

SHORT NOTE

First record of a long-toed stint (*Calidris subminuta*) in New Zealand

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On 31 August 1997 Sheila Petch and Nick Allen were at Jarvis Road, Lake Ellesmere looking for shorebirds newly arrived from the Northern Hemisphere. While looking at a flock of recently arrived red-necked stints (*Calidris ruficollis*) they noticed a bird of similar size, but with pale legs and much brighter plumage. However, the bird flew off before a description or photograph could be obtained, and it was not located again that day.

On 25 September 1997, SP and Colin Hill were at Embankment Road, Lake Ellesmere and found the pale-legged bird again in the company of red-necked stints. The bird was viewed from c. 15 m. Light conditions were good. The pale legs eliminated all but least sandpiper (*C. minutilla*), long-toed stint (*C. subminuta*), and Temminck's stint (*C. temminckii*). Temminck's stint was easily ruled out, as this species has neither a strongly patterned plumage, nor a pale V on the mantle, and it has white sides to the tail (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Least and long-toed stints, however, are so similar that separation is difficult. Fortunately, CH was able to take photographs and SP recorded a detailed description on this 2nd sighting. The bird was not seen again.

DESCRIPTION

Size as red-necked stint, but much brighter with longer tarsus and shorter body. The bill was black, slightly longer than that of a red-necked stint, slightly drooped at the tip, and thicker at the base. The legs were yellowish-green. The central toe was longer than the bill (that of least sandpiper is the same length). The scapulars and tertials had broad, dark brown centres, with bright rufous

edgings, although some had white or pale tips. The mantle was striped brown-rufous with strong pale lines at its edges. The wing coverts had dark brown centres and were edged whitish. Only the outer primary shaft was whitish. The chin was white and the throat brown. The head had a bright rufous cap (equaled in brightness by only a few least sandpipers), with a dark forehead dividing a conspicuous supercilium that met at the bill (the supercilium is relatively inconspicuous in the least sandpiper). The lores were dark. The breast was pale grey with narrow brown streaks and a buffy wash, absent at the breast centre (least sandpiper has a buffy wash with coarse but indistinct streaks, though there is overlap). The belly, flanks, and undertail were white.

Photographs were sent to Dennis Paulson, USA, and John Marchant, UK, well-known observers conversant with the species and both independently confirmed the bird as being a long-toed stint. In his response, JM stated that "The tertials were worn and faded, compared to the rest of the plumage. The lower scapulars are very large feathers that almost completely conceal the wing coverts on the folded wing. These are the strongest confirmations that the bird is not in juvenile but in breeding plumage."

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The long-toed stint has a striped mantle, whilst the least sandpiper has a scalloped mantle. Diagnostic long-toed stints have brighter, wider, rufous edges and fringes on the scapulars and tertials. The scapular line is usually buffy in long-toed stint. The coverts are whitish-edged in long-toed stint, but buffy-edged in least sandpiper. The supercilium is more conspicuous in long-toed stint, but there is enough variability to preclude this as a field mark. Breast streaking is relatively narrow and absent in the centre of the breast in long-toed stint whereas least

sandpipers have stronger streaking, but there is overlap. The middle toe appears longer than the bill in long-toed stint, but the same length as the bill in least sandpiper. The long-toed stint has a longer tarsus than the least sandpiper (Paulson 1993). Long-toed stints are reported to look long-necked and alert in comparison to least sandpipers, but many individuals act like least sandpipers, exhibiting a 'mousy' behaviour. The bird we found showed this 'mousy' behaviour.

The long-toed stint breeds in the low arctic, sub-arctic and boreal zones. Most long-toed stints winter in South East Asia and the Philippines. A few hundred reach Australia, mostly in western regions (Hayman *et al.* 1986).

A description, 8 slides, and 5 prints of this bird were submitted to the OSNZ Rare Birds Committee, which unanimously accepted it as the 1st confirmed record of a long-toed stint in New Zealand (UBR98/13).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SHORT NOTE

First record of willie wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) for New Zealand

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Willie wagtails (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) are found throughout Australia, insular New Guinea, the Molluccas, the Bismarck Archipelago, and The Solomon Islands. Three subspecies are recognised, the nominate form occurring throughout temperate continental Australia below 20° S (Schodde & Mason 2000). Here I present the first record of this species for New Zealand, an individual seen on Mangere Island (44° 16' S, 176° 18' W) in the Chatham Island group, 800 km east of the South Island. Mangere Island, c. 3 km off the coast of Pitt Island, is a nature reserve administered by the New Zealand Department of Conservation.

Tertia Thurley, John Neilsen, Brenda Oldfield, and I found the bird perching on boulders and driftwood above the high-tide mark at the base of a steep cliff on the western side of the island at c. 0900 h (Chatham Island Time) on 27 October 1999. It was observed with binoculars (8×) and later a telescope (22×) until 1030 h. At dusk of the same day it was observed for a further 1.5 h until it flew up the cliff into vegetation, presumably to roost. It was not seen again despite efforts to find it over the next few days.

FIELD NOTES

A distant photograph of poor quality was taken, which demonstrates the jizz and black and white colouration but little else. The tail, back, upper and underwings, and breast were black. There was a