

Mountain Plover

9 Jul 1986

Colo Ponds, Story Co., IA

*Zaletel, *****

IBL 56:116; 57:77; 59:76, Zaletel 1987

Record Number: 86-04

Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATIONS

Hank Zaletel, 9-10 July

Jim Dinsmore, 9-10 July

Mark Proescholdt, 9 July

Thomas H. Kent, 10 July

Jim Fuller, 10 July

Robert K. Myers, 10 July

Francis L. Moore, 10 July

Tom Staudt, 10 July

Paul Martsching, 10 July

OUTSIDE REVIEW AND LETTERS

Thomas H. Kent to Don Roberson, 19 April 1988

Don [Roberson] to [Tom Kent], undated

Thomas H. Kent to Don Roberson, 2 May 1988

Don Roberson to Thomas Kent, 9 June 1988

Don Roberson, Review of record

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 56:116

Zaletel, H. 1987. Mountain Plover in Story County. IBL 57:25.

Records Committee: IBL 57:77, 59:76

VOTE: 6-II, 1-no vote

II, The nine documentations of this bird are remarkably consistent except for one feature. Six describe the legs as "dark", two call them "gray", one says the legs are "very light colored"! This only shows the usual subjectivity of leg color in shorebird descriptions. This species seems highly unlikely in Iowa in mid-July. IOWA BIRDS lists four vagrant records for the Midwest in Missouri, Arkansas (Dec), Minnesota (May), and Iowa (Mar). I suppose this bird was lured here by its association with a persuasive Lesser Golden Plover. The descriptions suggest that this was a bird between alternate and basic plumage. The alternate features are the dark unstreaked crown, dark loreal line, and relatively plain back. Most of the observers went out of their way to mention that there was no paler edging to the back feathers. This would be more typical of alternate rather than juvenile or basic. One observer (Moore) did say there was very light (hardly noticeable) feather edging to the tertials, scapulars, and wing coverts. However, the extensive brown on the breast (Dinsmore said "breast and belly back to legs about the same color as back or perhaps slightly lighter") is more typical of a basic plumage. None of the guides I examined showed such extensive brown on the breast, but this is probably not a problem. For me the correct identification was clinched by the features noted by Kent, Staudt, and Myers. They all mentioned a narrow white wing stripe. This is a feature not shown by Lesser Golden Plover, but usually exhibited by Mountain. Further, only Myers saw the white wing linings and axillars. This is important

as Black-bellied Plover has, of course, distinctive black axillars in all plumages and Lesser Golden has noticeably grayish or brownish underwings. Furthermore, Myers in particular made an accurate description of the upper tail of a Mountain with "tail appeared blackish at terminal end." One would not expect this in Lesser Golden Plover.

II, Although there is essentially no precedence for this species occurring in Iowa at this time, the descriptions are convincing. Three cheers for Bob Myers who saw the most important field mark (under wing) and gave the best analysis.

II, Unless an acceptable photo was taken and can be available for evaluation. Descriptions of bird do appear to eliminate all species except Mountain Plover. Myers comment on the wing linings and axillaries seem to clinch the I.D. Overall the documentations were well done and are consistent in their description of this bird.

II, I had questions about bird's size and posture. Books say mountain plover is smaller than a killdeer. This bird seemed about the same size. I believe other marks outweighed these questions.

II, No one consulted new Shorebird book--seems odd--was out in July. Some conflict in descriptions--some called back greyish-brown, or grey to slightly brown, or medium brown or plain light brown. Leg color should be lighter, more brown than described by most. Rump not white in Mountain. However no other bird is possible and conditions on 7/10 sounded poor.

No vote recorded, This record raises some interesting questions in my mind. While the description appears to fit Mt. Plover, I have these questions: (1) Most important. Why were these birds here at a record early date for Lesser Golden-Plover? No observer noted this early date, neither did any observer describe the Golden-Plovers in detail. Apparently there was a "juvenile" and a "breeding-plumage" adult present at different times. The date is incredibly early even for adults, let alone juveniles. It is unclear, but seems that the "Mt. Plover" was a basic-plumage adult, but the "tinges of buff" on breast might indicate a juvenile. I raise these questions: What about the possibility of fulva? Why not a Mongolian (Lesser Sand) Plover rather than Mt. Plover? Juveniles are indeed the most likely Lesser Golden-Plover inland in fall, but due to the rarity of Lesser Golden-Plover inland in fall (to say nothing about Mt. Plover) the likelihood of a very unusual species rises sharply. Because fulva Lesser G-Plover are more westerly in distribution, and vagrant Mongolian Plover occur in the same area as fulva in breeding season, couldn't this be a small band of Siberian vagrants? Did anyone pay critical attention to the Lesser G-Plovers? Are there any photos? (2) Some observers noted "dark" or "black" legs on the "Mt. Plover." One observer noted that legs showed lighter (e.g. gray) for Mt. Plover. In any case, the bird seemed to have dark or black legs. The size of the bird also was noted by some observers as being a little larger than they expected. These two points (size and dark legs) would favor Mongolian Plover. Otherwise, nothing in the descriptions would

rule out the possibility of Mongolian Plover. While this seems incredible, there have been other well-publicised Siberian strays in the central US in recent years. Could these birds in Iowa have been a disoriented band of E. Siberian shorebirds (Mongolian Plover and fulva Lesser Golden-Plovers) wandering south after having missed a breeding season or two? Nothing in the descriptions suggests that any of the birds were definitely juveniles rather than basic-plumaged (non-breeding adults).

II, Would I dare vote against this record? The second documentation is unreadable.

REVOTE (at meeting, 10 July 1988, after receiving outside opinion from Don Roberson): 6 NA

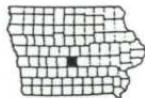
I did have several problems with the reports. The species accounts demonstrate how many early and late dates there were this season. Please be aware that a relatively common bird that occurs outside its normal time interval is a rare bird, and should be treated as such. Any bird that is way out of season should be fully documented, or it will not be entered into the record. Common birds that are reported among the three earliest or latest dates should be reported with some supporting evidence of identification. This need not be a full documentation, but it should be a brief description of the key field marks seen and heard. If an unusual sighting is presented without some evidence, the compiler cannot tell whether or not the observer made an error in entering the sighting (e.g., an incorrect date, or listing under the wrong species). If evidence is given, the compiler knows the observer was aware of the unusual nature of the record and probably took extra care in the identification.

Contributors should be clear about how many birds were seen on a given date. The best way to handle this is to state the number and date for the first, peak number, and the last seen. A report such as "2 to 10 were seen from 2 to 20 Oct" is difficult to cite. It is much better to say, "First: 4 on 3 Oct; peak: 10 on 15 Oct; last: 1 on 20 Oct." The latter data can be used.

For several years I have assisted Tom Kent with Field Reports. This time I thank him for helping compile part of the data and for writing part of the report. Suggestions for improving reports and corrections of factual information are welcome.

RED KNOT AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEVE DINSMORE

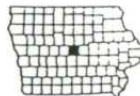


At 7:30 a.m. on 5 August 1986, while scanning the beach of the Oak Grove Recreation Area at Saylorville Reservoir, I noticed two medium-sized reddish sandpipers that were with several gulls and terns. At first I thought they were Sanderlings, but a closer view revealed that they were Red Knots. I watched the birds until 8:00 a.m. and noted the following marks. The birds were roughly the size of Killdeer, although they were shorter-legged and stockier. The throat, breast, and sides were reddish-brown. The lower belly and undertail coverts were white. The back was brown. The legs were short and yellow-green. The bill was dark, about as long as the head, and tapered to the tip. In flight, both birds showed a white rump and a white wing stripe that crossed the secondaries. These birds could not be relocated later in the morning; however, later that afternoon, Bob Myers and I found a single Red Knot at the Cherry Glen Recreation Area, about three-fourths of a mile south of Oak Grove. The bird was on a sand spit with a small flock of Sanderlings and peeps. It was similar to the birds at Oak Grove, except that there were patchy white areas on the breast, suggesting that the bird was an adult molting into basic plumage. The knot at Cherry Glen was still present early the next morning, but not later. Based on plumage differences, I believe that there were three birds. These records represent the sixth and seventh sightings of Red Knots in Iowa, with five of the records from the last three years. These are also only the second and third records of alternate-plumaged Red Knot in Iowa.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

MOUNTAIN PLOVER IN STORY COUNTY

HANK ZALETEL



Heavy rains fell in eastern Story County from 6 to 10 July 1986. The pre-dawn thunderstorms, fueled by southerly winds, filled the Colo Ponds, a favorite location for shorebirds (Zaletel, H. 1984. Finding water birds in eastern Story County. *Iowa Bird Life* 54:27-29). On the evening of 9 July, I left Colo at 6:30 p.m. on old highway 30 (E-41) and drove to the main ponds. The usual shorebird habitat was under water, so I continued east to the next road and turned north. After viewing several common shorebirds at the corner, I proceeded north for one-half mile to a recently ploughed field on the east side of the road where a small pond had formed due to poor drainage. On the north slope I spotted a bird that resembled a Lesser Golden-Plover, but it didn't look quite right. It had an unmarked back, similar in color to a Killdeer. Its throat, forehead, and eyebrow were white and unstreaked. Its eyes, lores, bill, and cap were black. The unstreaked breast was light, creamy-brown, while belly and vent were white. After viewing the bird for 25 minutes and comparing it with Killdeer and with Lesser Golden-Plover in breeding and non-breeding plumages, I concluded that it was a Mountain Plover. I returned home and called Jim Dinsmore and Mark Prescholdt. I met them back at the site, and they agreed with the identification.

That evening I notified a number of birders, many of whom assembled early the next morning bird. It was seen at about 7:45 a.m. for about one-half hour and remained all day. Additional features noted in the documentations from these observers included a thin, white wing stripe, white wing lining and axillars (seen by Bob Myers when the bird raised its wings), dark edge to the folded wing, dark tip to the tail, light-brown band across breast, and size larger than Killdeer and smaller than Lesser Golden-Plover. Observers emphasized the lack of markings on upperparts and underparts. The bird would disappear for up to one-half hour. Under constant observation, it was found to lie down and be perfectly camouflaged. It preferred wet waterways that led to the pond.

Tom Kent searched *Audubon Field Notes/American Birds* and bird books from various states and could find only two other records of Mountain Plover from the Midwest east of the Great Plains states: at Walton, Michigan, on 13 May 1976 (*American Birds* 30:845) and at Credit Island, Iowa, on 25 March 1964 (*Iowa Bird Life* 34:49).

715 West St., Colo, IA 50056



Black Scoters, Diamond Lake, 31 Oct 1986. Photo by Edwin Miller.

86-04

86-04

I.O.U. Records Committee
Thomas H. Kent, Secretary
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, IA 52240
April 19, 1988

Don Roberson
282 Grove Acre Ave.
Pacific Grove, CA 93950

Dear Don:

This is letter asking for help on a bird record. It can serve as an example of the kind of help that an organization of Records Committees might provide.

A record of a Mountain Plover documented by several observers on 9,10 Jul. 1986 was accepted by the IOU Records Committee. Two Mountain Plovers were also documented just north of the Iowa border in Minnesota at about the same time and were accepted by the Minnesota Records Committee. Terry Savaloja called me about the Iowa record because he was somewhat skeptical of the Minnesota sightings. Apparently he voted for the record, since Minnesota requires a unanimous vote for a new state record.

While birding in the Pawnee Grasslands in Colorado early last August, I drove my car close to a family group of Mountain Plovers and photographed a full-grown juvenile. My immediate reaction was that the Iowa Mountain Plover, which I had seen, must have been a Lesser Golden-Plover in very drab plumage. I convinced the IOU Records Committee that we should get further information and reopen this record.

Strong support for the hypothesis that the Iowa bird (and perhaps the Minnesota birds) were Lesser Golden-Plovers would be to demonstrate that golden plovers could migrate to the arctic and return early without molting from basic plumage. I have examined specimens at the University of Iowa, but the collection of golden plovers is too small to be useful. We do not have ready access to large collections to research this question.

The birds in question would have to be in full basic plumage if they were Lesser Golden-Plovers. They were in company with golden plovers in alternate plumage and there was a widespread influx of early shorebirds that summer. I always thought that the date and location were exceeding unlikely for Mountain Plover, and this feeling was enhanced by my finding a family group of Mountain Plovers on there nesting ground in early August.

With this preamble, could you suggest persons (names, addresses) who might be willing and able to research the basic plumage question and review our documentations?

I enclose a self-addressed envelope for your reply.

Thanks.

Tom Kent

over

Tom,

We regularly get wintering Mt. Plovers and migrant Am. Golden & Pacific Golden Plover out here. A number of Calif. birders would be qualified to review the documentation, including (but not limited to) Joe Morlan, Paul Lehman, Jon Dunn, Steve Bailey, Dick Erickson or myself. I'd be happy to look at it if that is the easiest.

Golden Plovers probably do not breed in their first summer, and basic-plumaged birds are often recorded through the first spring/summer. There is a summering record from central Calif. (a bird I saw) and May records of basic-plumaged Golden as far south as the Salton Sea (I have a copy of that photo); I believe there may be summering birds even farther south (e.g. South America) though I'd have to look into that. In any event, a basic-plumaged Golden Plover in summer in Iowa is certainly possible.

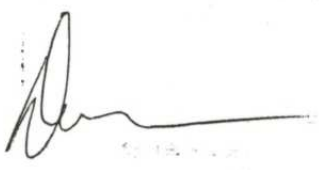
I have never thought the two were much of a problem; Mt. Plover is smaller, slimmer, has a more delicate bill and "big-eyed" look, has long yellow-to-yellow-brown legs (not gray to blue-gray to "dark" in both "species" of Golden), and has a much shorter primary projection than Am. Golden, and probably also shorter than Pac. Golden.

Differences, in size, shape, primary projection & leg color, should have been apparent if the birds were with breeding-plumaged Golden Plovers (of which species?).

In any event, now that you've got my curiosity up, I'd be happy to review both your documentation and that from Minnesota, if they would also like comments.

As to the Convention, sorry you're not going to make it, but I'd trade a trip to Arizona for Duluth most summers.... and I had nothing to do with how the workshop was written up by the ABA ... indeed I hadn't even noticed what it said until you brought it up!

Cheers,



8604

I.O.U. Records Committee
Thomas M. Kent, Secretary
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, IA 52240
May 2, 1988

Don Roberson
282 Grove Acre Ave.
Pacific Grove, CA 93950

Dear Don:

Thanks for your interest in looking at our Mountain Plover record.

Enclosed are 9 documentations. One is unreadable (it doesn't add anything, but illustrates common problem we see with worn out dot matrix printer ribbons). Also enclosed is a note on the bird from Iowa Bird Life.

In addition, I am enclosing a note from Iowa Bird Life on the only other report of Mountain Plover from Iowa. We would appreciate your opinion on this old record also.

I also copied the article from the Loon on the Minnesota record. I don't think you should render an opinion on this sighting--they have already obtained consultation and made a decision. Besides, one state should not evaluate another's records. I include the Minnesota article because their birds were seen about the same time and only a little over 100 miles north of the Iowa sighting.

Our bird occurred at a time when there was an unusual early movement of shorebirds in Iowa. Summering shorebirds are quite unusual in Iowa--if they can get here in spring they usually can continue on.

If you think our bird was a Lesser Golden-Plover, we would be most interested in finding evidence of Midwest or East Coast (golden plover is uncommon in the Midwest in fall--most go east) fall records of pure basic plumaged birds.

Thanks for your help and interest. You can keep the materials.

Sincerely,

asm

86-04

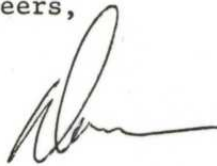
282 Grove Acre
Pacific Grove CA 93950
9 June 88

Thomas Kent
211 Richards St.
Iowa City IA 52240

Dear Tom,

Enclosed is my review of Iowa's second Mt. Plover. Alas, because the Minnesota record formed the only precedent for the date, I was forced tangentially to comment upon that bird as well. Thus I have sent copies of my analysis to Bob Janssen and Walter Graul. Thanks for the opportunity to review this interesting sighting... alas, I tend to get wordy and run on at great length (8 pages!), but at least it is comparatively thorough. You should see my 25 page paper on Barnacle Geese!

Cheers,



Don Roberson

REVIEW of a record of MOUNTAIN PLOVER 9-10 July 1986 in Story Co., Iowa

At the request of the Iowa Ornithological Union's Records Committee, I review herein the documentation submitted to them documenting this occurrence of a Mountain Plover Charadrius montanus. This record has already been accepted by them (Kent & Myers 1987). The published acceptance, however, contains the following comments:

"This identification was not easy, because basic-plumaged Lesser Golden Plover [Pluvialis dominica] can have a very similar appearance. The lack of edging to the back and wing feathers, light underwing, and dark tail band were crucial features in the identification. Although there is little precedent for the occurrence of this species as far east as Iowa or at this time of year, two Mountain Plovers were identified on 2 July 1986 in Minnesota about 15 miles north of the Iowa's border and directly north of Union Slough N.W.R." [Janssen 1986].

This represents the second record for Iowa; the first - one in full breeding plumage 25 Mar 1964 - having been reported by Peterson (1964).

The I.O.U. committee supplied copies of the Janssen, Kent & Myers, and Peterson articles, and copies of nine descriptions (no photos were taken). IOURC member comments during circulation were not supplied. One description was illegible due to a worn-out printer ribbon; I thus reviewed only the descriptions of J. Fuller, T. Kent, P. Martsching, F. Moore, R. Myers, M. Proescholdt, T. Standt, and H. Zaletel. Most were on standard I.O.U. report forms; Zaletel included a sketch of the head/breast region. I do not personally know any of these observers. I cannot comment upon their experience, expertise or ability. Presumably, since the record was accepted, they are well thought of locally.

All agree the bird lacked a black frontal bar and lores; it cannot have been an alternate-plumaged Mountain Plover. Likewise, it cannot have been in juvenal plumage because not only did it lack the scaly back and buffy breast, but Mountain Plovers should be in no position to wander as early as 9 July [Bent (1929) gives 105 egg dates 30 Apr-9 July; Graul (1975, 1977) states the fastest incubation is 28 days and earliest fledging 33 days after hatching; 61 days from the early egg date of 30 Apr is 30 June and it is clear most young have not even fledged by early July. The earliest fledgling would be expected to be very buffy. C.f. summary of breeding biology in Johnsgard 1981].

If it is a Mountain Plover, then, it must be a basic-plumaged bird. But the Kent & Myers article relates possible confusion with Lesser Golden-Plover (which were in the same field), a point strongly reiterated in the Janssen (1986) description of a Minnesota bird. I have a fair degree of field experience with basic-plumaged Mountain Plovers (which winter regularly in central California) and all plumages of Lesser Golden-Plover (which regularly migrate through my area). It is worth noting that Lesser Golden-Plover is considered

to be two species - American Golden P. dominica and Pacific Golden P. fulva (see Connors 1983) - and since only nominate dominica occurs east of the Rockies (A.O.U. 1983), we may restrict our consideration of that bird to basic-plumaged (all other plumages are much too bright) "American Golden-Plover".

How then does one separate basic-plumaged Mountain Plovers from basic-plumaged American Golden-Plovers. This question has never previously arisen in my mind. I consider the two rather different in shape/stance - Mountain being a smaller, long-legged, upright-standing, big-eyed bird uniformly-colored above; American Golden is bigger, bulkier, bigger-billed and more horizontal in stance with speckled upperparts and more conspicuous facial pattern. The eye of Mountain really stands out in the plain face, a feature I've not seen on any Golden. Mountain Plover has yellowish legs; American Golden has gray, bluish-gray to blackish-legs. In flight, Mountain shows a more conspicuous wingstripe, conspicuously white underwings and a white-fringed tail, whose distal half is black. American Golden has a more uniform flight pattern and an unmarked tail. The calls are also different. American Golden typically gives a mellow "tu-wee"; I am less familiar with the calls of Mountain, though my recollections are they are a much different piping note. Apparently piping whistles and rough notes are given on the breeding grounds, but the typical note on California wintering grounds is a harsh, low "krip" (Garrett 1983; incidentally, Kimball Garrett has amongst the finest ears in the bird world - some have called them "legendary").

These impressions were confirmed in the best literature available: Hayman, Marchant & Prater (1986), Prater, Marchant & Vuorinen (1977) and Pym (1982). In addition, good photos of Mountain (alas in alternate and/or juvenal plumage) in Farrand (1983), Terres (1980 - same photo), and Wetmore (1965) show well the sleek, long-legged and big-eyed look and upright stance, much more similar to Pacific Golden-Plover than to American Golden-Plover (see photos in Pym 1982, 1984). Photos of basic-plumaged birds are more difficult to review, but I do have in my collection a nice January Mountain Plover in Panoche Valley, California (by Steve Wilson) and a 19 Apr molting basic dominica (Goleta CA; Paul Lehman) and a worn basic apparent fulva from early May (Salton Sea CA; also Lehman). A group of Golden Plovers (fulva?) mostly in basic plumage (some in molt; some quite worn) by These Daniels appears in color in Wetmore (1965). These photos show strikingly different birds. The Mountains are very plain with huge eyes in a plain face, upright in stance and with prominently pale yellow-tan legs. The Goldenes are bulkier birds with very prominent superciliums (esp. behind the eye) and decidedly dark legs (gray to blue-gray, looking black at a distance; Pym 1982, Hayman et al 1986).

During a recent visit to the American Museum of Natural History in New York (courtesy of the Chapman Fund), I did briefly compare several trays of Mountain Plovers with those of American Golden. In skins, the size difference is striking - Mountain Plover is decidedly smaller and size differences between the two in the field should be very apparent. I was further impressed by the very dainty, thin bill of Mountain Plover compared to be thicker bill of American Golden. Structural and size differences are so great that there is little overlap in any measurement (Hayman et al 1986). Comparison to Killdeer Charadrius vociferus should

provide a good evaluation, with Mountain being a smaller bird but with longer legs and American Golden averaging larger than Killdeer.

Reference to Hayman et al (1986) suggested additional differences. American Golden is particularly long-winged, with the wings extending well beyond the tail at rest and with a very long primary projection (a key difference from Pacific Golden), but in flight the legs should not project beyond the end of the tail. In contrast, Mountain Plover has a wing that extends to or just beyond the tip of the tail, with short primary projection (like Pacific Golden) but is long-legged, so that the feet extend beyond the tip of the tail in flight.

Another important difference found in the literature is the fact that golden-plovers have a distinct first-summer plumage (at 1 year old); they do not attain breeding plumage until the second year (Hayman et al 1986, Pym 1982, Prater et al 1982) thus looking like basic-plumaged birds through the first summer except for variably black patches or spots below and scattered alternate feathers above. American Golden-Plovers in first-summer are much whiter below than Pacific Golden and "usually gain little or no black on underparts" (Hayman et al 1986). In contrast, Mountain Plovers attain breeding plumage in their first summer, retaining only a few juvenile inner coverts (Prater et al 1977). Thus we could expect many "basic-plumaged" golden-plovers in July (most first-summer birds) but essentially no Mountain Plovers in basic plumage in early July, before pre-basic molt. Grauer made this same point ("I have not seen an adult . . . that, by July, has completely lost the black crown patch") in his letter published in Janssen (1986). This corresponds well with the fact that non-breeding American Golden-Plovers regularly summer well south of the breeding range (to northern South America; A.O.U. 1983) whilst Mountain Plover is apparently unknown away from the breeding range in summer (A.O.U. 1983, DeSante & Pyle 1986).

Having in mind these characters, I turn to the descriptions, considering the important characters outlined above:

SIZE: "size of Lesser Golden" (Zaletal), "larger than Killdeer... same size as...Golden" (Proescholdt), "slightly smaller than Lesser Golden" (Fuller), "slightly smaller than Golden . . . between Killdeer and Golden, closer to Golden" (Kent), "about same size as Killdeer" (Myers), "somewhat smaller than Golden" (Moore), "perhaps a bit smaller...than Golden" (Martsching).

ANALYSIS: All agree it was Killdeer to Golden Plover in size; strongly favors Golden, since Mountain should be decidedly smaller than Golden and usually smaller than Killdeer.

SHAPE/BILL/LEG LENGTH: "chunkier than Killdeer" (Kent), "chunky shape" (Standt), "squatty" (Moore), "plover-type beak" (Martsching).

ANALYSIS: No one noticed any of the very apparent shape differences; no attempt was made to evaluate primary projection, wing/tail ratios, exact bill shape, or feet/tail proportions in flight (probably impossible at the distances involved). Most emphasize the similarity to Golden; "chunky" much better describes Golden. Strongly favors this having been an American Golden.

LEG COLOR: "gray" (Zaletel), "dark" (Proescholdt), "dark" (Fuller), "dark" - could be muddy? (Kent), "hard to note but appeared dark" (Myers), "gray" (Moore), "dark" (Standt), "very light colored" (Martsching).

ANALYSIS: All but Martsching describe dark to gray legs, absolutely typical for Golden-Plover and outside the known range of Mountain's "pale brown to brownish-yellow" (Hayman et al 1986). Basic-plumaged Mountains are strikingly pale-legged, basically yellowish (photos). Gray legs were described both days, so I give little credence to the suggestion that they may have been muddy. First, since I've never seen a Mountain Plover in water or mud because they so much prefer dry fields, I can't imagine one ever wading into water or mud. Further, it was rainy both days and certainly the mud would have washed off at some point. Martsching's description (light-colored - what does that mean?) is so contradictory to the others (who were there at the same time) that I suspect it was written in error. Leg color alone so strongly favors Golden that Mountain can basically be ruled out.

FACIAL/HEAD PATTERN: Basically everyone agrees the bird had a distinctly dark cap, white forecrown and broad white supercilium, esp. behind the eye.

ANALYSIS: This well describes the typical facial pattern of Golden, and worn birds are particularly dark-capped (Apr & May photos from CA). In contrast, Mountain is never dark-capped in basic plumage and has a very plain face which contrasts with the big dark eye. Again, these features alone basically serve to rule out Mountain. The white throat/grey breast pattern described by some is typical for Golden, atypical for Mountain

WING/TAIL PATTERN: Only Myers & Standt describe a flight pattern ("thin white stripe running length of wing") and neither noted the tail pattern. The "dark terminal band" to tail was seen only while the bird was sitting (by Moore); this same observer saw (at 50-75 yards) "light feather edgings" to tertials, scapulars and coverts (suggesting juv. plumage? Not possible) and contradicted by Martsching and others. Martsching also apparently contradicts the tail pattern ("dark at least on the top side"), noting no subterminal pattern. Only Myers describes "white wing linings & axillaries", and not from flight, but from lifted wings on ground at the same 50-75 yards (or 75-100 yards estimate by Kent).

ANALYSIS: Mountain Plover has striking wingstripe, contrasting with very dark secondaries. The descriptions favor Golden's less noticeable wingstripe. Tail pattern and underwing coverts do strongly favor Mountain, though the tail pattern as described lacks the white-to-grayish outer retrices and pale tip of Mountain. However, only single observers among

the throng present noted these features; the weather was uniformly described as poor, with variable rain; and the distance to the bird was great. I would place little emphasis on these points, particularly since they were not confirmed by others and neither the tail or underwing pattern was noted in flight. In my opinion, these points are ambiguous and add nothing to the record; certainly, considering the conditions in which they arose, they do not deserve the emphasis placed on them in the Kent & Myers report of the I.O.U.R.C. I evaluate these features as "neutral".

Incidentally, I would evaluate the dark edge of wing, seen on the ground contrasting with duller coverts, to be more indicative of Golden than Mountain (supported by photos).

BACK COLOR: Uniformly described by all as unmarked brown, "about the color of Killdeer" (Zaletel). It appears this was considered to be the most important character by all the observers, and by the I.O.U.R.C.

ANALYSIS: Of course this feature favors Mountain, though the color described is much too dark (should be sandy-brown, decidedly paler than Killdeer). But it does not eliminate Golden Plover. First, the bird was at a far distance (50-100 yards) in poor light under bad weather, making any exact determination of exact pattern difficult. Furthermore, Golden Plover has a basic-like first summer plumage and may show no black below. The white spots at the edges of the back feathers are prone to wear; a worn bird could appear plain-backed at this distance. This was very demonstrably apparent in one *P. dominica* specimen at AMNH (20 Apr 1913 Brownsville TX), whose old back feathers were worn evenly brown, but new scattered feathers were being molted in. In the field, a bird not molting in new feathers, but wearing an old plumage, could look evenly brown-backed at a distance (see Lehman's photos and esp. the published Daniels photo cited above, which shows a couple very plain-backed birds).

This analysis leads me to conclude the bird was not a Mountain Plover. I do not believe one must say absolutely what a bird was to reject the record (some descriptions can never be labelled) but I strongly favor the suggestion it was an American Golden-Plover.

A* prefatory analysis of distribution also favors this conclusion. Vagrant Mountain Plovers have occurred in fall migration as juvenals (e.g. coastal records in WA to CA; specimen from Chatham MA taken 28 Oct 1916) and ended up as winter vagrants to the southeast in Florida (specimens 1 Dec 1870 Key West and 17 Dec 1927 Daytona Beach) and Alabama (6 Jan 1973 Magnolia Springs; Chandler 1974). Considering the strong eastward angle of spring migration, a spring overshoot in breeding plumage might also be expected. The first Iowa record (Peterson 1964) is of such a bird in late March - the expected time frame (it is unfortunate the published details say no more than "full breeding plumage").

I can conjure no theory to support the occurrence of a basic-plumaged

Mountain Plover ~~bird~~ in early July. One prior such report - in Minnesota (Janssen 1986) - is almost surely not a Mountain Plover based on the published description of its call (the report also suffers from many of the same problems associated with this one). Two specimens were said to have been taken in late July 1901 at St. James I., Florida by R.W. Williams but were accidentally destroyed (Sprunt 1954) - there are no published details and I consider the record best ignored. In any event, the birds reported were 20 July-1 Aug (Bent 1929) on a date when migration might be occurring (as contrasted with early July).

In contrast, American Golden-Plovers do not normally breed in their first summer and often summer south of the breeding range, to northern South America (A.O.U. 1983). I observed one such summering bird (but not identified to race) at Pescadero, San Mateo Co., Calif. on 21 June 1980. My field notes describe a basic-plumaged bird washed with golden-brown and spotted upperparts (but no black on underparts). Clearly this bird was not as worn as it appears the Iowa/Minnesota birds were. Alas, most texts do not give the plumage/age of summer plover records and specific summering records in the Midwest have not been located. However, I do note that Connors (1983) states there is some movement of failed and successful nesters around the breeding grounds in early July. Furthermore, the earliest migrant adults reach California by early July. It is easy to hypothesize that a first summer bird, now quite worn, that had summered at or near the breeding grounds, joined a migrant flock of plovers and reached Iowa by early July.

Given my conclusion that the bird was not a Mountain Plover, one might ask how such an event could occur. It seems apparent to me that the poor weather and fair distance to the bird were contributing factors. Equally important may have been the over-reliance on standard field guides, which I consider of little or no value in identifying difficult vagrants. It appears only one observer (Myers) reviewed additional literature (at least he is the only one to state so) and the review did not appear to consider photographs or the best literature available. No one appears to have considered the question of molt/wear at all (of course it is possible these were considered during IOURC review, comments from which I have not seen). Finally, the entire episode appears to have suffered from "mass illusion/hysteria", a subject I know only much too well having been part of the gullible crowd in Dec 1978 that misidentified California's first Eurasian Skylark as our first "Smith's Longspur"! Such may happen to even the best observers (including virtually all of Calif's "big names") when they have little to no experience with the species in question. There is no shame in such an occurrence as long as the record is eventually made clean - here one of the observers became suspicious when he gained experience on the breeding grounds with real Mountain Plovers. Mistakes may be further exacerbated when a museum or scientific "expert" is used, who may have little or no experience with alternative species, may be biased against sight records, or may be ill-trained to review photos and descriptions. This, too, happened in California, when an albatross photo was proclaimed a "Short-tailed" by a world renowned museum man and was

accepted as such by the Calif. Bird Records Committee (see W. Birds 11:47-48 & 10:171), but was rather easily proved not to be that species when reviewed by experienced sea-birders and in comparison to photos of actual similar-aged Short-taileds (see Roberson 1980, W. Birds 17:71). In that case it was a pleasure for the CBRC to re-evaluate the record and unanimously reject it. It appears a similar situation may account for the Minnesota record (see Janssen 1986), relying (surprisingly) upon a fairly unsupportive review by Walter Graul, who has done much on the breeding biology and status of Mountain Plover (Graul 1973, 1975, Graul & Webster 1976) but perhaps nothing on golden-plovers or plover identification. I am pleased to be able to add something to the review of this interesting record.

-Don Roberson
282 Grove Acre Ave.
Pacific Grove CA 93950

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cc: Thomas Kent, I.O.U.R.C.

Robert Janssen

Walter Graul

86-04

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: Mountain Plover

DATE SEEN: 9 July 1986

SITE OF OBSERVATION: Colo Ponds, Story Co.

OBSERVERS: Hank Zaletel, m.ob.

DATE OF REVIEW: 9-1-86

METHOD OF REVIEW: Vote via mail

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: II

COMMENTS: Vote: 6-II, 1-no vote

The Records Committee accepted this record on the basis of nine documentations. The key marks for the identification were the unspotted brownish back, white wing linings, and the tail being tipped with black. The one "no vote" was concerned with the possibility that perhaps an even more exotic vagrant such as Mongolian Plover should have been considered.

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

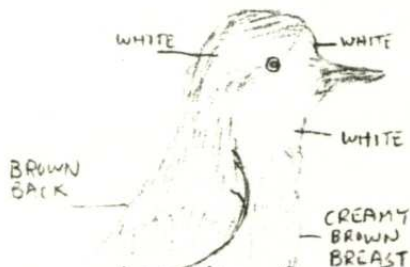
Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

Mountain Plover--1 observed

Seen: 6:30-6:55 PM July 9, 1986
6:45-7:15 PM July 10, 1986

Located: 3 miles east of Colo, County
Road E-41, ½ mile north,
section 1 T83N R21W, Story
County.

Description of bird: The bird was the approximate size of a nearby Lesser Golden Plover. The bird had a dark cap, dark eye, dark bill and gray legs. White above eye and above bill. The throat was white and unstreaked. Neck and back were brown, about the same color as a Killdeer. It was unmarked and did not have a scaly appearance. The breast was the same color as the back and was unstreaked. Underbelly and under tail were white.



Location--General--Recently plowed field with several pothole ponds
Specific--The bird stayed in the waterways that led to the ponds. These areas were wet and contained no vegetation.

Birds eliminated by above description:

Golden and Black-bellied plovers have gray-white and brown-gold scaly backs, this bird's back was brown and was unmarked. These two plovers have streaked throats which this bird did not have. These two plovers have streaked breasts which this bird did not have. The white above the eye of this bird was clear and contained no streaking as does the Black-bellied Plover. The bird associated with Golden Plovers in breeding plumage and one that was not so that comparison could be made on the spot for the two plumages

Behavior:

The bird would associate with the other plovers and would move up and down the waterway. On some occasions the bird would disappear from sight and only after diligent search would the bird be found laying down.

The bird was viewed with the sun at our backs through a 25 x Bushnell Spacemaster scope. It was seen by Jim Dinsmore and Mark Proescholdt on the first evening and many others the next day. The National Geographic field guide was used for preliminary consultation.

This documentation was written July 17, 1986 from notes taken at the time of the sightings.

Hank Zaletel
715 West St.
Colo, Iowa 50056

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Mountain Plover

How Many? one

Location? Colo Ponds, Story County

Habitat? plowed field along flooded area of field

Date? 9 and 10 July 1986

Time? 7:45-8:00 p.m., also 7:30-8:00 a.m.

Observers Name and address: Jim Dinsmore, Ames

Others who saw bird: Hank Zalelei, Mark Proescholdt (7 July); Tom Kent, Francis Moore, Bob Myers, Jim Fuller, Tom Skudt, Eugene and Eloise Armstrong (10th)

Description of birds:

Shorebird, obviously plover by shape and bill. size about the same size or slightly smaller than a Killdeer or Lesser Golden Plover, compared directly with both in the field.

Bill, legs and eyes all dark

Back appeared to be a uniform brownish gray in color, no noticeable flecks, speckling or other marks on it, if looked hard, could see slightly lighter color to the ends of some feathers on the back but not noticeably obvious

Undersides—breast and belly back to legs were a uniform brown color, about the same as the back or perhaps slightly lighter, from legs back to base of tail was white

Crown was dark brown; when seen well, clearly darker than the brown found elsewhere on bird

Forehead distinctly white, lores white and a white stripe continuing back above the eye and curving slightly down behind the eye, almost comma shaped, there did appear to be a bit of brown that went from eye up to crown, separating white eye stripe from the forehead dark line through eye

Chin region white and going down in V to meet the brown on the breast Did not see in flight to get wing markings, did not note tail color

Similar species and how eliminated: By size, eliminates all except Killdeer, golden, black-bellied, and mountain plovers lack of belly band eliminates killdeer

The combination of no speckling on back, no streaking on breast, white color on the underside behind the legs and the markings on the head eliminate the other two plovers. None possess this combination of colors.

The bird had more extensive brown on the undersides than any plates I can find but the general pattern otherwise comes close to the Robbins for a bird in basic plumage. The crown was solid rather than streaked, suggesting it may not have molted in that area yet

Viewing conditions and equipment: partly cloudy on 9th, overcast on 10th, used 20 power scope both days

Previous experience with species: none

References consulted: Robbins, Natl. Geographic Guide, Johnsgard's shorebirds of the world

How long before field notes were made? made in field

How long before this form was completed? 20 hours

What species? Mountain Plover How many? 1Location? Colo Ponds - (Story Co.)Type of habitat? Recently plowed field surrounding small pondWhen? date(s): July 9, 1986 time: 7:50 p.m. to 8:50 p.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Hank Zaletel, Jim Dinsmoreothers before or after you: Bob Myers, Francis Moore, Steve Dinsmore, Armstrongs, many others

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.

A bird that was definitely a Plover was in a freshly plowed field. It had a dark brown cap and a striking white line over its eye that curved downwards behind its ear area. It had an unscaled, unstreaked brown back. It had quite a brownish, unstreaked breast and flanks which were accented by a distinctive white throat. It had dark eyes and dark legs. It was white from the underside from its tail to at least its legs area. I saw it from 40 yards - 60 yards away at different times. Occasionally, it would run around a lot and move quite a distance from where it had been. It was larger than a Killdeer and a Short-billed Dowitcher and about the same size as a breeding-plumage Golden Plover that was right beside it on several occasions.

Similar species and how eliminated: A winter-plumage Black-bellied Plover is grayer and has streaked, scaled back and sides. A winter-plumage Golden Plover has a streaked, scaled back and sides which are a darker brownish color.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Good visibility - partly clear overhead and cloudy in the west. Sunlight behind me. Distances estimated. 8x30 Binoculars and 22x Scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen 1-2 mt. Plover in Colorado and numerous basic plumage Golden + Bl.-bellied Plover

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Natl. Geog. Birds of N. America, Robbins' Birds of N. America, and Pough (Audubon guide - E.+C. Birds of N. America)

How long before field notes made? while viewing this form completed? July 25, 1986

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Mountain Plover (1), 10 July 1986, Colo Ponds, Story Co, IA
 Observer: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52240
 Other observers: Before: Hank Zaletel, Mark Proescholdt, Jim
 Dinsmore.

With: Tom Staudt, Francis Moore, Bob Myers, Jim Fuller, Jim
 Dinsmore, Eugene and Eloise Armstrong.

Time: 7:40 to 8:30 a.m.

Habitat: farmland with glacial ponds, recently plowed area with
 thin grass.

Description: The bird was found last night. We arrived at 6:00
 a.m. in moderate rain with poor visibility. We found a Lesser
 Golden-Plover in breeding plumage and another plover with it.
 Later when the rain subsided to a sprinkle, we found both birds
 in the field at about 100 yards. The bird we identified as a
 Mountain Plover had the following features according to my notes
 taken at 7:50 a.m.: slightly smaller than Golden-Plover, all
 plain--no feather edging, gray to slightly brown back and top of
 head, dark top to tail, white rump and lower breast, light
 gray-brown across breast, white throat, white eye line, prominent
 white lores (forehead), in flight a faint line in secondaries,
 otherwise wings and tail plain. After viewing field guides, at
 8:10 the following additions were made: cap darker than back
 (bird seen head on looking down), eye and legs dark, darker edge
 to folded wing, size between Golden-Plover and Killdeer, closer
 to Golden-Plover. The bird appeared chunkier than the killdeers
 in the same field, not necessarily shorter. The posture was quite
 similar to the Golden-Plover and it stayed with this bird when
 feeding and flying.

Song: not heard.

Behavior: Running, feeding, flying like typical plover.

Conditions: Heavy overcast with variable rain; about 75-100
 yards; 20 x scope and Celestron scope (?60 x).

Similar species: At first I thought the bird might be a basic
 plumage Golden-Plover, but excellent looks with the Celestron
 convinced me that there was no edging to any of the feathering as
 would be expected with Golden-Plover in any plumage. The extensive
 gray across the breast suggests a basic-plumage bird. The legs
 were dark, but the light was dark and the bird was in a muddy
 field. The bird did not stand up in an erect posture like the
 Colorado birds I have seen before. We did not observe the color
 of the underwing linings. All other features fit Mountain Plover.
 Agreement: As far as I know, all agreed.

Previous experience: I have seen this species once in Colorado.

References/time used: Looked at National Geographic guide before,
 during and after observation.

Time of notes/typed: during observation/10 hours.

What species? MOUNTAIN PLOVER How many? 1Location? STORY COUNTY - 3 MILES EAST, 1/2 MI. N. OF COLOType of habitat? FLOODED PLOWED FIELDWhen? date(s): 7/10/86 time: 7:30AM to 7:50 AMWho? your name and address: JIM FULLER, 6 LONGVIEW KNOLL, IOWA CITY, IOWA, 52240others with you: MOBothers before or after you: MOB

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.

I SAW THE BIRD IN RATHER POOR LIGHT FOR APPROXIMATELY 20 MINUTES. THE FOLLOWING ARE THE FEATURES NOTICED:

- (1) SHAPE - BODY AND BILL - PLOVER
- (2) SIZE - SLIGHTLY SMALLER THAN LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER NEARBY
1/3 - 1/4 LARGER THAN PECTORAL SANDPIPER NEARBY.
- (3) WHITE LINE ABOVE EYE.
- (4) WHITE THROAT
- (5) BROWN CROWN & BACK WITH CROWN DARKER. BACK HAD NO SPECKLING OR FEATHER EDGINGS VISIBLE.
- (6) DARK LINE AT BASE OF BROWN WING.
- (7) DARKER WASH ON BREAST
- (8) DARK LEGS

BASIC PLUMAGE

Similar species and how eliminated: BLACK BELLED PLOVER
LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER - NO SPECKLING ON BACK.

WASH ON BREAST NOT FOUND ON THESE BIRDS

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

OVERCAST - LIGHT RAIN. BINOCULARS - 9X36 AND 20X SCOPE

Previous experience with species and similar ones: NONE

References and persons consulted before writing description: PETERSON, NATL GLOB;

How long before field notes made? IMMED this form completed? 12 HOURS

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

What species? Mountain Plover - Charadrius montanus How many? 1Location? Colo Ponds - Story County, Ia.Type of habitat? Plowed field with pool of standing waterWhen? date(s): July 10, 1986 time: 7:45 A.M. to 8:15 A.M.Who? your name and address: Robert K. Myers, R.R. 2, Box 153, Perry, Iowa 50220 Sim Dinsmoreothers with you: Francis Moore, Tom Kent, Tom Staudt, Jim Fuller, Gene + Elise Armstrongothers before or after you: Hank Zaletal,

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.

A Plover-like bird about same size as killdeer this bird was basically a flat medium brown color. The head showed a darker brown cap and a ^{small} white area on forehead between bill + cap and a very obvious white stripe above the eye that slightly curled behind the eye. Cheek area was also white. Throat was white. Eye appeared large and dark. Bill was dark. Breast was light brown - little lighter color than back. Med. brown back + rump had no white spots or streaks. Tail appeared dark (blackish) ^{at least} at the terminal end. Flanks were brown with hint of buffy color. Top of wings was med. brown with a definite thin white stripe running length of wing - seen in flight - Wing linings + axillars were white (bird raised wings when at rest). Undertail coverts + posterior abdomen were white (no black marks present). Primaries (leading edge of wing) was darker brown as seen when bird was sitting with wings folded. Leg color was hard to note but appeared dark.

Bird was apparently in basic plumage - possibly a non-breeding bird in its second summer that remained in basic plumage all year.

9. White throat 10. White Southhead 11. overall brown (not grayish) color

Similar species and how eliminated: A golden plover in some weird plumage may be similar. The following observed marks would be present on mountain plover and not on golden.
 1. no white spots on brown back 2. white wing stripe 3. brownish (unstreaked) breast 4. white eyeline
 5. dark cap 6. whitish wing lining + axillars 7. blackish tail 8. white (no black) in posterior underside
 Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? I don't think so.

I was a little concerned with size - Books say bird should be slightly smaller than killdeer and this bird was as big as killdeer - just slightly smaller than golden plover also present.

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
 Rainy day - light not real good but OK, about 100 yd (guess) - we used 20x, 25x and 33x scopes.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Much experience with golden plover but none with mountain

References and persons consulted before writing description: see back of page

How long before field notes made? 2 hr. this form completed? 1 day

References Used -

86-04

1. Birds of North America - Nat. Geographic Society
2. Guide to the Identification & Ageing of Holarctic Birds - Prater
3. Audubon Society Master Guide
4. Field Guide to Western Birds - Peterson
5. Plovers, Sandpipers & Snipes of the World - Johnson
6. Birds of North America - Robbins

What species? Mountain Plover (Charadrius montanus) How many? 1Location? 2 mi. E. of Colo on the Story Co. border.Type of habitat? Plowed/disked field near pool of waterWhen? date(s): July 10, 1986 time: 7:50 am. to 8:15 am.Who? your name and address: Francis L. Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703others with you: Tom Kent, Tom Staudt, Jim Fuller, Eugene + Eloise Armstrong, Bob Myers,others before or after you: Hank Zaletel, Steve Dinsmore
Jim Dinsmore

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.

This bird was found by Hank Zaletel and was in the company of an Alternate plumaged Lesser Golden Plover. The bird was somewhat smaller than the L. Golden Plover. but had similar actions. The legs and feet were ~~black~~ gray. It was white on the under tail coverts into the lower belly. It was gray to brownish on the sides of the breast. The bird had an overall ~~buff~~ - weak buff to gray wash. It was grayish brown on the back. The head had a tri colored effect; white above and below the bill and into the loreal area, blackish just in front of the eye and around the eye area and dark grayish brown on the top of the head, a little darker than the back. The throat was clear and white colored. The tail had a dark terminal band as it was seen sitting. As the bird walked around a dark leading edge could be seen on the wing. The bird was also lighter grayish colored down the middle of the breast than on the sides. There was very light (hardly noticable) feather edging on the tertials, scapulars and wing coverts. This bird also had a little more squatty appearance. It was not seen in flight well and no voice was heard.

Similar species and how eliminated: L. Golden Plover has a more speckled effect on the tertials, scapulars and wing coverts because of more feather edging giving them a more speckled effect. Golden also has darker throat

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? _____

If yes, explain: Everyone was hesitant at first but limited identification to Mountain Plover through process of elimination and combination of field marks.

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

Raining at first, then, seen in bright sunlight at approx. 50-75 yds at closest. using 10x40 binoculars, 20x Bushnell telescope and 33X Celestron C90 telescope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen lots of basic plumage Lesser Golden Plover and quite a few basic plumage Black-bellied Plover; no experience with Mountain Plover.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Tom Kent, Tom Staudt, Armstrongs, Jim Dinsmore. discussion after field notes made.

How long before field notes made? 15 min. this form completed? 3 days

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

What species? Mountain Plover How many? 1Location? Colo ponds story co.Type of habitat? flooded plowed farm fieldWhen? date(s): Thurs. July 10 1986 time: 7:50 am to 8:20 amWho? your name and address: TOM STAUDT 517 Dearborn Iowa cityothers with you: Jim Dinsmore, Jim Fuller, Tom Kent, Bob Myers, Francis Moore, Armstrongsothers before or after you: Jim Dinsmore

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.

Chunky shape, drab overall color.

White throat, forehead, eyebrow strip that curled down behind the eye.

Eye very dark.

Crown a dark gray, darker than any other part of the bird.

Back, wings, and rump an unflecked gray-brown. Very little if any mottling.

Black tail feathers

Breast to mid-belly a pale gray, lighter in center with some hints of buff.

Flanks white, undertail coverts white. Legs dark, bill black.

A thin white wing strip was noted in flight.

Similar species and how eliminated: black-bellied juvenile and basic plumage have mottled upperparts white rump and banded tail.

Golden plover has mottled back & rump and no wing strip

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification?

Initially the presence of this bird with an alternate plumage Golden plover suggested

If yes, explain: some problems but the overall blandness of the upperparts and the head markings indicate a Mountain Plover.

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

overcast fair 19 gray. 100-120 yds EST 20X & 35X scopes

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

none with this species. Numerous sightings of various plumaged Golden Plovers

References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic Birds of N. America

How long before field notes made? immediately after observation this form completed? same day.

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

86-04

What species? Mountain Plover How many? oneLocation? Colo pot holes - about 3 miles east of Colo, Iowa (Story County)Type of habitat? a fairly recently worked field with a broad deep water way thru it.When? date(s): 10 July 1986 time: 6:15 to 7 pm CDSTWho? your name and address: Paul Martsching 11 20 Marston Ames, Iowa 50010others with you: Cal & Bernie Knight, Hank Zaletel & othersothers before or after you: Many - I think it was first seen by Hank Zaletel.

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.

Plover shape - perhaps a bit smaller than the adult and the juvenel Lesser Golden Plovers that were more or less associated with it. Plover type beak.

Head: very dark crown with white over beak and going back over the eyes.

Back plain lite-medium brown with no markings. wings plain medium brown with no obvious feather edgings, longer wing feathers darker. tail dark. throat ^{at least on top side} white, belly white, undertail coverts white, breast with pale brownish wash. legs very light colored.

Similar species and how eliminated: To some extent, resembled the juvenel Lesser Golden Plover that was sometimes very close to it. However the head markings on the Golden Plover were very indistinct and it also had definite streaks on its breast. It also had dark legs ^{"speckled" back.}

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: sun to west, bird to my east. was partly cloudy - tho several times seen with sun shining.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: never seen before

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? immediately this form completed? next day

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