

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) 1, juvenile

August 2, 1988 apprx 18:00 for about 20 minutes

King Avenue Ponds, Warrenton, Clatsop Co., OR

On dredge spoil mudflats associated with Western Sandpipers, where it was seen feeding, preening and just standing around watching other birds.

Light conditions: excelent, though the sun was beginning to go low. I was between the sun and the bird

DESCRIPTION

Size: noticeably smaller than Western Sandpiper

Overall look: Upperparts had an olive-brown cast, Underparts white, small headed and long-legged with narrow pointed bill

Head: forehead was white

crown, brown/olive streaking with rufous wash

supercillium, white and prominent; a faint, but apparent second line was visible providing a faint split supercillium effect

auriculars and hindcrown grey-olive/brown

bill. black; fairly narrow at base. tapering to a fine point

Nape: grey-olive, slightly paler than crown

Cheek and throat: white

Breast: mostly white, diffuse brown streaking at sides of pectorals with faint buffy wash

Belly and undertail coverts: white

Back: dark brown feathers with rufous fringe; faint buff line along lower back more prominent buff line bordering scapulars neither of these lines were brightly prominent

Scapulars: Dark brown centers with rufous fringe on uppers, Centers greyish-brown with paler. buffier fringes on lowers

Wing coverts: grey-olive centers with greyish fringe

Tertials: dark brown with deep rufous fringe

Primaries: dark brown, projecting well beyond tertials

Legs: black; tibia seemed long, giving the bird an overall long-legged look

SIMILAR SPECIES

Black legs and overall plumage eliminate Least Sandpiper. Long-toed and Temmink's Stints

Bill shape, plumage and overall size eliminate Western Sandpiper

Semipalmated Sandpiper was eliminated by bill shape and size: the base of bill was too narrow, bill tip pointed rather than broadly blunt, scapulars were too long and broad they did not show anchor shape or buffy fringe. Lacked overall scaly-backed appearance of juvenile semipalmated.

Rufous-necked stint: At this point my confidence in this identification breaks down. I have never seen Rufous-necked stint. I have never even seen a good photograph of one in juvenile plumage. I have only seen Little Stint in basic plumage. I am certain That this bird is either a Little Stint or a Rufous-necked Stint.

This bird's overall shape and size is consistent with my memories of Little Stints in Africa. The habitat in which this bird was found is also very similar (muddy banks of inland ponds).

After studying the photographs and comparing them to written descriptions (Veit and Jonsson,1984: Hayman, Marchant and Prater,1986), I find the following points that favor Little Stint: Slender,finely pointed bill substantial primary projection long-legged look broadly dusky centers to scapulars with no discernable shape (blob-like) that conceal feather shafts. rufous fringes to scapulars

- pale (white) face, strong supercillium. dark cap with noticeable "split" supercillium

"white-fronted" appearance. diffusely streaked pectoral side bands with buffy wash

This bird is not as brightly marked as one would expect of a juvenile Little Stint in early August, however.

It has also been suggested by others who have seen photographs of the bird, that it seems to have a long body and steep forehead more characteristic of Rufous-necked Stint though these characters do not hold from photo to photo.

Based upon my reading, I believe this bird lacks the following characteristics that would identify it as a juvenile Rufous-necked Stint. They form the basis for my submitting this report in favor of Little Stint:

Lacks pale grey lower scapulars and wing coverts

Lacks anchor shapes on subterminals of coverts

Tertials are not pale grey, feather shafts of tertials are not visible

Crown is not pale grey, supercillium more pronounced then suggested in all descriptions of RN Stint

Face is whiter than all descriptions

Lacks grey wash on breast at pectorals

This bird is proportionally long-legged.