

A SECOND RECORD OF LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*)
IN MASSACHUSETTS

Date. First discovered on 25 July 1985; rediscovered on 1 August and then seen more or less continuously by a number of observers through the following week (exact date of departure unknown to the writer).

Location. Beach at Third Cliff, Scituate, Massachusetts. This is the precise location where a Rufous-necked Stint (*C. ruficollis*) occurred in July of 1980.

Observer. Discovered by Wayne R. Petersen on 25 July; rediscovered by the writer on 1 August, at which time it was shown to P. William Smith. From 2 August on, the bird was seen by numbers of people from Massachusetts and elsewhere.

Description from 25 July notes. I went to count shorebirds on the evening tide, which was full at 1800. Viewing conditions were excellent: clear sky and soft evening light; 10-12 mph SW wind. At approximately 1830 I noticed in a large group of Semipalmated Sandpipers a sleeping peep that impressed me by its richly colored back and the sandy-cinnamon coloration of its nape and head. The bird was resting on the dry sand adjacent to the salt marsh. Suspecting that the bird was an adult stint in alternate plumage, I carefully stalked the bird, finally getting within about 80' of it. Several times the bird woke briefly, allowing me quick looks at its bill, which was thin and black and more pointed (less blunt) than the bills of nearby Semipalmated Sandpipers. Finally, something alarmed the flock, and it flew to a nearby, flooded washout on the beach, where most of the birds began to feed. After several minutes, I again located the bird, which now was actively running and probing, stopping for several minutes to doze near a tuft of beach grass, and then resuming its feeding. During these two periods, the following notes were made.

1. Head. Rich cinnamon with a definite sandy or yellowish cast to the color. Color most rich on the sides of the head and face, and extending around to include the nape. Top of head and crown dark, finely streaked (lightly spotted) with dusky and buffy streaks. Lores dusky (faint), but a light superciliary visible behind the eye. No white V extending from base of bill toward the eyes.

2. Back. Mantle and scapulars bright rusty, margined with pale buff, which produced a pronounced V on the midback, particularly noticeable as the bird walked away, and seemingly less visible some times than other times. Certain postures of the bird actually gave the impression of a second, less distinct V on the mantle. The scapulars had rather long, tear-shaped, black centers, which were prominently rusty and buff-fringed. No obvious contrast existed between the wing coverts and the scapular-mantle area. The tertials had dark centers; however,



Little Stint (Calidris minuta)

*Third Cliff, Scituate, MA
August 9, 1985
Photo by Rick Morus*

margin color simply was not observable, despite efforts to do so. The overall effect dorsally was much warmer and more richly colored than that of the adjacent gray-backed Semipalmated Sandpipers or the dark brown backs of the Least Sandpipers.

3. Underparts. The chin and throat were white. The rich color of the head and nape extended slightly onto the sides of the upper breast but clearly was not present on the throat, nor did this intense color occur even across the midbreast. There was at most a blush of rusty in the center of the breast. There were dusky streaks (spots) at the sides of the upper breast, and these extended toward the center of the breast but were barely discernible on the midbreast. Both the rusty coloration and the spotting were most conspicuous at the sides of the upper breast, not in the middle. The rest of the underparts were strikingly white.

4. Legs. The legs were black with no other color tone discernible, and they seemed particularly fine and slender. Careful scrutiny with a 20X telescope, when the bird was standing on hard-packed sand, showed no indication of toe webbing at a distance of about 50'. At no time was the clubfooted appearance of the Semipalmated Sandpipers apparent on the Little Stint.

5. Size and behavior. Overall size was close to but slightly smaller and more compact than nearby Semipalmated Sandpipers. The stint was dramatically smaller than an adjacent Sanderling, but was not as crouched or diminutive as the Least Sandpipers feeding in the same beach wash. When feeding, the bird darted and probed like the Semipalmated Sandpipers, and several times it was bumped and chased by nearby birds. It made several short flights, each time exhibiting a white wing stripe. However, detailed impressions of the flight pattern could not be obtained. At no time did the writer hear it call.

Observations were made at about 60'-80' for nearly an hour before the bird finally flew. Despite efforts to locate and observe it further, the stint could not be found again that evening.

Further observations were made on 1 August, when I had the chance to view the bird in Smith's Questar. This only enhanced impressions obtained at the time of the original observation. On this occasion, the broad, rufous margins of the tertials were more apparent than on the first encounter with the bird, due to the superior quality of the Questar image.

This record marks the second for Massachusetts, the first occurring at Monomoy Island, 19-25 June 1980.

Wayne R. Petersen

A QUESTION FOR BIRDERS

Have you bought your Duck Stamp this year? Any year? Ever?

On October 21, the first duck hunters loomed on the Massachusetts birdwatchers' horizon, marking the start of the forty-day (never on Sunday) 1985-86 duck-hunting season. If you find shotgun pellets falling around you as you search for a Harris' Sparrow on Bolton Flats this fall, control your indignation and fury. The people firing the guns may have contributed more than you to the wildlife refuge land you value so highly for birdwatching! How so? Read on.

The 1920s witnessed extensive draining of wetlands for farming and development, and the 1930s brought a prolonged drought that carried a double whammy. Drought eliminates wetlands in two ways: by drying them up directly and, indirectly, as a result of the practice of putting farm wetlands into cultivation once they become sufficiently dry and then "improving" the drainage. Federal studies have shown that less than half remains of 215 million acres of wetlands existing in colonial America and that 87 percent of this loss resulted from agricultural development.

Fifty years ago, the combined effects of cultivation, drainage, and drought on wildlife habitat so alarmed a group of hunters and conservationists led by Jay ("Ding") Darling, a political cartoonist for the *Des Moines Register*, that they petitioned Congress to act. The upshot was the passage of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act of 1934, requiring every waterfowl hunter sixteen or older to buy (for one dollar then, \$7.50 now) a Duck Stamp to be attached to the hunting license. Jay Darling was the artist for that first stamp, and in the half-century since, 89 million stamps have produced \$285 million in revenues used to acquire 3.5 million acres of wetland habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Today the artwork for the stamp is chosen in a Duck Stamp Contest, the only art competition regularly sponsored by the federal govern-