

Species: Lesser Golden-Plover
(Vernacular name)

Pluvialis dominica 18-87-19
(Scientific name) A

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): 7, 8 & 9 October 1983

Time Bird seen: 9:45 am to 10:55 am
on 7 Oct.; 2:45-5:00 pm on 8 Oct
8:00-8:15 am on 9 Oct.

Locality: Hart's Basin

Eckert, Delta County Colorado
Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: Nikon 9x30 binoculars; Bushnell Sentry II 20x scope

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: _____

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: _____ Plumage: winter (non-breeding)

Light conditions On 7th: High thin clouds, direct sun at back for 1/2 of the time;
on the 8th: bright sun at back; on the 9th: overcast, sun over shoulder.
Distance from bird, and how measured: As close as 25 meters and as far as 500 meters

Describe the bird's overall behavior: Did not associate much with any of the other shorebirds but was usually in the vicinity of the larger waders, especially Long-billed Dowitchers and a Dunlin. Most often toward the edge of the flock, but would wade into the deeper (2") water towards the center. Active and mobile, it would range far by constantly walking and feeding. This it would do by taking a step or two, or turning and then taking a step or two and then probing quickly, usually only once, with its bill in the mud and then repeating this action. In flight it stayed fairly close to the ground and never rose very high in the air. Flight is strong and rapid and fairly direct. Upon landing would stretch wings out before folding them but not up over the back like a phalarope.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:
Hart's Basin at this time of year has extensive mud flats caused by seepage. The N.E. end of the lake is very wet. This mud ranges from bare to submerged under about 2" of clear running water. There is no emergent vegetation where the plover was observed on all three days.

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):
On 9 Oct the bird was seen by David Gallinat of Olathe, Colo.

On 8 Oct. the bird was seen by a class of non-birders from Rocky Mt.

See

School of Carbondale

size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, legs, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field. In shape the bird was plump and rounded with a fairly large head and rather big black eyes. The bird was about 9" long; larger-bodied and higher standing than a Killdeer; about the same body size as a dowitcher but much shorter-billed and consequently shorter overall. The bill was short (about 1" long), slender and pigeonlike; dark gray in color. The legs were medium-long and gray. At a distance especially, the body is a fairly even color and dully patterned. The undersides are finely mottled and yellowish or buff-yellow in color except for the feathers around the legs, the vent area and the undertail covers which were white. The crown, face, nape, back, rump, tail and wings are a dark buff-yellow. At very close range this color can be seen as a basic grey-brown back-ground with a golden wash or suffusion. The upperparts are slightly more mottled with the back and wing coverts more coarsely checked with blackish feathers with yellowish spots on them. The crown is slightly darker than the nape. There was a broad lighter-colored superciliary line that curved down behind the eye and then down the side of the head onto the sides of the neck. The area below and behind the bill was also lighter colored and this gave a darker appearance to the cheek area. In flight the rump and tail were this same even buff-yellow color and there was no white area in the wing. In flight from above it was a remarkably plain buff-yellow bird. The axillars were greyish in color, the same as the rest of the under-

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard, including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.: Not heard. 355 Killdeers drowned out any other sounds. 1 of the preceding could really only be seen at close range, especially the tailing of the plumage of the upperparts. At a distance, as one would normally see a wader, this would be seen as a plump, medium-tall buffy-yellow bird that is very plain in appearance whether seen perched or in flight.

List similar species and how you eliminated them. Looked plump, big-headed and large-billed, with medium-long legs and short pigeonlike bill: therefore I thought of *Pluvialis* plover immediately. Solitary Sandpiper is smaller, more slender, longer-billed and has a slight eye-ring; Buff-breasted Sandpiper is smaller, has eye-ring, light legs and white, not gray wing linings; Among other differences, the yellowlegs, Stilt Sandpiper and Knot all have white rumps. Phalarope is smaller, more slender and thinner-billed. Compared to Black-bellied Plover this bird was slightly smaller and thinner-necked and smaller-headed, with a lighter smaller bill. These differences were subtle and may have been just this particular bird and not true of the species as a whole. However, the plain upperparts with a lack of a white rump and the plain gray, not black, axillaries along with the yellowish suffusion overall definitely mark this as a Golden Plover.

Prior experience with this and similar species: I have seen Black-bellied Plovers in winter plumage on numerous occasions. I have no experience with Lesser Golden Plover in any plumage. Of the other birds mentioned in the previous paragraph I have experience with all but the Buff-breasted Sandpiper and the Knot.

This report was written from notes made during x after observation; from memory .

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