

We apologize for not changing the caption under the December picture to read, "Can you identify these birds?" The problem was difficult enough without added confusion. Roger Everett, the photographer, is so busy catching ordinary and extraordinary birds on film that he has little time for field guides; hence, these are truly mystery birds - unidentified at the time they were photographed. Although the color slide did not stump the experts at Mass Audubon, identification from a black-and-white photocopy is another matter. We offered several birders the chance to write up this picture, but the most positive response was one expert's suggestion that the photo be withdrawn! By default, then, the reader must be content (or not) with the confused impressions of an acknowledged dilettante in the area of shorebird recognition.

General Inspection. The differences in the size and shape of the bills and the color of the legs indicate that these are two species, with the right-hand bird larger and somewhat longer-legged. Both appear to be immatures (light feather-edgings) and are standing in what looks like a pool but might be a receding wave.

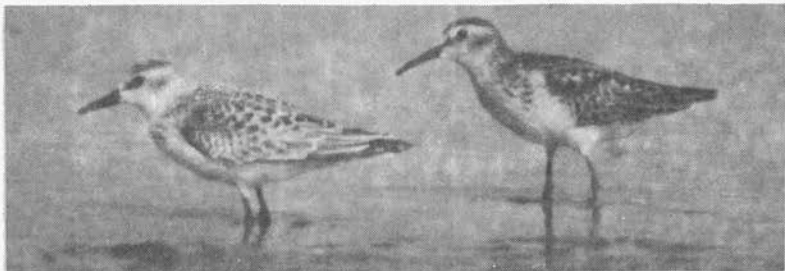
Left-hand bird: dark legs on a light-colored bird; medium-length tapering bill, heavy at the base; slightly elongated body shape, i.e., more bird aft than fore the legs; field marks - presence of a definite dark mark at the bend of the wing as well as a black-and-white checkered dorsal surface and the absence of dark flecks or chevrons along the sides. Possibilities that occur to me are SANDERLING, SEMIPALMATED, or WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER. Right-hand bird: light-colored legs on a darker-colored bird; a slender, tapering bill with possibly a terminal droop; the general proportions of a peep (as much bird to the front as to the rear of the legs); field marks - a white, supra-orbital line and a pattern of striations extending well down on the breast. How about LEAST (bird is much too large), WHITE-RUMPED (is bill straight enough; are legs too pale), or PECTORAL (most to my taste)?

I believe Roger was informed that this was a picture of a Semipalmated and a Pectoral Sandpiper, but my gut feeling now is that the left-hand bird is a SANDERLING. What is it doing standing quietly, legs nearly covered, in a pool? Perhaps, an immature, it is unpracticed in the frantic scurrying of Sanderlings at the water's edge.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? This pair of birds is no different from what you might come upon anytime, in season, along our New England coast. You may be lucky enough to have the birds fly off before you must commit yourself, but watch out for photographer-friends who can preserve the question on film!

D.R.A.

Photo by Roger Everett



# At a Glance . . .

Photo by John Gavin  
Courtesy of MAS



Can you identify this bird? Identification will be discussed in next issue's *At a Glance*. Bird Observer will award a PRIZE to the reader who submits the most correct answers in 1985. Please send your entry on a postcard to Bird Observer, 462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02178 before the answer is published.

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## Georges Bank - Hydrographer Canyon Pelagic Trips

May 31 - June 2 or September 6 - 8, 1985

A few places are still available on the June and September pelagic trips to Georges Bank and Hydrographer Canyon. The trips leave Gloucester at 7:00 P.M. and return 48 hours later. The trip leader for both trips will be Wayne Petersen. The cost for either trip is \$250 per person which includes meals and accommodations aboard ship. To reserve your spot please send a \$50 deposit (\$25 nonrefundable) to the BOEM Program Coordinator, Martha Vaughan, 15 Elmwood Park, Newton, MA 02160. Make checks payable to BIRD OBSERVER. If you have any questions, call Martha Vaughan at 617-244-0166.

*Register now!*

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