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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

RED KNOT

Calidris canutus

Location: Lake Holbrook; Rocky Ford area; Otero County, Colorado

Date: September 27, 1992

Setting:

I scanned the east shore of Holbrook Reservoir about 11:00 on a beautiful clear warm fall day. I first observed the Red Knot from about 250 yards. I hiked to the bird and observed it from about 11:05 a.m. until 11:30. I stood as close as 30 yards and watched it through my Kowa scope at 20-40X. There were about 8 other shorebirds, including Baird's Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitcher and Sanderlings for direct comparison of size, shape and color. The Red Knot fed along the shore, wading out several feet, feeding further out than other, smaller peeps. It waded in water as deep as its "knee" and fed by probing under the water with submerged bill.

Description: (From my field notes)

In shape the bird was short-necked, with a rather flat crown, sloping gently into the top of the bill. Roughly twice the bulk of Baird's Sandpiper. About size (length) of Long-billed Dowitcher but more slender, less bulky and longer-winged. Wings extend about 1/4-1/2" beyond tail. Bird is 10" long. Legs medium-long, dull yellowish-green. Bird wades further out than other peeps. Bill longish and thick (for a peep) and about one-half the length of the Long-billed Dowitcher bill. Bill is black, thick-based, straight and tapered to a dull point.

Above, bird is dull, pale grey. Each scapular narrowly bordered by a thin blackish subterminal line, then terminally in white. Folded primaries blackish. Tertiaries patterned as scapulars. Breast and underparts and foreparts white with faded orange wash. At a distance the bird appears dull buffy (sandy grey), but close up has faint orange tones on the breast and belly. Sides of breast obscurely marked with indistinct streaks. Lower flanks unstreaked. Undertail coverts pure white. Crown and forehead finely streaked brownish-grey. Dull white superciliary. Obscure darker eyeline. Lower cheek with orange tones.

In flight, the bird was reminiscent of a Lesser Golden Plover. Rump virtually same color as back and tail, with sides of upper tail barred black and white (this wavy barring was visible in the standing bird but showed little contrast in flight). The wing in flight was distinctive, with blackish primaries, a noticeably blackish bend of wing and a marked white wing stripe.

Similar Species:

Plovers are more erect, larger-eyed, smaller-billed and do not feed by probing. Yellowlegs, Wilson's Phalarope, dowitchers, Curlew and Stilt sandpipers have white rump (and other discrepancies). Other peeps way too small and small-billed. Pectoral Sandpiper lacks white and black wing pattern, has brownish tones and distinct streaking on chest. Ruff has white on rump. Upland and Buff-breasted sandpipers much buffier, longer-necked, bigger-eyed and lack white wing stripe. Other phalaropes too small, have smaller bills, blacker legs and do not feed by probing.

Experience with Species:

I have seen all mentioned shorebirds (except Ruff). I have seen juvenile breeding and winter plumaged Red Knots in Texas.

This report is prepared from notes made during observation.

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