

## HOLARCTIC WADERS OBSERVED AT TIERRA DEL FUEGO, NOVEMBER 1977

by A. J. Williams and S. Pringle

Relatively little information is available on the occurrence and numbers of Holarctic waders wintering at Tierra del Fuego (Humphrey *et al.* 1970, Jehl & Rumboll 1976, Devillers & Terschuren 1977, Harrington & Morrison 1980a, Morrison *et al.* 1980). We made observations of seven species of Holarctic waders at three locations in Argentine Tierra del Fuego during November 1977. The localities were: 1) dry and flooded pasture adjacent to the junction between the Chorlito and main north-south roads, 6 November; 2) the southern 3 km of mudflats in San Sebastian Bay close to the Argentine frontier post, 7 November; and 3) from the northern side of the river mouth at Rio Grande, one hour's observations of waders flighting from high tide roosts to mudflats as the tide receded, on 7 November.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*. Two flocks, of 11 and 14 birds, flew past at Rio Grande, clearly showing their black axillaries. The only other observation of this species in South America south of Buenos Aires on the east coast and Concepcion on the west coast is that of Jehl & Rumboll (1976) who observed one at Rio Grande in 1974.

Knot *Calidris canutus*. Humphrey *et al.* (1970) considered this species to occur irregularly and cited observations from December to March. Subsequently, Jehl & Rumboll (1976) observed flocks in October, Devillers & Terschuren (1977) observed 3,000-5,000 at Rio Grande in January, and Harrington & Morrison (1980a) found 5,000-6,000 at Rio Grande and smaller flocks scattered along the east coast in December 1979. We observed two flocks, of approximately 100 and 250 birds, at San Sebastian and three groups of up to 30 birds at Rio Grande.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*. This species is a regular visitor to Tierra del Fuego and is found in almost all months of the year (Humphrey *et al.* 1970). They were common on mudflats, and were also seen on flooded pasture at the Chorlito junction.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*. This species is a regular visitor to Tierra del Fuego (Humphrey *et al.* 1970). We found Baird's Sandpipers in company with White-rumped Sandpipers at the coast and on flooded pasture, but Baird's Sandpipers also fed in dry, short grass pasture which was not frequented by White-rumped Sandpipers.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*. Regarded as irregular and uncommon in Tierra del Fuego by Humphrey *et al.* (1970) who list observations from December to April. Jehl & Rumboll (1976) observed 30 in October 1973. In 1977 we observed three at San Sebastian and another three at Rio Grande.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*. An irregular visitor to Tierra del Fuego with records from November to April (Humphrey *et al.* 1970). Jehl & Rumboll (1976) and Devillers & Terschuren (1977) each recorded single large flocks. We observed a single bird which fed with Hudsonian Godwits at San Sebastian.

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*. This species was described as a regular but uncommon visitor to Tierra del Fuego (Humphrey *et al.* 1970) and both Jehl & Rumboll (1976) and Devillers & Terschuren (1977) found fewer than 20 at a time, although Olog (1963) had previously reported them common in the northeast of the island. We found 700 in a 3 km stretch of mudflats at San Sebastian. More large waders, probably also this species, could be seen further along the flats which stretch for about 50 km around the Bay. Flock size at San Sebastian varied from approximately 50 to 200. This species breeds only in restricted areas in Canada and Alaska (Godfrey 1966). Its world population is likely to be small. The entire population winters in South America south of Sao Paulo - Matto Grosso (Schauensee 1966) and almost entirely east of the Andes (Johnson 1965). The coast of Argentina south of Bahia Blanca is cliff-dominated and mudflats are common only in estuaries (*pers. obs.*). It therefore seems possible that the northeastern part of Tierra del Fuego, especially Bahia San Sebastian with its extensive mudflats revealed by 6.6 m tides (Humphrey *et al.* 1970), may harbour a major element of the world population of Hudsonian Godwits during the northern hemisphere winter. Subsequent to our observations, Harrington and Morrison (1980b) observed 640 Hudsonian Godwits also at Bahia San Sebastian, and reached a similar conclusion about the importance of this locality for this species.

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A.J.Williams, Fitzpatrick Institute, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700, South Africa. (Present address: State Museum, P.O.Box 1203, Windhoek, Namibia.)

J.S.Pringle, 26 Morris Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 2AT, England.