FIRST RECORD OF THE LONG-TOED STINT IN CALIFORNIA

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On 29 August 1988 we, along with Douglas R. Willick and Kurt Radamaker, identified a juvenile Long-toed Stint (*Calidris subminuta*) at the sewage ponds in Salinas, Monterey County, California. At about 1230 PDT, Daniels noticed an unfamiliar small *Calidris* sandpiper sitting at the edge of one of the large rock-lined sewage ponds with some Least (*C. minutilla*) and Western Sandpipers (*C. mauri*); he and Willick watched it for about 20 minutes before Patten and Radamaker arrived. The weather was clear and mild with a slight breeze, so observation conditions were excellent. We studied the bird through binoculars and telescopes for the remainder of the afternoon at distances as close as 20 feet.

The following description is based on our field notes, on those of various observers who sent details to the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC), and on photographs.

Our bird was a small *Calidris* slightly larger than a Least Sandpiper. It was similar in shape to a Least, but had a longer neck, longer legs (in particular, longer tibiae), and a shorter, straighter bill (about 75% as long as the head). The crown sloped to a high point at the rear, unlike a Least's. The middle toe seemed to be as long as the tarsus and was clearly longer than the bill. The legs and feet were straw yellow, a bit brighter than a Least's. The bill was blackish, except for a pale base to the mandible. In flight, the toes extended beyond the tip of the tail. There was a very thin whitish trailing edge to the greater secondary coverts, but this did not create an obvious wing stripe. The tertials were long and concealed the folded primaries.

The crown was black with narrow bright rufous streaks that were more prominent posteriorly. The bird had a capped appearance resulting from a distinct separation between the crown and the brownish-gray nape and bold white supercilium. The nape was finely streaked with black. The dark crown ran down through the forehead, meeting the bill and a dark trans-ocular line. This line dipped downward slightly before the eye, forming a bulbous white loral spot. Thin buffy-white lateral crown stripes were very distinct, forming a split supercilium. The supercilium was whitish and flared slightly behind the eye before stopping abruptly at the nape; it seemed somewhat broader than a Least Sandpiper's and was cleaner white before the eye and dirtier (a bit streaked) behind the eye. The face was mostly white with a uniform dull brownish-gray ear patch that was finely streaked with black; a tinge of chestnut was visible on the posterior edge of the cheek. The chin and throat were clean white. The breast was very pale buff or whitish at the center, gradually becoming more buffy toward the sides. The breast was streaked with dusky, very finely at the center and more heavily toward the sides. The undertail coverts and belly were white.

The blackish mantle feathers were thinly edged in rufous, creating a pattern of rufous and black stripes. The blackish scapulars and tertials were edged in bright rufous, with the edges on the outermost tertial duller than those of the inners. The blackish median and lesser coverts were edged with buffy white, contrasting slightly with the pale chestnut edgings on the greater coverts. The fringes of the greater wing coverts and scapulars were broken at the tip by a black shaft streak. The scapulars and wing coverts of this bird were longer and more pointed than those of a juvenile Least Sandpiper, which are shorter and more diamond-shaped. Buffy-white stripes

on the sides of the mantle formed a prominent "V" on the back. The tail pattern was like that of a Least.

The flight call, heard several times, was a mellow, rolling "chrrrup" or "prrrt," lower pitched than that of a Least Sandpiper. The bird fed by walking jaçana-like on floating vegetation and picking insects from the surface. It had a strange tumor-like growth on the right cheek that slightly raised the feathers away from the face.

The bird was last reliably reported on 2 September 1988. Additional photographs were published in *American Birds* 42:1226 and 43:27 and by Wilds (1988). The record, the first for California and only the third for North America outside of Alaska, was unanimously accepted by the CBRC on the first round (McCaskie and Pyle in manuscript) and is now on file, with over 20 color photographs, at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Los Angeles.

Figure 1. Long-toed Stint, Salinas sewage ponds, 31 August 1988. The extremely long toes and pale base to the mandible are visible in this photograph. In particular, note the whitish edges of the lesser and median coverts versus the bright rufous edges of the scapulars.

Photo by Lawrence Sansone

DISTRIBUTIONAL SUMMARY

The Long-toed Stint nests in disjunct populations in the forested areas of Siberia from the River Ob' east to the Chukotski Peninsula, the Commander Islands, the northern Kurile Islands, and (probably) the Kamchatka Peninsula (Cramp and Simmons 1983, A.O.U. 1983, Flint et al. 1984). Display flights and similar behavior have prompted speculation that the bird may occasionally nest in Alaska (Roberson 1980, Balch 1988, Armstrong 1990). The species winters from the Philippines, Formosa, southeastern China, and eastern India south to Ceylon through Indonesia to southern Australia (A.O.U. 1983, Cramp and Simmons 1983, Blakers et al. 1984). A few may also winter regularly in eastern Africa, because small numbers pass through the Middle East (Hayman et al. 1986, Hollom et al. 1988).

Long-toed Stints have occurred three times as vagrants in Europe: once in Sweden, 4 October–5 November 1977 (Pettersson et al. 1978), once in Britain, 28 August–1 September 1982 (Rogers et al. 1985), and again in Britain, 6–7 September 1990 (Nightingale and McGeehan 1990); each was a juvenile. There are at least nine records for Africa (Urban et al. 1986) and for Christmas Island and the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean (Hayman et al.

Figure 2. Long-toed Stint, Salinas sewage ponds, 29 August 1988. Here the combination of the dark forehead (extending down to the bill), the bulbous white loral spot, the dark comma-shaped loral stripe, and the bold white supercilium are evident. Note the bulge of a presumed tumor on the lower cheek.

Photo by Peter La Tourrette

1986). Also, a juvenile was collected 26 August 1967 on Midway Atoll, Hawaiian Islands (Clapp 1968).

In North America, Long-toed Stints occur regularly in the outer Aleutian Islands (east to Adak) and casually to the Pribilof Islands, St. Lawrence Island, and western mainland Alaska (A.O.U. 1983). As many as 40 were on Shemya Island 16 May 1976 (Roberson 1980). Most records from this region are from spring (mid-May to early June) and fall (late July to mid-September), but the species has been recorded in summer (Armstrong 1990). The Long-toed Stint's occurrence in Alaska coincides with the known spring and fall migration timing of the species (Cramp and Simmons 1983). The only previous records for continental North America outside of Alaska (see DeSante and Pyle 1986) are two birds reported from Oregon: a juvenile at the south jetty of the Columbia River 2-6 September 1981 (Gilligan et al. 1987) and an adult in alternate plumage there 17 July 1983 (Schmidt 1989). An earlier report from Oregon and one from British Columbia are generally regarded as misidentified Least Sandpipers (Roberson 1980, A.O.U. 1983, Godfrey 1986).

Figure 3. Long-toed Stint, Salinas sewage ponds, 29 August 1988. This angle clearly shows the bold mantle stripes and the sharp contrast between the crown and the nape.

Photo by Peter La Tourrette

IDENTIFICATION SUMMARY

Both the Long-toed Stint and the Least Sandpiper are very small with medium-long yellowish legs (but see Carey 1987) and medium-long black bills that are slightly decurved and pointed at the tip. They are very similar to one another and field separation can be difficult. Consistent differences in shape, bare-part coloration, measurements, and vocalizations are given in standard references such as Prater et al. (1977), Grant and Jonsson (1984), Hayman et al. (1986), and Veit and Jonsson (1987).

The Long-toed Stint and Least Sandpiper are much more similar in plumage than they are in shape. In juvenal plumage, each is characterized by whitish underparts with dark streaking at the sides of the breast, a rufous crown, a white throat and supercilium, grayish ear coverts, largely dark-centered feathers with rufous edgings on the upperparts, and whitish mantle stripes. However, subtle differences can be found in each of the characters mentioned here. Much has been said about the extent of streaking on the underparts and whether or not it crosses through the center of the breast. According to several sources (such as Wallace 1980), a typical Least shows a complete breast band of streaks on a buff wash whereas a typical Long-toed shows no streaking at the center of the breast and the ground color is whiter. Nevertheless, much overlap exists and this

Figure 4. Long-toed Stint, Salinas sewage ponds, 29 August 1988. Note how the streaking fades toward the center of the breast and extends down the flanks. A fairly distinct lateral crown stripe is apparent at this angle.

Photo by Peter La Tourrette

character cannot be used with complete confidence (Wilds 1988, Alström and Olsson 1989). A key difference exists in the wing coverts: on the Least, the wing coverts are edged with warm buff or rufous; on the Long-toed, the edgings are white or whitish-gray and broken at the tip. Thus, contrast between the wing coverts and the scapulars is significant on the Long-toed, whereas little or no contrast is present on the Least. The rufous fringe on the scapular feathers of the Long-toed is broken by black at the tip but completely encircles the tip on the Least.

The pattern on the face and head provides some of the best clues to specific identification. The supercilium of the Long-toed is usually whiter, especially above and in front of the eye. Often, the supercilium of the Long-toed extends past the auriculars to the back of the head, thus creating a more capped effect. However, the Least can show a supercilium nearly this long and the Long-toed can show one much shorter, so this mark should not be relied upon in the field. On Long-toed, the dark loral line appears to be split, as if formed by two spots that barely meet (Wilds 1988, Alström and Olsson 1989). The gap at the center forms a comma-shaped loral line, producing a bulbous white "drop" between the eye and the bill. This effect is further accentuated by the dark forehead of Long-toed, which extends down from the crown to meet the base of the culmen and to connect with the loral stripe. The Least has a thicker loral line that shows no sign of being split. Also, the anterior portion of the supercilia usually meet over the bill, creating a white area on the forehead at the base of the culmen. Bold whitish lateral crown stripes, forming a split supercilium, are often present on juvenile Long-toed Stint but usually absent or faint on the Least Sandpiper (Alström and Olsson 1989). The posterior edge of the auricular is usually whiter and less well defined on the Long-toed and the nape of a Long-toed is typically gray, unlike the faded buff of a Least. The nape color contributes to the more capped appearance of juvenile Long-toed Stint.

In alternate plumage, the supercilium is not nearly as bold as in juveniles and the white area before the eye is less clearly defined. A split supercilium is frequent in spring Long-toed, but is also rarely present in spring Least. The loral stripe tends to be wider in alternate-plumaged Long-toed but is still narrower than on a typical Least. Thus, the two species can closely resemble one another in alternate plumage, although the Long-toed Stint tends to be brighter overall and each species still shows a head pattern similar to that described for juveniles. Basic-plumaged birds of both species are brownish-gray above, with the Long-toed slightly darker. The pattern of the mantle feathers is distinctive. These feathers are black-centered and widely edged with brownish in the Long-toed. In the Least, the feathers are mostly brownish-gray with black shafts that blend diffusely into the surrounding feathers. Also, the differences in facial pattern are still evident.

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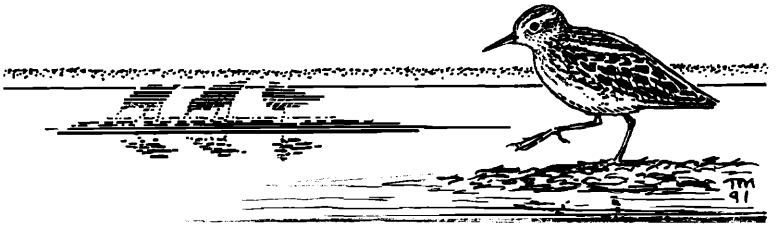

Long-Toed Stint *Sketch by Tim Manolis*