

Snowy Plover

22 May 1988

Dunbar Sl., Greene Co., IA

*S. Dinsmore, *Fix, *B. Blevins

also 25 May, photos by Fix; IBL 58:80, 59:76, Dinsmore and Fix 1988

Record Number: 88-03

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore, 22 May

Andrew S. Fix, 22 May

Brian L. Blevins, 22 May

PHOTOGRAPHS

A. Fix, P-0246 (IBL 58:87)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 58:80

Records Committee: IBL 59:76

Photograph: IBL 58:87 (P-0246)

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

VOTE: 4 A-P, 1 A-D, 1 abstain

A-P. Well documented. Photo by Fix diagnostic and also showed possible different shape ear patch from Bays Branch bird. However, difficult to say whether this was actual or apparent difference due to camera angle etc. I'm inclined to think that it is more likely two different birds were present.

A-P. Black bill, legs, and auricular patch plus tail pattern are diagnostic.

A-P. Documentations very good on a fairly easy to identify species. Photograph showed detail to identify this bird as a Snowy Plover. If you put this photo beside other bird of 5/16 at Bays Branch these birds certainly appear to be different birds.

A-D. I consider this bird the same as one covered in 88-02 (Bays Branch on 6 May, ed.)

A-P. Also clearly a Snowy Plover.

SENT TO: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010; Andrew S. Fix 153-C University Village, Ames, IA 50010; Brian Blevins 2003 E. 12th St., Davenport, IA 52803

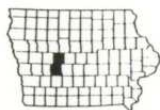
would be no need for a Field Reports Editor and because of your efforts my task is much easier. Most reports were neat, on time, in taxonomic order, and almost everyone provided documentations or details for sightings requiring them.

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!

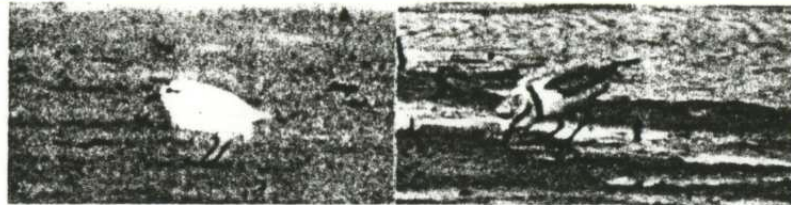
SNOWY PLOVERS IN CENTRAL IOWA

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.

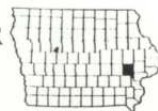


Snowy Plover, Dunbar Slough, 22 May 1988. Photo by Andrew S. Fix

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

Location? Dunbar Slough, Greene Co.

Habitat? feeding on mudflat with other shorebirds

Date? 22 May 1988

Time? 2:54-3:09 p.m.

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

Others who saw bird: Andrew Fix

Description of bird: We were scanning the hundreds of shorebirds in the SW corner of Dunbar Slough when Andy said he had found a Piping Plover. But when I located the bird, I recognized immediately that the bird was not a Piping Plover, but a Snowy Plover, similar to the one I found on 6 May at Bays Branch.

We watched the bird for 15 minutes, took some brief notes, and then Andy photographed the bird. When we left, the bird was still on the mudflat. The following description was written from notes taken during the observation. The bird was slightly smaller and slimmer than several nearby Semipalmated Plovers. The upperparts, including the back, wings, and tail, were sandy brown. The underparts were white. The bird had a black slash, about an inch long, on each shoulder just above the bend of the wing. The crown was brown except for a black patch just above the forehead. The forehead was white. The bird also had a white eyeline and a black patch just behind each eye. The bill was black and was a bit longer and slimmer than the bill of a Semipalmated Plover. The legs were dark. In flight, the bird had a dark rump and a pale stripe running the length of each wing.

Now for the difficult question; is this the same bird that was at Bays Branch on 6 May 1988? I would say it wasn't for a couple of reasons. First of all, I birded all of the shorebird areas in Greene and Guthrie counties on at least 8 occasions between the sightings. If the first bird had still been in the area, I think I would have seen it. Other birders also looked for the first bird on later dates, but with no luck. My second reason for believing that this was a different bird is based on the weather patterns this spring. We have had a lot of strong SW winds this spring, and this, combined with the excellent shorebird habitat, would explain the presence of two different Snowy Plovers in central Iowa.

Similar species and how eliminated: The size and general plover posture eliminates all shorebirds except Semipalmated and Piping plovers. The pale upperparts, dark legs and bill, and head pattern eliminates Semipalmated Plover. The dark bill and legs, dark ear patch, and dark rump eliminates Piping Plover.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with good light. Estimated viewing distance varied from 50-75 yards.

Submitted by: Andrew S. Fix DVM
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515-296-7554

88-03 ①

Documentation for Snowy Plover (Charadrius alexandrinus)

Date: May 22, 1988

Time: approximately 2:45 PM (observed for about 25 minutes)

Location: Southwest corner of Dunbar Slough

I first located this bird on a mudflat in the southwest corner of Dunbar Slough in a group of peeps, several semipalmated sandpipers, Killdeer, and Lesser Yellowlegs. Steve Dismore and I (after initially ruling out a Piping Plover) identified it as a Snowy Plover. We were about 150 ft. away with the sun primarily behind us. After two minutes of observation through a 20x Bushnell Sentry II Scope I returned to the car, assembled my camera, and spent the remainder of our observation time photographing the bird. Documented photographs were taken with a Minolta X-570 SLR camera, Tokina 400mm 5.6 telephoto lens, on Kodachrome 25 film. Most exposures were at $\text{f} 5.6$ at $1/60$ of a second. Photographs were taken at a distance of about 40-50 ft from behind a muskrat house.

Our identification was based on finding a small, very pale plover (paler and slightly smaller than a semipalmated plover) with the following morphologic characteristics:

- 1) pale brown to light grey (relatively uniform) rump, mantle, wings, and tail when at rest
- 2) white forehead, preocular and supraocular regions, chin, throat, breast, belly, and sides

A. Fix
Ames, IA
88-03

(3)

personally observed a piping plover on Oak Grove Beach on April 23 with Steve Densmore so I have a relatively recent observation with which to compare it to. This bird was fully banded but incomplete bands exist.

- ② Semipalmated plover - completely banded; darker nape broken by band; dark mantle and wings; light legs; shorter bicolored bill
- ③ Wilson's plover - large heavy bill; large, heavy full band; larger size; no distinct auricular patch; pale legs
- ④ Killdeer - much larger size; two full bands; large, heavy bill;

Please consider the above details as observations of record for the Snowy Plover. Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional information.

Andrew S. Fix DVM

Andrew S. Fix, DVM
153-C University Village
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Brian Blevins

88-03

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What Species? Snowy Plover How many? 1

Location? Dunbar Slough - Greenclo.

Type of Habitat? Drying marsh with extensive mudflats

When? date(s)? 5/25/89 time: 9:30 to 9:32 AM

Who? your name and address: Brian L. Blevins
2003 E. 12th Street Davenport, Iowa

others with you: Pete C. Petersen

others before or after you: Steve Dinsmore, Andy Fix

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.

Bird showed a buff gray coloring and in full sunlight against dark vegetation and background almost appeared as light as winter plumage Sanderling. Patching ^{black} on forehead, behind the eye, and on shoulder was present but not near as dark as markings of close-by semipalmated plovers. Bill and legs were dark and absent of color (again contrasted with Semipalmated Plovers)

And finally no doubt to feeding behavior; Plover style of steady walk or run then large dip, instead of constant dipping and probing.

Similar species and how eliminated: Bird was near (25 ft) from two Semipalmated Plovers thus giving easy contrast. Semipalmateds were much richer brown and had full extension of ring on Neck (lower).

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: full sunlight, Bird was seen at roughly 30ft on ground and in flight from that position 7x35 Binoculars, and by eye.

Previous experience with this and similar species: watched extensively on breeding grounds in Cheyenne Bottoms in Kansas. Also found nest.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Birds of North America (National Geographic Guide) for wing bar check at second identification.

How long before field notes made? 5 minutes after and during observation

How long before this form completed? 5 1/2 hrs.