



Bermuda Audubon Society
NEWSLETTER

P O Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX

Summer
1995

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PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER - NEW TO BERMUDA

by David Wingate

The Pacific Golden-Plover *Pluvialis fulva* has only recently been described as a separate species from the Lesser Golden-Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, now known as the American Golden-Plover. The latter species is a common fall transient through Bermuda, and it was the observations of huge flights, recorded by officers of the British garrisons during the mid 19th century, which first revealed their long overwater migration from Labrador to Barbados and South America between August and October.

Bermuda has little suitable habitat for this open country grassland feeding species and virtually all records of golden-plovers in recent years have been confined to the 2 sq. mile airport. Consequently, this unique habitat is monitored regularly for plovers and other grassland favouring shorebirds and passerines.

Since moving to St. Davids, I have been in a position to monitor the airport much more frequently. On 21st Jan. 1995, Steven DeSilva and I were taking a lunch break from helping US Navy environmental officers with the creation of a nature reserve on Cooper's Island. Encountering a large flock of wintering Black-bellied Plovers on Perimeter Road, we stopped to scan them with binoculars. Suddenly, Steven noticed that two of the birds were smaller, more slender-billed and darker in

colour, distinguishing them as winter "lesser" golden plovers, and this was confirmed when they both flew a short distance revealing their dark tails and dusky underwings. (Black-bellied Plovers have white tails and white underwings with black "armpit" patches). However, one of these birds was strikingly different from any wintering American Golden-Plover I had ever seen before, in that it showed a much brighter gold-spangled mantle and a rich buffy colour around the head where an immature American shows white, both characteristics of immature Pacific Golden-Plover.

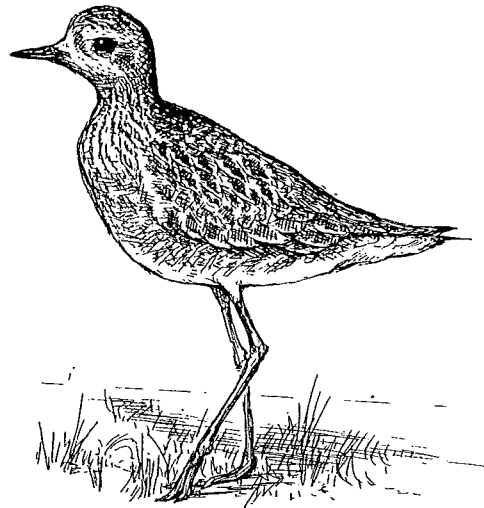


Illustration by Wendy Frith

I had only recently been alerted to watch for Pacific Golden-Plover on Bermuda by Paul Buckley of the US Biological Survey, who had recorded the first Caribbean record in Barbados a few years before. (The species has also occurred quite regularly in Britain).

Over the next few days we scrambled for as much published information of these two very similar species as possible, and all of the local birders attempted their I.D. skills on the bird. Immatures, as it turns out, are easier to separate than breeding plumaged adults, but the clinching field character is the extension of primaries, tertials and tail relative to each other. American Golden-Plover have long primaries and short tertials, while Pacific Golden-Plover is just the opposite. Unfortunately this character requires very close observation. The airport is a very large place, and our plover was rarely cooperative. In fact on many checks through the spring we failed to find it at all and assumed that it had departed, only to relocate it again. Underscoring its unique identity and origin was the fact that it usually fed alone and away from the Black-bellied Plovers. (American Golden-Plover usually accompany them). By March it was apparent that the bird was moulting into breeding plumage and we were hopeful that we might ultimately confirm its identity in both plumages. But then it disappeared again, we thought for good. Imagine my surprise then, when I found it again on 24th April - in breeding plumage! The yellowish wash on the head had moulted into pure white, the golden spangling on the back and wings was richer than before and the underparts had moulted from buffy white to jet black except for a white line down the side of the neck and flanks. All of the birders were called and this time it was more cooperative, affording very close views through 20X telescope which confirmed all the breeding plumage characters and wing extension ratios for Pacific Golden-Plover once again. We also noticed for the first

time that the bird had an unusual leg injury giving the tarsus a distinctive forward arc, but it did not prevent the bird from walking and foraging normally. Finally, we discovered that the bird had been roosting on one of the smaller rocky islets in Annie's Bay when not feeding, something that American Golden-Plover would never do. Steven DeSilva got the last view of the bird on 10 May, just about the time it would normally be expected to depart for its Alaskan breeding range.

Society News

Cooper's Island Nature Reserve
Society members joined other members of the public for the official opening of the new nature reserve on the US Naval Air Station near Clearwater Beach on Sunday 30th April. Former society president, David Wingate, gave a fascinating history of Cooper's Island and led a walk through the new nature trail.

South Shore Dunes and Beaches
As part of this year's Earth Day celebrations, on Sunday 21st May about thirty members enjoyed a guided walk through the South Shore dunes and along the beaches. Led by David Wingate and Jeremy Madeiros, the tour concentrated in particular on the dune fauna.

Membership
On your address label you will notice an expiry date. If it reads Exp. June 95 - you need to renew your membership. Please complete the enclosed form if you wish to remain a member.

Forthcoming Events
Please note dates of forthcoming events which can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

Tundra Swan in Bermuda

by Andrew Dobson

Identification of *Cygnus* Swan species in Bermuda 27 Nov. to 1 Dec.1994.

After reading the article "Identifying Trumpeter and Tundra Swans in the Field" by Michael A.Patten and Matthew T.Heindel in *Birding* Vol.XXVI No.5, I sent copies of colour slides taken by Penny Soares and myself to the two authors. I am particularly grateful to them for their helpful comments.

I made the following conclusions: The bird was an immature, as indicated by its grey plumage. Although Tundra's grey plumage has gone by March and Trumpeter can show immature plumage in April or later - this I.D. is of little use to our swan in late November, although there was much white plumage on the body, which would develop earlier on a Tundra.

Tundra is usually smaller, but there is an overlap in size between male Tundra and female Trumpeter. (Immatures of both species are slightly smaller than adults and do not achieve full adult size until their second spring). The head and neck look proportionately smaller on Tundra. However, these points are of little use with no other swan for comparison.

The apex of the back is central on Tundra, towards the rear of Trumpeter. This is often difficult to see, but all the photos of our swan show a central apex.

The structure of the bill is very significant in identification. Immatures of both species can have a flat culmen. The nostril placement is particularly important:-

Trumpeter - the nail to nostril is 2ins. or more.

Tundra- the nail to nostril is 2ins. or less. However, more importantly -

Trumpeter - the distance from

nostril to eye = nostril to bill tip.

Tundra- the distance from nostril to eye is greater than nostril to bill tip.

The ratio for the Bermuda swan was 1.9:1.0 (based on measurements taken from the slides). In other words the distance from nostril to eye was almost twice the distance from nostril to bill tip. This strongly indicates Tundra.

It is worth noting that the bill reaches adult size by a swan's first fall (unlike its body). Therefore the bill can look proportionately large on immatures - certainly true for the Bermuda swan. It is more useful to look at the following ratio - of nape to eye : length of bill (tip to gape).

Trumpeter ratio 1:2

Tundra ratio 1:1 (but more often 1:1.5)

The ratio for the Bermuda swan was 1:1.1 (based on measurements taken from the slides). This again strongly indicates Tundra. The Trumpeter appears to have a bill that is "black with a pink area in the middle" whereas a Tundra has a "pink bill with black at the ends". Our swan would appear to conform with the latter description and fig.5 and fig.6 (p.310 *Birding*) show great similarities. Matt Heindel comments, "I think the single most solid clue is the bill. By the end of the year, almost all Trumpeters show a dark bill, with some pink in the middle. Of course this is variable, but the pattern of the bird pictured is very typical for an immature Tundra."

My own conclusion is that the swan in Bermuda was not a Trumpeter Swan *C. buccinator* (as reported in the Audubon Newsletter Vol.6 No.1.) but a Tundra Swan *C. columbianus*. There have been two previous records in 1945 and 1985.

The 1995 Spring in Bermuda *by Andrew Dobson*

Highlights of this spring have included a Booby, Pacific Golden-Plover, Horned Lark, several Yellow-throated Vireos, Philadelphia Vireo, and possibly Bermuda and North America's first Pallid Swift. (See separate table for dates).

Seabird migration has not been well observed this year due to unfavourable wind direction. Shearwaters have been seen off-shore, but up to mid-June, few large flights were observed. Winds were rarely from the south-east which kept birds well out to sea. Small numbers of jaegers have been seen chasing migrating Arctic Terns and our breeding Longtails (White-tailed Tropicbirds). Paul Watson saw a single Roseate Tern being chased by Common Terns in the Harbour Islands, while Chris and Ron Porter were lucky enough to be within a few feet of a Booby on North Shore before it flew up off the water and out of sight. The description suggested that it might even be Bermuda's first Red-footed Booby, but we will have to wait for more details.

By June most herons and egrets had departed and the only migratory duck to remain was a female Wood Duck at Spittal Pond, which may well become the first summering record for this species. Leila Madeiros was amazed to see a Peregrine Falcon take a Feral Pigeon in the middle of Hamilton, providing the earliest record for this uncommon spring migrant.

Although spring shorebirds were sparse, pride of place goes to the Pacific Golden-Plover (see separate article) which stayed for four months. A single Black-necked Stilt and Wilson's Phalarope graced Spittal Pond, while two Upland Sandpipers, a Ruff and Whimbrel provided interesting spring dates.

Chimney Swifts were scarce, but quite astonishingly, a possible Pallid Swift seen by Eric Amos over Spittal Pond Farm would be the first sighting of this Mediterranean species on this side of the Atlantic. Unfortunately no other birders were contacted until dark, and the bird was never seen again. All the regular swallow species occurred this spring, but a Bank Swallow seen on the Naval Air Station in early April is probably the earliest ever.

A Western Kingbird found by Andrew Harford in the Arboretum, provided a number of birders with their first view of this flycatcher which is commonly found on the western side of North America. No Horned Larks were present this winter, but one seen by Paul Watson on the Naval Air Station was the latest spring record. Particularly noteworthy this spring were vireos. A Yellow-throated Vireo was seen in mid-February, perhaps it over-wintered, but others were also seen in the early spring. A Philadelphia Vireo at Blue Hole Park in early March was also exceptional. This vireo was only found as a result of a Yellow Warbler having been seen at the same location. A singing Dickcissel in Fairylands was a major surprise for Steven DeSilva, but he was then astonished to see a Bobolink in the same location!

Of our returning breeding birds, Longtails were first seen off Nonsuch Island on 14th February, while Common Terns were noted on 25th March by the Causeway.

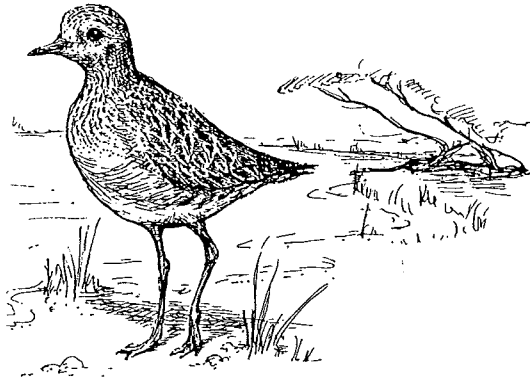
A total of 49 pairs of Cahows successfully raised 24 young this year. With an increase in the number of breeding pairs, David Wingate is optimistic about their future.

Spring Bird Dates 1995

Compiled by Andrew Dobson

	First date	Location	Last date	Location
Pied-billed Grebe	*	Various	9.5	Spittal Pond
<u>Horned Grebe</u>	1.2	Castle Harbour (DWa)	15.3	Castle Harbour
Cory's Shearwater	21.3	Cooper's Point	Still passing in June	
Greater Shearwater	24.5	Cooper's Point	Still passing in June	
Sooty Shearwater	29.4	Devonshire Bay	Still passing in June	
Manx Shearwater	16.2	Cooper's Point	24.5	South Shore
White-tailed Tropicbird	14.2	Nonsuch Island	Breeding	
<u>Booby sp.</u>	24.5	North Shore (RP- single date)		
Double-crested Cormorant	2.3	Little Sound	7.4	Little Sound
American Bittern	*	Various	17.4	Somerset Long Bay
Least Bittern	3.3	Tom Moores	25.4	Spittal Pond
Great Blue Heron	*	Various	Still present in late June	
Great Egret	*	Various	Still present in June	
Snowy Egret	*	Various	22.5	Spittal Pond
Little Blue Heron	3.4	Spittal Pond	14.5	Spittal Pond
Tricolored Heron	3.4	Spittal Pond	26.4	Spittal Pond
Cattle Egret	6.2	Camden Marsh	22.5	Jubilee Road
Green Heron	6.3	Blue Hole Park	10.5	Marsh Lane
<u>Black-crowned Night-Heron</u>	28.1	Spittal Pond		
Glossy Ibis	*	Devonshire Marsh	22.4	Devonshire Marsh
Wood Duck 4	*	Various	Still present in late June	
Green-winged Teal	*	Various	9.6	Nonsuch Island
<u>American Black Duck</u>	*	South Pond	8.4	Nonsuch Island
Blue-winged Teal	*	Various	19.5	Spittal Pond/Gibbons P
Northern Shoveler	*	Various	1.3	Spittal Pond
Eurasian Wigeon	*	Lover's Lake/Jubilee Rd	13.2	Jubilee Road
American Wigeon	*	Various	5.3	Lover's Lake
Ring-necked Duck	*	Various	8.4	Pitman's Pond
Lesser Scaup	*	S.Princess/Spittal Pond	9.4	S.Princess Pond
Hooded Merganser	*	Various	8.4	Spittal Pond
Red-breasted Merganser	*	Great Sound/Daniels Head		
<u>Ruddy Duck</u>	*	Spittal Pond	8.4	Spittal Pond
Osprey	*	Various	Still present in late June	
<u>Northern Harrier</u>	*		27.2	Hawkins Island
American Kestrel	*	Various	30.3	Alton Hill
Merlin	*	Various	1.5	C.A.T.
<u>Peregrine Falcon</u>	15.3	Hamilton (LM - single date)		
Sora	12.2	Spittal Pond	17.4	Pembroke Marsh
<u>Purple Gallinule</u>	9.5	Marsh Lane	22.5	Marsh Lane
American Coot	*	Various	25.4	Spittal Pond
Caribbean Coot	*	Somerset Long Bay Still present in June		

Black-bellied Plover	*	Various	Still present in June	
<u>Pacific Golden-Plover 1</u>	21.1	USNAS (SD/DBW)	10.5	USNAS
Killdeer	2.4	Jubilee Road	8.4	Dockyard
<u>Black-necked Stilt</u>	14.4	Spittal Pond	6.5	Spittal Pond
Greater Yellowlegs	12.2	Marsh Lane	23.5	Spittal Pond
Lesser Yellowlegs	20.2	Marsh Lane	9.5	Warwick Pond
Solitary Sandpiper	3.4	Marsh Lane	17.5	Spittal Pond
Spotted Sandpiper	*	Various	26.2	Castle Harbour
Upland Sandpiper 4	23.5	C.A.T. (DBW - Two birds)		
Whimbrel 2 4	4.4	C.A.T. (AD)	24.5	USNAS (DBW)
Sanderling	*	Various	28.5	Elbow Beach
<u>Semipalmated Sandpiper</u>	18.5	Spittal Pond	19.5	Spittal Pond
<u>Least Sandpiper</u>	4.5	Spittal Pond (single date)		
Pectoral Sandpiper	7.5	Warwick Pond	18.5	Spittal Pond
<u>Dunlin</u>	21.1	C.A.T	30.3	C.A.T.
<u>Ruff</u>	8.4	Marsh Lane (AD)	13.4	Marsh Lane
Common Snipe	10.3	Devonshire Marsh	18.4	Marsh Lane
<u>Wilson's Phalarope</u>	18.5	Spittal Pond (DWa)	21.5	Spittal Pond
Pomarine Jaeger	6.5	South Shore	25.5	South Shore
Parasitic Jaeger	29.4	South Shore	6.5	South Shore
Long-tailed Jaeger	1.5	South Shore	29.5	South Shore
Jaeger sp.	21.3	Cooper's Point		
<u>South Polar Skua</u>	24.5	Nonsuch Island (DBW - single date)		
Skua sp.	18.4	Off west end		
Laughing Gull	7.5	Dockyard	14.5	Dockyard
<u>Common Black-headed Gull</u>	12.2	USNAS (single date)		
Bonaparte's Gull	26.1	Nonsuch Island	19.3	Hamilton Harbour
Ring-billed Gull	*	Various	9.5	South Shore
Herring Gull 4	*	Various	28.5	Spanish Point (PW)
<u>Iceland Gull</u>	12.2	USNAS	27.3	St.Davids
Lesser Black-backed Gull	*	Various	2.4	Hog Bay
Great Black-backed Gull	*	Various		Still present in June
<u>Roseate Tern</u>	28.5	Two Rock Passage (PW - single date)		
Common Tern	25.3	Causeway		Breeding
Arctic Tern	29.4	Devonshire Bay	29.5	Devonshire Bay
<u>Least Tern</u>	15.5	Castle Harbour (single date)		
<u>Yellow-billed Cuckoo</u>	16.5	Nonsuch Island (single date)		
Chimney Swift	14.5	Spittal Pond	17.5	S.Princess
<u>Pallid Swift 1</u>	22.5	Spittal Pond Farm (EA - single date)		
Belted Kingfisher	*	Various	24.5	Cooper's Point
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	10.2	Coral Beach Club	2.4	Jenningsland
<u>Western Kingbird</u>	9.3	Arboretum (AH)	24.3	Arboretum
<u>Horned Lark 4</u>	17.4	USNAS (PW - single date)		
Purple Martin	2.4	Hog Bay Park	23.5	USNAS
<u>Tree Swallow</u>	1.4	Daniels Head (single date)		
Bank Swallow 2	4.4	USNAS (AD)	16.5	Ruths Point



Pacific Golden-Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

Illustration by Wendy Frith

Cliff Swallow	26.3	Daniels Head		
Barn Swallow	31.3	Nonsuch Island	24.6	Spittal Pond
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	*	Port Royal/Jenningsland	16.4	Jenningsland
Hermit Thrush	*	Various	12.4	Jenningsland
<u>American Robin</u>	24.3	Jenningsland	6.4	Jenningsland
Cedar Waxwing	*	Various	11.5	Jenningsland
Yellow-throated Vireo 2	12.2	Botanical Gardens (JM)	21.4	Hog Bay Park
<u>Philadelphia Vireo 2</u>	6.3	Blue Hole Park (EA - single date)		
<u>Red-eyed Vireo</u>	10.5	Coral Beach Club	11.5	Coral Beach Club
Blue-winged Warbler	*	Various		
Orange-crowned Warbler	*		2.2	Shelly Bay Marsh
Nashville Warbler	*	Various	21.4	Jenningsland
Northern Parula	*	Various	9.4	Jenningsland
Yellow Warbler 3	3.3	Blue Hole Park (SD)	5.5	Coral Beach Club
Magnolia Warbler	11.3	Coral Beach Club	11.5	Coral Beach Club
Cape May Warbler	*	Various	25.4	Jenningsland
Black-throated Blue Warbler	*	Various	10.4	Arboretum
Yellow-rumped Warbler	25.3	Horseshoe Dunes	10.4	Devonshire Marsh
Black-throated Green Warbler	24.3	Fairylands	29.4	Great Head Park
Yellow-throated Warbler	*	Various	31.3	Port Royal GC
Pine Warbler	*	Various		
Prairie Warbler	*	Various	3.3	Warwick Dunes
Palm Warbler	*	Various	29.4	Great Head Park
Black-and-white Warbler	25.3	Horseshoe Dunes	24.4	Jenningsland
American Redstart	31.3	Port Royal GC	19.5	Great Head Park

Prothonotary Warbler	8.4	Tom Moores/Spittal Pond		
Worm-eating Warbler	10.4	Jenningsland	30.4	Great Head Park
Ovenbird	*	Various	16.5	Nonsuch Island
Northern Waterthrush	*	Various	21.5	Spittal Pond
<u>Louisiana Waterthrush</u>	9.4	Lukes Farm (single date)		
Common Yellowthroat	*	Various	26.4	Spittal Pond
Hooded Warbler	*	Various	29.4	Great Head Park
<u>Yellow-breasted Chat</u>	10.4	Vesey Street (single date)		
Summer Tanager 2	12.3	Arboretum (PS)	25.3	Horseshoe Bay
<u>Scarlet Tanager</u>	9.5	Devonshire Marsh (single date)		
Rose-breasted Grosbeak 3	9.3	Arboretum	28.4	Nonsuch Island
<u>Blue Grosbeak</u>	7.5	Talbot Estate (single date)		
Indigo Bunting	*	Various	23.5	Nonsuch Island
<u>Dickcissel 3</u>	23.3	Fairylands (SD - singing/single date)		
Chipping Sparrow	*	Various	15.4	Port Royal GC
Savannah Sparrow 4	*	Various	13.5	USNAS
<u>Fox Sparrow</u>	*	Hog Bay Park		
<u>Swamp Sparrow</u>	*	Evans Pond	25.2	Evans Pond
White-throated Sparrow	10.4	Arboretum/Vesey St.	15.4	Port Royal GC
Dark-eyed Junco	*	Mid-Ocean GC	31.1	Mid-Ocean GC
Snow Bunting	*	USNAS	21.1	USNAS
Bobolink 2	23.3	Fairylands (SD)	23.5	USNAS

Significant records are noted with the observers initials.

Many thanks to those who have provided details of their sightings:

Eric Amos (EA)	Steven DeSilva (SD)	Andrew Dobson (AD)
Andrew Harford (AH)	Peter Holmes (PH)	Jeremy Madeiros (JM)
Leila Madeiros (LM)	Ron Porter (RP)	Penny Soares (PS)
David Wallace (DWa)	Paul Watson (PW)	David Wingate (DBW)

All records have been submitted and printed in good faith. Audubon members are encouraged to submit any interesting bird records, or telephone the Audubon Hotline 238-3239.

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- 1 New record for Bermuda
 - 2 Earliest spring record
 - 3 Earliest spring record but possibly over-wintered
 - 4 Latest spring record
- Underline = Single bird

Membership Renewal/Application

(see address label for expiry date)

Name.....Tel.No.....

Address.....

Adult.....\$10.00

Student.....\$ 5.00

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New Member

Renewal

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Return to: Bermuda Audubon Society

P.O.Box HM 1328 Hamilton HM FX

Bermuda Audubon

Society

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Vice-President	Andrew Dobson
Treasurer	Ted Cassidy

Committee members	Heather DeSilva
	Penny Hill
	Peter Holmes
	David O'Neill
	Helge Trapnell
	David Wingate

Newsletter	Andrew Dobson
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Bermud Audubon Society

HOTLINE

238-3239

bird news
society business
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If undelivered please return to:



Bermuda Audubon Society
P O Box HM 1328
Hamilton HMFx

Future Events

Saturday 24 June to Saturday 1 July	Nonsuch Island Natural History Camp for students
Sunday August 20	Nonsuch Island Open Day Depart from Biological Station 9.30 pm Return from Nonsuch Island 3.30 pm Reservations 292-0707 Cost \$20
Sunday 10 September	Spittal Pond Field Trip To observe migratory birds 7.30am East End car park. Refreshments provided
Friday 6 to Sunday 8 October	Birdwatching Weekend Paget Island Depart Ordnance Island 6.00 pm Reservations 238-3239 Cost \$40