

plumage studied at length in California. The tail pattern, size, scaly appearance, straight, medium-length bill, and buffy foreneck and breast rule out all other shorebirds.

Wilson's Phalarope breeds in the interior of North America and winters in southern South America. It is recorded in transit in western Ecuador and Colombia, and in Central America. Phelps and Phelps (*Lista de las Aves de Venezuela con su Distribución*, Tomo II, Parte 1, Caracas, 1957) opined that Wilson's Phalarope (p. 16) would probably be found in Venezuela, but they apparently could not state positively that it had occurred. Moreover, vagrants have been observed in Jamaica, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Barbados (Bond, *Birds of the West Indies*, 1974) and in interior Brazil in Mato Grosso (de Schauensee, *The Species of Birds of South America with their Distribution*, 1966).

The Ruff is, of course, a Eurasian bird, but it has been reported frequently from North America. Antillean records were sufficiently numerous for Bond (*op. cit.*) to include the species in the main text rather than in his "List of Vagrants." Indeed, he notes it as "a frequent visitor to Barbados." The only previous South American record is from Colombia, but, according to Blake (*Manual of Neotropical Birds*, p. 592, 1977), it is "based solely on a skin of 'Bogotá' make and is questionable." However, after mentioning one record each for Guatemala and Panama and

two observations for Trinidad, Blake surmises that "accidental occurrences on the South American mainland are likely."

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE new records for Venezuela, the series of fall shorebird censuses carried out by the authors in 1975, 1976 and 1977 at the Refugio de Fauna Silvestre de Cuare has resulted in observations of several other shorebird species only rarely recorded in Venezuela. Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*), a species previously known in Venezuela from only two specimens (Phelps and Phelps, *op. cit.*) was sighted Oct. 18, 1975 and Nov. 1, 1975. Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*), known in Venezuela from only one specimen (*op. cit.*) was recorded Sept. 28, 1975 (two individuals), Sept. 10, 1977 (two individuals) and Sept. 17, 1977 (one individual). Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), not previously reported from the Venezuelan mainland, (although reported resident in the Dutch and Venezuelan islands of the southern Caribbean), has been found to be regular in small numbers (up to seven individuals) in September and October of all three years.

The authors would like to thank E. R. Blake and E. Eisenmann for commenting on this manuscript.

—*Departamento de Matemáticas, Universidad Simon Bolívar, Apartado Postal 5354, Caracas, Venezuela.*

Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

George G. Daniels

THIS NOTE IS SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF MY colleagues Allan R. Keith, Charles W. Lincoln, Richard M. Sargent, E. Manning Sears — and myself.

At approximately 10 a.m. on February 18, 1978, we arrived at the northwest corner of Menemsha Pond preparatory to birding the area. Manning Sears was the first to spot a large shorebird standing among gulls on a sandspit approximately one-half mile to the

east. Through binoculars we could discern that the bird was a curlew, and the expectation was that it would be a Whimbrel, which would have been unusual enough at this time of year. However, the first look through our scopes — ranging from 20x to 40x — made it clear that here was no Whimbrel. The bill was too long and the bird appeared to be plain-headed, lacking the Whimbrel's bold stripes. The bird, also, was immense —



Eurasian Curlew, Menemsha, Martha's Vineyard, Mass., Mar. 11, 1978. Note the light tail and white wedge extending up the back. Photos/ Alan Brady.

nearly Herring Gull size.

Color was a medium-dark, brown-gray, which ruled out Long-billed Curlew, as did the bill, which, while long, was not exceedingly so. At this point, in feverish consultation with a European field guide, we began to suspect that our bird was a Eurasian Curlew, *Numenius arquata*. We thereupon moved up to the bird, leap-frogging so that some members of our group always had the bird in scope. After we had worked up possibly one-third of the distance, it became apparent that the bird, in fact, did not have head stripings. We also observed that aside from the body streaking, there was a thin, horizontal whitish line where the wings covered the tail. The legs appeared slaty blue, in what was fair light, with the sun off our right shoulders.

The bird next got up and flew a short distance, exposing a light tail, with a white wedge running up into the back. We now knew that it was a species of European curlew. Not wishing to rule out anything, we considered the possibility of Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*), but the bird was much too big and too long-billed.

OUR BIRD COOPERATED ADMIRABLY by flying across the narrow Menemsha channel to a marsh, affording excellent views. We were impressed by the triple-toned effect: brownish grey body and fore-wing, a distinctly lighter area in the secondaries, and a much darker set of primaries. This flickering triple-toned effect as the bird flew was really quite striking. It was in dramatic contrast to

the more uniform mantle of Whimbrel — of whichever race.

We continued to observe the bird on the marsh for perhaps another ten minutes, and finally concluded that no good purpose would be served by moving to the opposite shoreline and perhaps spooking it into flight.

We found the bird again the next day, and confirmed all of our previous observations. Numerous groups of birders from Massachusetts, Connecticut and as far away as Florida, on hearing the news, travelled to the Vineyard and saw the bird. The last reported sightings was on March 18.

Numenius arquata breeds in Eastern Europe, the U.S.S.R. and Scandinavia and normally winters throughout much of Europe, North Africa and Asia Minor. As far as we



Eurasian Curlew, same bird, showing the long decurved bill, light area in the secondaries and dark forewing.

can determine, this is the third record for continental North America. A bird of the nominate race was collected on Long Island, N.Y., in 1853. A second bird was observed at Monomoy, Cape Cod, Mass., in the fall of 1976. It is interesting to speculate whether the present bird is the Monomoy bird of two years past. These accidentals have a way of turning up in the same general area year after year. A Smew reported in Rhode Island in 1978 was possibly a returnee [see p. 322]. A Sandhill Crane turned up on the Vineyard a

year after one spent the winter on the Cape. And finally, two male Brewer's Blackbirds spent the winter of 1975 on the Cape, the winter of 1976 on the Vineyard, the winter of 1977 back on the Cape, and, lo, Allan Keith pointed out a male Brewer's in a flock of Starlings on this last trip at the very same Katama farm where the two had appeared at Christmastime two years earlier.

— 10901 Pleasant Hill Dr., Potomac,
MD 20854.

Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) breeding in Newfoundland

Davis W. Finch

At Stephenville Crossing on the west coast of Newfoundland an extensive estuary with broad flats, shallows and small islands provides breeding habitat for Great Black-backed, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls as well as Common and Caspian Terns. Since at least 1973, small numbers of summering Black-headed Gulls have also been present, as the following records indicate: In 1973, four adults on August 15 and two on August 20 (DWF); in 1974, three adults on July 17 (AGR); in 1975, ten adults on July 27 (BDMact, SIT); in 1976, eight adults or second-summer birds on July 28 and four on August 24 (DWF). In 1977, I visited the area on August 12 and 26, finding on the first occasion five adults and a just-fledged juvenile, and on the second five adults and three juvenals. This appears to be the first evidence of North American breeding by the species.

That these were indeed locally-hatched juvenals was apparent from the fact that the primaries were not fully developed, the wings being short and rounded at the tips and the wingbeats deep. To an observer accustomed to juvenal Bonaparte's Gulls they looked surprisingly dark brown on the crown, neck, back and upper wing surface, but like that species had a warm brown wash on the

sides of the upper breast. The feet were an indeterminate dark shade, the bill dull pink basally.

My approach across the flats provoked repeated if mild protest behavior on the part of the adults, some of which circled low overhead, making shallow dives and uttering a sharp "kuk-kuk". The only call heard from the young birds was a shrill whining "eeeer" repeated at short intervals both in flight, when in some cases they seemed to pursue adults, and on the flats, when they would walk up to adults in a hunched posture with neck withdrawn and head lowered. Although it could not be established with certainty, it seemed probable that two pairs of adults were present with young and although the record could not be based on nests and eggs, the evidence of breeding was unambiguous. It could be added that the discovery comes as no particular surprise, Black-headed Gulls having slowly increased in eastern North America for more than four decades. The species may well have nested at Stephenville Crossing prior to 1977; the area is only occasionally visited by birdwatchers.

I wish to thank Bruce D. Mactavish, A. Glen Ryan and Stuart I. Tingley for their records.

— South Road, East Kingston, N.H. 03827