

The upper surface was described as: "Wings brownish. Faint light margins on wing coverts. Back more uniform dark grey, not much pattern. Transverse brownish or grey-brown bars on upper rump, but rump not seen in flight." Illustrations show much white at sides of rump and tail with broad patterned centre stripe. The white would not be spread out except in flight and this we did not have the opportunity of seeing. Only the patterned centre was visible with the bird on the ground.

Of the under surface it was noted: "Mid. to lower breast rufous tinge on grey-brown. No pectoral line. Drab white under. Speckled on side of body below rear- and fore-wing gap between, bird standing on ground." After study of many books it has been decided that the speckling on the side is best shown in the illustration of the Reeve, plate 40 in "Collins Pocket Guide to British Birds," by Fitter and Richardson. In the bird we saw, the moult was not so far advanced, for it had speckling below the rear- and fore-wing, instead of the continuous markings along the side. It also did not have the barring right down on the breast.

It was agreed that the legs were: "Longer by say one inch than those of a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper." They were much heavier, in fact appearing to be disproportionately thick. Witherby gives the male tarsus as 45.5-52 but omits the female. That of the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper is 23-27.

The difference in the average of the two species is 24 m.m. which is only 1 m.m. less than one inch. The long stoutish legs were the first thing to attract our attention. This would indicate that it was a male, or Ruff. A mounted specimen of a female, or Reeve, in the War Memorial Museum, Auckland, is much smaller, paler and more lightly built than the bird we saw at Karaka. H.R.McK. made the leg colour something like bluish-grey or lead-grey but N.B.Mack, after prolonged study, decided that they were of no definite colour. The books allow for almost any colour.

The more upright stance of the figures in Witherby portrays the position in which we saw our bird but the best picture so far found is a reproduction of a photograph in the English magazine "Country Life," Oct. 22, 1959. This really portrays the bird as we saw it.

The prospects of occurrence of this species in New Zealand are not entirely remote. At least two Reeves have recently been collected in Australia and any species of migratory arctic wader going there, even if in small numbers, can be expected to straggle to New Zealand sooner or later.

— N. B. MACKENZIE

— H. R. MCKENZIE

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A RECORD OF THE WESTERN SANDPIPER ON FAREWELL SPIT

During a visit to Farewell Spit in early October, 1964, the attention of one of us was drawn to a bird resting in a tight flock of 31 Red-necked Stints (*Calidris ruficollis*), on account of its distinctive bill. A long period of observation at 18 to 20 feet with 10 x 50 and 7 x 50 binoculars, and subsequent reference to the literature, has enabled us to identify the bird as a Western Sandpiper (*C. mauri*). During the period of observation the bird was put to flight more than once, so that the wing and tail pattern could be noted; and it was at all times

in close company with Red-necked Stints, thus allowing a detailed comparison. Three Curlew Sandpipers (*C. ferruginea*) were nearby.

The following description is taken from our field notes: Size, very slightly larger than a Red-necked Stint; bill black, much longer than that of *ruficollis*; at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ times as long, heavy at the base, and tapering fairly quickly when the bird is observed head-on, and slightly down-curved at the tip; plumage very similar to *ruficollis*, but slightly more rufous; pale forehead, with the crown darkish and faintly streaked longitudinally; very pale sides of neck and nape, and a light superciliary bar; legs black. In flight, there was little to distinguish the bird from a Red-necked Stint, the tail pattern appearing identical, but the wing bars were extremely faint. The manner of feeding was the same as that of its companions.

The Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*), which is known to both of us, has a noticeably heavier bill, and the crown is distinctly striped, compared with the faint markings observed on the crown of the Western Sandpiper.

The Western Sandpiper has been observed once in Great Britain, and so is included in Hollom's "Popular Handbook of Rarer British Birds," where an excellent description is to be found. This tallies very closely with our observations, except that the legs are described as "dark olive, but usually looking black." Also the toes are partially webbed, which we did not observe, mainly because the bird was for most of the time in very shallow water. The length is given as $6\frac{1}{2}$ ins., compared with 6 ins. for the Red-necked Stint as stated by Condon and McGill in "Field Guide to the Waders." Hollom describes it as "a confiding bird," which was definitely our impression during the long period of observation.

The Western Sandpiper breeds on the coasts of north and west Alaska, according to Peterson's "Field Guide to the Western Birds," and winters from San Francisco Bay southwards; so it is a species which, along with the Hudsonian Godwit, Yellowlegs, Wandering Tattler, and others, may be expected as an occasional visitor to New Zealand.

— A. BLACKBURN

— B. D. BELL



LITTLE WHIMBREL AT MIRANDA

On a routine check of the birds of the Miranda coast on 13/10/64, a dark brown bird was seen on the pools just north of the old Miranda wharf. It was smaller than a godwit and too large for any of the sandpipers which frequent those pools. Mrs. B. Brown and Miss A. J. Goodwin approached it carefully and soon noted its down-curved bill, which then became evident to the rest of the party in the car on the road. (Mrs.) Dr. K. Heinroth of West Berlin, Mrs. McKenzie and the writer. The bird was alone except for an almost fully red Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) about two chains away. It allowed close inspection; and was clearly a Little Whimbrel (*Numenius minutus*). It is considered that it was most likely the same bird as the one seen at Karaka, Manukau Harbour, on 28/3/64 (*Notornis* 11, 99).

— H. R. MCKENZIE