



A Most Curious Sighting at Brig

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following report was written by Dr. Marvin Hyett, longtime DVOC member:

A most curious sighting was made by this observer at 9 a.m. on Aug. 24, 1992, at Brigantine (Forsythe) National Wildlife Refuge.

Driving down the south dike, past the observation tower and the boat house, I stopped to watch a Whimbrel feeding on the south side of the road, about 75 yards away. I turned and noted a solitary shorebird flying toward me from over the impoundment, and as it flew past the dike, in front of the car, it struck me as being less bulky than a Whimbrel, but with a definite "curlew" bill.

It glided down and flew with a very stiff-winged pattern, reminiscent of a Spotted Sandpiper. As it turned into the wind to land, about 75 yards out over the marsh, definitely cinnamon-colored wing linings were noted, contrasting with the rest of the underwing. The bird did not call, and head markings were not noted. It disappeared immediately in the tall grass, or possibly into a gut, and was not seen again, although I waited 45 minutes.

The weather was sunny and clear. The mid-morning light was good.

Without a photograph or specimen, and without further corroboration, this is, at best, a hypothetical record. Field notes were made immediately following this sighting and were sent to the New Jersey Records Committee.

We're talking Eskimo Curlew here, even if Mary chose not to name it.

At the Sept. 3, 1992, informal summer meeting, this sighting was discussed at length. With the cooperation and assistance of Robert Ridgely of the Academy of Natural Sciences' Ornithology Department, Sidney Lipschutz brought two Academy specimens for DVOC members to compare: one an Eskimo Curlew, the other a very short-billed Whimbrel.

At this meeting, Ed Manners told a story of another time an Eskimo Curlew came to a DVOC meeting. These are his recollections:

James Bond had just received the frozen carcass — frozen with dry ice — from a market hunter he knew on the island of Barbados. That night was the DVOC meeting. At that time, we met upstairs in the Ornithology Department, among the specimen cases.

All present that night had the opportunity to examine the dead bird in the flesh before it was made into specimen. I remember Jim saying the hunter did not know this particular bird, so he had sent it to him, as he did all unusual birds he shot.

Apparently he had been in contact with the man for some time in pursuit of specimens from the hunter's bag of game. I also understood Jim to say that this was the first specimen or recorded sighting of an Eskimo Curlew from Barbados.

Bond's *Birds of the West Indies*, 1985 edition, mentions this specimen in the "List of Vagrants," page 241.

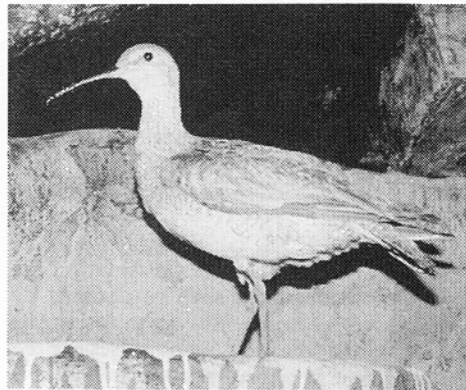
The meeting was surely a summer meeting, with no minutes, so there's probably no record of it.

A few years ago, just before Labor Day, I found a single wader, a curlew, at Harrisonville pasture, where we used to have nesting Upland Sandpipers. If you refer to *Shorebirds — An Identification Guide* (Hayman, Marchant, Prater), Plate 51, Picture 129j, Whimbrel, race *hudsonicus*, this picture is what I think is a long-billed version of the bird I saw.

The bird was there for several days, the only wader in the grassy dry cow pasture.

The first time I saw the bird (which, by the way, called often the first day but not after that — a call I never heard from migrating Whimbrels), I was so excited I called the Academy from the nearest pay phone.

The next day, several ornithologists from the Academy visited the field and later called me to say that the bird was a Whimbrel. At the time, I felt very stupid and embarrassed for causing such a stir, but



This specimen of an Eskimo Curlew (*Numenius borealis*) is on exhibit at the Academy of Natural Sciences.

Sid Lipschutz/Courtesy of VIREO

just compare this picture of a Whimbrel to Plate 50, Picture 128e of an Eskimo Curlew.

Also of interest to me, during the same period, in nearby fields were flocks of Golden Plovers numbering in the hundreds, the most I have ever seen in South Jersey, by far. Each time I went to check the curlew (Whimbrel), a flock or two of Golden Plovers would buzz the field and fly on.

According to "Status and Conservation of the Eskimo Curlew," (American Birds, Summer 1991) by Craig A. Faanes and Stanley E. Senner, "Since 1959, 15 Eskimo Curlews have been reported on 11 separate sightings during the fall migration in North America and the West Indies. With the exception of one Eskimo Curlew, which was collected on September 4, 1963, in Barbados, none of these records is confirmed by a photograph or a specimen."

The source of this information is J.B. Gollop, T.W. Barry and E.H. Iverson, "Eskimo Curlew: Vanishing Species?" Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Special Publication 17.

The reference to the Barbados specimen surely is the bird on which Ed has reported.

By the way, Stan Senner, former executive director of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, is a former DVOC member.

You are cordially invited to the DVOC Annual Banquet

Thursday, November 19, 1992

Place: Iona Keller's Dugan's Restaurant
7900 Roosevelt Blvd.
Philadelphia, Pa.

Cash Bar: 6 p.m.; dinner: 7 p.m.

Guest speaker: Peter Alden, bird-tour leader and star of "Gone Birding" video game

Topic: "Birding Antarctica and Patagonia"

Reservations must be received by November 12. For information, call Ed Fingerhood, banquet chairman, 215-843-5818

Clip this half and mail to: Freda Rappaport
7373 Ridge Ave., Apt. 415, Philadelphia, Pa. 19128
215-483-7034

Please reserve _____ spaces for:

_____ (names) at the banquet.

No.		Total
_____	Breast of Capon Stuffed With Wild Rice	@\$15.00
_____	Roast Prime Rib of Beef au jus	@\$19.00
_____	Flounder Stuffed With Crabmeat	@\$19.00
	Total:	_____

Make checks payable to DVOC.

Vote slated Nov. 5 on bylaws changes

DVOC Council and the Bylaws Committee, chaired by Chris Walters, have proposed the following changes in the club's bylaws. They will be voted on at the Nov. 5, 1992, meeting.

First change:

ARTICLE VI. MEETINGS

SEC. 1. The regular meetings of the club shall be held on the first and third Thursdays in each month from October to May, inclusive, and on the first Thursday in June, at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, or at such other places or times selected by Council, except when January 1 falls on a Thursday the regular stated meetings in that month shall be on the second and fourth Thursdays, and except when, at the discretion of Council, the last meeting in May shall be held on the fourth Thursday of that month. The Annual Meeting of the Club shall be the first meeting of January.

First change drops reference to starting time of meetings and adds first Thursday in June as a regular club meeting.

Second change:

ARTICLE XI. DISSOLUTION

In the event of the Club's dissolution, its assets and endowment shall be donated by Council to a nonprofit organization or organizations whose stated purposes are the advancement or appreciation of the natural sciences.

Second change: This is a new article.

Third change:

ARTICLE V.

FEES AND ASSESSMENTS

SEC. 3. The names of Fellows and Active Members eleven (11) months in arrears for dues shall be dropped from membership provided that they have been twice notified in writing of their indebtedness by the Treasurer and their attention has been called to this By-Law.

Third change decreases from two years to eleven months the period of arrears before membership is dropped.

Final changes:

ARTICLE VII.

WITMER STONE AWARD

ARTICLE IX.

JULIAN K. POTTER AWARD

Modify next-to-last sentences of each of these Articles to read: The presentation of the Award shall be made at the Annual Banquet generally held on the third Thursday of November.

Final changes move time of presentation from club's Annual Meeting in January to the Annual Banquet in November.

PROGRAMS

Meetings are normally held the first and third Thursdays of the month, beginning at 7:30 p.m., at the Academy of Natural Sciences, 19th St. and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, unless otherwise indicated. For information on programs, call Hart Rufe, 215-257-8677 (home) or 215-348-6708 (work).

OCT. 1, 1992 — DON FREIDAY, member of the Board of Directors of New Jersey Audubon Society: "Fine Points of Raptor Identification."

OCT. 15, 1992 — ARMAS HILL, voice of the Philadelphia Birdline and owner of Focus on Nature Tours: "Birding Argentina and Chile." Armas, a club member, will share with us his experiences in birding two of South America's best birding areas.

NOV. 5, 1992 — JIM STASZ: "The North American Migration Count." A former DVOC member, Jim will recount his success in getting the new one-day spring bird migration count under way, as well as his plans for 1993 and beyond. He will supplement his presentation with slides.

NOV. 19, 1992 — ANNUAL BANQUET, with PETER ALDEN: "Birding Antarctica and Patagonia." See banquet information

on Page 1.

DEC. 3, 1992 — PAUL KERLINGER: "Birding, Economics and Conservation." As director of the Cape May Bird Observatory, Paul has done an extensive study, along with club member David Wiedner, on the economics of the sport of birding and the effect we birders have on local economies — and how that translates into the importance and need for conservation. His slide program will document his work in this area.

DEC. 17, 1992 — SCOTT WEIDENSAUL, "Forests of Life." Nationally known author, photographer and artist Scott Weidensaul will bring to us his own professionally prepared slide program on the neo-tropics of Belize, Guatemala and the Amazon. He will also have available for sale many of his books — including his most recent, *Seasonal Guide to the Natural World* — which he will autograph for purchasers.

JAN. 7, 1993 — ANNUAL MEETING. Christmas Bird Count reports will follow election of officers and year-end committee and financial reports. Refreshments shall be served.

FIELD TRIPS

Sunday, Nov. 1, 1992: Bake Oven Knob. Meet at the lookout parking lot at 9 a.m. for traditional day of hawk-watching. Leader: Chris Dooley.

Thursday, Dec. 17 to Sunday, Jan. 3: Audubon Christmas Count period. For information, call Sandy Sherman, 215-237-6814 (home) or 215-893-5739 (work).

Saturday, Dec. 12: Alan Brady's pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon. Sorry, sold out.

Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 9 and 10: Annual Pocono trip. Meet at the Days Inn, Routes 22 and 309, in Allentown at 8 a.m. Overnight at Pocono Environmental Education Center. Bring Saturday lunch. \$30 for one night and three meals, including cocktail party. For information, call Phil Street, 215-647-8324 (home).

For information on any of these trips, contact the members listed.

Philadelphia Larus

Send information you would like considered for publication in Philadelphia Larus to:

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