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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

HUDSONIAN GODWIT
Limosa haemastica

Location: Cheraw Lake; Cheraw; Otero County, Colorado

Date: May 23, 1992

Setting:

I found and observed this bird alone at about 8:00 a.m. It was at the shallow pool on the west side of Highway 109 at Lake Cheraw. I observed it for about 20 minutes. However I didn't find it when I stopped back there later that afternoon. I watched it through a Kowa scope at 20-60X and my binoculars at distances of about 50-100 feet. The sun was bright and from my back. Viewing conditions were excellent and I was able to drive right up to the edge of the pool and use the car for a blind. At high power the bird filled my scope field of view.

After about 20 minutes the bird flushed and flew, giving me good views of the white rump and wing pattern.

Description:

The bird was quite large, dwarfing the dowitchers, but less bulky than the nearby avocets. It was long-legged, long-billed and about 16" long. It was in breeding plumage. The long neck and head were brownish-grey, finely flecked with white. It had a fairly distinct whitish supercilary and an indistinct black eyeline. Overall it was quite a dark shorebird. This impression came from the plain, dark grey to blackish flight feathers, the dark brown feathers of the scapulars which were narrowly fringed white, and the rich deep chestnut breast and belly. The flanks were irregularly barred by feathers with subterminal black marks and narrow whitish fringes. The bill was about twice as long as the head and barely up-curved. The basal half was reddish and the distal half was blackish. The tail was black with a distinct white upper tail and rump in flight. The undertail was white with black bars. The legs were dark.

Similar Species:

The large size and recurved bill eliminate most other shorebirds. Greater Yellowlegs and Willet have straight bills and are whitish, not red underneath. The Am. Avocet is brightly patterned and orange above. Curlews have downcurved bills. Marbled Godwit is the most similar but is plainer buff below, not reddish, lacks the white rump, lacks the white and black tail and has straighter bill. Bar-tailed Godwit lacks white rump, is less red below and lacks black barring on flanks. Black-tailed Godwit has strong white wing bar, straighter bill, white throat and black-barred whitish underparts.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many Marbled Godwits. I have seen three previous Hudsonian Godwits in Colorado, all in breeding plumage and all in May. I saw small flocks of Hudsonian Godwits in Texas in April 1984. I have never seen Bar-tailed or Black-tailed godwits.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

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