Francis MooreOthers before or after you: Steve Ansmore, Bob Myers

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.

A small light colored plover; much lighter than Semipalmated Plover in same field of view; Appeared white at a distance by ~~my~~ naked eye.

Very short tailed appearing, given a larger head appearance. Bill effectively prominent and long.

Bill, legs, eye black.

White forehead with black bar above. Black shoulder mark with white in front. White extends around nape as white collar.

Black line in ear area (below and behind eye); white line (faint) behind eye.

In flight - thin white wing stripe. White on sides of tail - brown in middle of tail.

Underparts white, upper parts very light gray-brown.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Facial marks, leg color, tail pattern eliminate Piping. Light color eliminates all other small plovers.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

Back & side light, sun and overcast, 20 yds (~~est~~), 10x binocs, 20x scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones: None seen in Texas in winter

References and persons consulted before writing description: none before notes taken

How long before field notes made? while watching this form completed? 12 hrs

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