
Books

TUNDRA PLOVERS: THE EURASIAN, PACIFIC AND AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVERS AND GREY PLOVER. By Ingvar Byrkjedal and D. B. A. Thompson. 1998. T & A. D. Poyser, London (distributed in North America by Academic Press, San Diego). xxxiv + 422 pp. \$34.95 U.S.

One of those magical moments of birdwatching occurred for me on 22 May 1961, when I rounded a corner on the shore of Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba to be greeted by the sight of the sun gleaming off the golden backs of a flock of American Golden-Plover, accompanied by a single Ruddy Turnstone. Equally impressive was the silver shine gleaming from the backs of Black-bellied Plovers occupying the same sand spit a year later, on 21 May 1962, again with a single Ruddy Turnstone. The thrills of those two days have never worn off and are recalled every time I see or hear either species and on my subsequent introduction to Pacific Golden-Plovers in 1997. Thus, I was delighted to receive this scholarly book, devoted entirely to these four species of tundra-breeding plovers.

The authors have combined their own extensive data (some previously published, but also including considerable previously unpublished data) from Asia, Europe and Manitoba with data published by others. Their review of the literature is exhaustive, including not only major books and papers published in international journals, but also local books and notes published in regional journals and not only English publications, but also those published in several other languages. The 14 chapters of text cover the taxonomy and phylogeny of these four species and other plovers, zoogeography, plumages, molts, behavior/ecology in both breeding and non-breeding seasons, migration and conservation. The chapter and appendix on phylogeny and biogeography are co-authored with Godtfred Anker Halvorsen. Numerous plates, graphs and drawings are scattered throughout the text, which is followed by 14 appendices, an extensive reference list, 16 tables and an index. Virtually all those aspects of the biology of the "tundra" plovers that can be studied in "the field" are treated in extensive detail.

Banders will find much of interest in this book. Migration routes and some aspects of breeding biology are based on banded and/or radio-tagged birds. These include documentation of the long believed migration of Pacific Golden-Plovers between Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands, recovery in Japan of Pacific Golden-Plovers banded in the Pribilof Islands, wintering areas and migration routes of Black-bellied Plovers and Eurasian Golden-Plovers banded in various European countries, influence of habitat on whether Black-bellied Plovers feeding in England's Tees Estuary form short-term territories, long-term territories or no territories, amount of time that Black-bellied Plovers spend feeding at night, differences in night versus daytime roost sites of Pacific Golden-Plovers, longevity and site-fidelity of Pacific Golden-Plovers, overlapping home ranges of "off-duty" members of nesting Eurasian Golden-Plover pairs, times the latter spend on agricultural fields, shifts in their habitat use with progression of incubation, and progressive movements from nests of broods after hatching. Capture techniques are also described (pp. 31-32), with a note that nest traps work well, whereas mist nets do not. Trappability varies among species, the Eurasian Golden-Plover being the most problematic. The chapters on plumages, molts and geographical variation are detailed and well illustrated, with additional details in the corresponding appendices and tables. Tables include measurements of both adults (by sex) and chicks and a thorough comparison of "field marks."

Although the authors are from Norway and the British Isles, their coverage of North American information is thorough. Readers not familiar with European names may not realize that most references to "skuas" are to the smaller species that we call jaegers. Other names are also entirely those used in Europe. Even the North American name Black-bellied Plover for one of the main subjects of the book is not mentioned until p. 45, where various alternative common names for each species are listed. Although the lack of North American names will pose no problem for most ornithologists, the authors could have increased the appeal of the book to more casual North

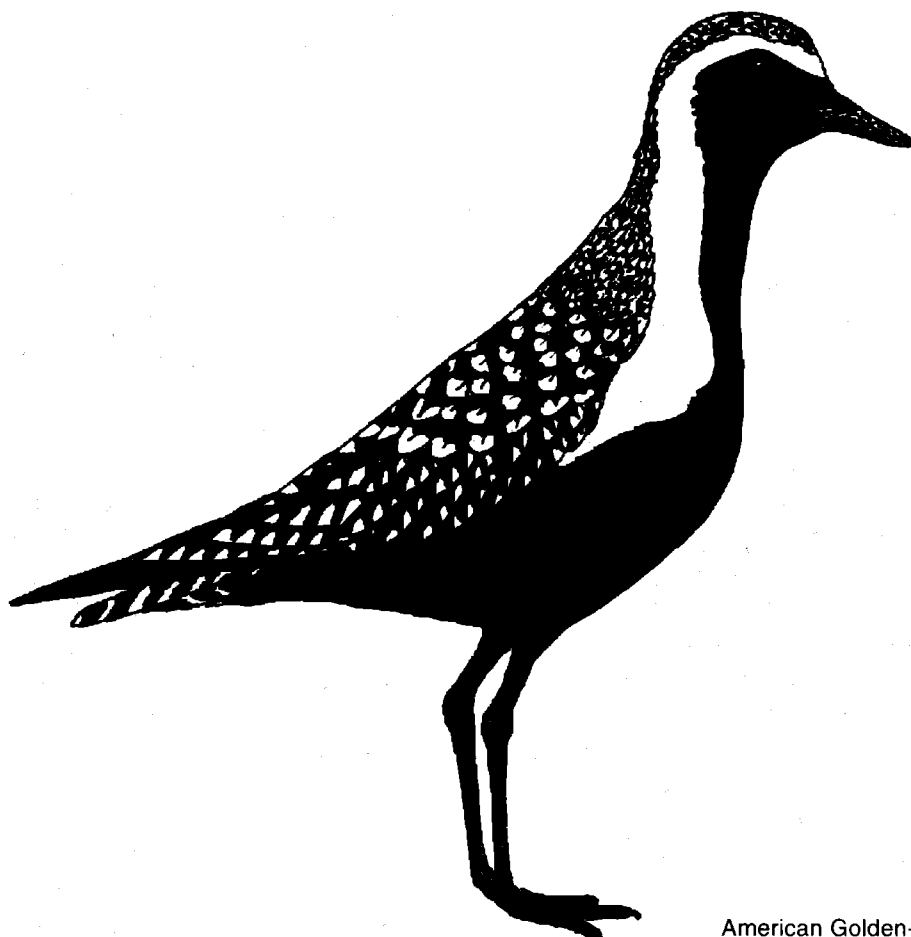
American birders by including North American English names in Appendix 1, where scientific names are listed.

As would be expected in a book written by two authors whose combined years of research on their subject totals about 50 years, this volume appears to be free of substantive errors. Errors are confined to minor grammatical points (especially repeated references to "between" the four species, instead of "among"), a few spelling errors in names of other researchers (e.g. Friedman instead of Friedmann and Hussel instead of Hussell at least four times, though spelled correctly elsewhere) and of at least one bird name (Kildeer on p. 292 instead of Killdeer) and a few references cited (Barnard and Thompson 1995 on p. 116, Downie *et al.* in press on p. 263, Flint and Kondratjew 1976 on p. 138, Holt and Whitfield 1967a on p. 329, Mayfield 1975 on p. 139, Thompson 1993 on p. 190 and

Thompson 1994 on p. 249), but not included in the reference list. Dover is incorrectly listed as the original publisher of Bent's 1929 *U.S. National Museum Bulletin* on shorebirds instead of as the reprinter.

In short, **Tundra Plovers** is a well-researched book packed with information. It should appeal to all shorebird enthusiasts, as well as anybody concerned with the ecology of Arctic regions.

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American Golden-Plover by George West