

Terek Sandpiper in British Columbia, Canada

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ON JULY 21, 1987, WE DECIDED TO do some birding at River Jordan, 50 miles west of Victoria, Vancouver Island, British Columbia. As we neared Sooke on Highway 14, we turned left onto Goodridge Road and stopped at the Goodridge Peninsula end of the narrow causeway in Sooke Land District, British Columbia (48° 23'N, 123° 40'W). At 0845 hours PST, a grayish-brown shorebird teetering on the barnacle-encrusted gravel and boulder outer foreshore caused both of us to scrutinize with great care. This looked like a long-dreamed-of species. The long dark upturned bill and the two prominent dark lines on the back were diagnostic of Terek Sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*), a bird that we had hoped to see, but never really expected to find.

While one of us went back across the causeway to telephone birders in Victoria in order to get the confirmation process underway, the other studied the bird. Keeping it under close observation was not always successful, for the bird managed to disappear. Before long, Keith Taylor arrived from Victoria and found the bird farther east along the shore. He photographed it with his camera mounted on a telescope. We returned to Victoria, notified the Victoria Rare Bird Alert and contacted as many local birders as we could directly. The effectiveness of telephone networking is proven by the fact that about three hours later, we received calls from as far away as Ontario and Surrey, British Columbia. "Terek Sandpiper fever" spread rapidly, but did not appear as such on the sick-leave slips of working birders who did not wish to risk waiting until the weekend.

Several Victoria birders found their life Terek Sandpiper that evening. Among them was Tim Zurowski, who cautiously approached the bird in his kayak and took excellent close-up photographs, used here with his permission. Zurowski has placed copies of his photographs on file at the British Columbia Provincial Museum in Victoria (BCPM1160), and in the VIREO collection at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia (Z/03/6/001-004).



Photo/Tim Zurowski. VIREO Z03/6/001R.

These supplement Keith Taylor's earlier efforts. These and written descriptions ensure that the record is properly documented.

Probably the abundant supply of tiny crabs, on which the sandpiper appeared to be feeding voraciously, was the determining factor that kept the Terek on the south shore of Goodridge Peninsula until at least August 6. It was seen by many observers from several parts of Canada and the United States. We particularly like the story we heard of four young students from North Carolina who learned of the bird, hopped in a vehicle, took turns driving, drove continuously for about four days, existed on "fast food," and were ecstatic when they arrived and found the bird still there.

The Terek Sandpiper breeds from Finland, northern Russia, and northern Siberia south to central Russia, Lake Baikal, and Anadyrland, and winters from the Persian Gulf, southern Red Sea, Southeast Asia and Hainan south to South Africa, India, the East Indies, New Guinea, and Australia (A.O.U. 1983). It occurs casually in spring and fall migration in the west Aleutians, Pribilof Islands, St. Lawrence Island, Seward Peninsula, and the south coast of Alaska (Roberson 1980; A.O.U.

1983). Roberson (1980) mentions unconfirmed reports from Dungeness, Clallam County, Washington, on October 27, 1972, and from Alberta. The A.O.U. Check-list (1983) lists a sight report for Churchill, Manitoba. Godfrey (1986) details a single individual carefully observed there July 13, 1972, by James F. Akers. On the strength of this report, Godfrey placed the Terek Sandpiper on the hypothetical list for Canada. Neither Godfrey (1986) nor Salt and Salt (1976) mention an Alberta sighting. Our observation at Goodridge Peninsula is, apparently, the first confirmed sighting for North America outside of Alaska.

LITERATURE CITED

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