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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

RUDDY TURNSTONE

Arenaria interpres

Location: Lake Henry; Ordway; Crowley County, Colorado

Date: August 28; September 2, 1994

These birds were seen before me by Brandon Percival, among others.

Setting:

Several of us (myself, Bob Dickson, Brandon Percival, Toni Brevilier) observed two birds on the 28th. On the 2nd we (myself, Peter Gent, Vic Zerbi) observed one bird. We saw them briefly, for less than five minutes as they walked along the gravel shore in the southwest corner of this plains reservoir. These birds were frightened by the activity of bathers and we saw them fly off across the lake. On the 2nd we found one bird on the point just north of the first location. In both cases I observed the birds with binoculars and my Kowa TSN4 20-60X scope. The light was decent and we all got quite close (30-75 yards) views.

Description:

I think that 3, not 2, birds were involved.

On August 28th, I thought that there were two adults in non-breeding plumage present. They were medium-sized (about like a Killdeer) shorebirds with stout orange legs and a dark chisel-shaped bill. The pattern was like that of a washed out adult: dark above and white below; a shadow of a black "apron" across the breast. They both had a touch of orange in the upperparts, being somewhat chestnut across the scapulars. In flight, they were striking, with chestnut shoulders and back, white marks down the back and diagonally across the wings and a white tail with a wide black terminal band. These were quite unmistakable and very beautiful in flight.

On September 2nd, I thought that there was a single juvenile bird present. It was like a duller version of the description above except that the upperparts lacked the chestnut or rufous tones of the birds on August 28th. Instead they were dark brownish-grey above with distinct paler edges to the upper feathers, giving the bird a scaly appearance. In flight the bird lacked the orangish tones, but was brown, black and white instead.

Similar Species:

The conspicuous white, black and rufous pattern and medium size eliminate most other shorebirds. Avocets are much larger with recurved bills. Snowy, Piping and Black-bellied plovers lack the white face, bib, rufous and black back and wedge-shaped bill. The Killdeer is plainer above in flight and has two breast bands. Phalaropes have thinner and longer bills, different habits and lack orange legs. Sandpipers are plainer, especially in flight, and lack the chisel-shaped bill. The Black Turnstone has no rufous in any plumage and is less scaled as a juvenile.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many Ruddy Turnstones on ocean beaches. I have seen two (or three) previous Ruddy Turnstones in Colorado: 1-2 juveniles on September 16, 1989 at Cheraw Lake; 1 breeding adult at Blue Lake on May 23, 1993.

This report is prepared from notes made after observation.

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