

SIGHTING OF A EURASIAN CURLEW (NUMENIUS ARQUATA) IN MASSACHUSETTS

by Richard R. Veit, Hull

On Sunday, September 19th, Simon Perkins and I were birding on the north end of Monomoy Island. The weather was clear and warm with a gentle breeze blowing from the southwest.

At approximately 10:00 a.m., as we approached the midway point between the northern end of the island and Inward Point, I spotted a distinctly white-rumped curlew flying south roughly 150 yards to the east of us. It continued south for about one mile, and then landed. I tentatively had identified the bird as being the Eurasian race of the Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*), as my view of the bird was not sufficiently good to judge its size.

Some three hours later, on our return trip from Inward Point, we were fortunate to flush the bird from the marsh grass, and were immediately struck by the tremendous size of the bird. During the next hour, we flushed the bird a number of times, and were able to scrutinize it in flight and at rest, both in the marsh and amongst other shorebirds on the tidal flats.

The bird was clearly larger than a Marbled Godwit, and seemed to approach the bulk and proportions of a Long-billed Curlew. The bill was exceedingly long and decurved, again closely resembling that of a Long-bill. The general coloration of the bird was a pale gray-brown; the breast was finely streaked and the belly whitish. The crown was finely streaked, but without any bold markings, as on a Whimbrel. There was an indistinct superciliary stripe as well as a suggestion of an eye-ring. Finally, in flight the bird displayed a striking white lower back, similar to the corresponding patch on either of the North American dowitchers. On flushing, the bird emitted a mournful, plaintive "cur-lee" call, as well as several shorter whistled notes with the same quality.

After examining the literature, we concluded that the bird could only be the Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*).

This record represents the second for the continent of North America, the first being a bird shot by a hunter on Long Island, New York, in 1853. That specimen is now in the state museum in Albany.

On September 20th and 21st, I was able to return to Monomoy and to identifiably photograph the bird despite its wariness. (It generally could not be approached closer than 300 yards when on the ground.) In addition, numerous experienced and competent observers were able to visit Monomoy and to observe this bird, which remained until at least the 12th of October.



Eurasian Curlew photographed in Scotland by Chris Leahy, Massachusetts Audubon Society