

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

RUDDY TURNSTONE

Arenaria interpres

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

Date: September 21, 1997

I was birding with Brandon Percival and Bob Dixon along the edge of Lake Holbrook. There were lots of shorebirds on the sandy/muddy western shore. I spotted the Ruddy Turnstone somewhat well up from the water, in the debris and drifted trash nearer the higher, drier areas. We observed the bird around 8:00 - 8:30 a.m. twice, for about 5 min. each time. We were at distances of 50-150 yards and used our scopes (KOWA TSN-4 20-60x) and binoculars. The light was flat and gray.

Description:

This was a juvenile or non-breeding adult – likely a winter-plumaged adult. It was about the size of a Killdeer, about 10" long. Overall it was "chunky" looking – short-necked and plump. It was white underneath with a blackish throat, breast and sides of the breast. It was dark above with a mixture of blackish, and brown feathers with pale edges. The head was brown with a darker pattern below the eye. The legs were orange. The bill was sharp, dark-colored, with an up-turned lower mandible.

Similar Species:

The medium size and wedge-shaped bill eliminate most other shorebirds. The Killdeer 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 and most lack orange legs.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many Ruddy Turnstones on ocean beaches. I have seen seven previous Ruddy Turnstones in Colorado, including juvenile birds.

This report is prepared from notes made immediately after observation.

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