

## Western Hemisphere Flyways

### A note on the feeding behaviour of Magellanic Plover *Pluvianellus socialis*

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The Magellanic Plover *Pluvianellus socialis* is, like the seedsnipes, one of the very special waders of the southern tip of the Americas. Hayman (1987) described Magellanic Plovers as follows: "a rare and beautiful soft grey-and-white wader found only around the southern tip of South America. It is unusual in a number of respects, not at least its habit of feeding its young by regurgitation, which is unique among waders. Its relationship is uncertain, and it may not be a plover at all".

On 25 December 1995 we visited a nearly dried out salty lake, not far from the Rio Grande Airport at Tierra del Fuego in southern Argentina. There were many waders on the mudflats, mainly White-rumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis*, some Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris Bairdii*, several still in summer plumage, and tens of Two-banded Plovers *Charadrius falklandicus*, but also a pair of feeding Magellanic Plovers. They were very hard to discover. They looked quite different from the other shorebirds, being grey with a white belly. From a distance only the firm short pink legs were visible. The feeding behaviour drew our attention especially. One of the Magellanic Plovers kept its distance on higher grounds while the other (the female?) caught small worms (or larvae) on the mudflat. The worms with a length of about 10 mm, were

kept in the beak in the same way as an Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* does: it gathered its prey in such a way that the worms were kept crosswise between its closed mandibles. When the plover had caught about ten worms, it walked with the worms dangling sideways of both sides of his bill back to its partner.

Jehl (1975) describes in his study that adults, when they return to feed their chicks, carry small bits of food in the bill. The behaviour we saw, however has not been described before, as far as I know. We did not look for young Magellanic Plovers, not only so as not to disturb this very rare bird, but also because we had to catch our plane back home.

#### REFERENCES

- Hayman, P., Marchant J. & Prater, T. 1986. *Shorebirds. An identification guide to the waders of the world.* Croom Helm, London & Sydney.
- Jehl, R. 1975. *Pluvianellus socialis*: biology, ecology and relationships of an enigmatic Patagonian shorebird. *Transactions of the San Diego Society of Natural History* 18(3): 25-74.

