

FIRST RECORD OF THE EUROPEAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*PLUVIALIS APRICARIA*) FROM THE PACIFIC

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The European Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) breeds from Iceland and the British Isles east to the base of the Taimyr Peninsula, Russia, at about 102° 30' E (Vaurie 1965). Virtually the entire population migrates to or through Europe to winter in the British Isles, western Europe, and throughout the Mediterranean Basin; small numbers winter east to the southern Caspian Sea and casually to eastern India, and small numbers winter on the Atlantic coast of Africa, casually south to Gambia (Vaurie 1965, Cramp 1983). At the western periphery of this range, the European Golden-Plover is a regular vagrant to Greenland, where it is also a local breeder in the northeast (Boertmann 1994). It is a casual visitant to Newfoundland (including Labrador) and Saint Pierre et Miquelon, with nearly all records in April and May (Tuck 1968, Mactavish 1988, ABA 1996). There are reports from New Brunswick (Am. Birds [AB] 42: 408, 1988), Nova Scotia (AB 43:56, 1989; AB 44:390 1990; Natl. Audubon Soc. Field Notes [NASFN] 49:222, 1995), and Quebec (AB 42:1271, 1988).

On 14 January 2001 we collected a European Golden-Plover near the Ketchikan airport, Gravina Island, Alexander Archipelago, southeast Alaska (55° 17' N, 131° 46' W). In a search of the literature, and contacts with shorebird specialists in Asia and the Pacific, we found no evidence of the prior occurrence of this species in the Pacific basin.

Piston discovered the bird on 13 January 2001 and watched it for approximately one hour as it fed on a rocky gravel-covered beach with a flock of 35 Black Turnstones (*Arenaria melanocephala*), three Rock Sandpipers (*Calidris ptilocnemis*), and two Surfbirds (*Aphriza virgata*). Knowing that the occurrence of a golden-plover in Alaska in the winter was unprecedented, he took photographs and notes in the field. Later that same day we looked over references and discussed the bird's field marks. The bird was brightly colored, with gold speckles over the entire back and a golden wash on the head and breast. The bird also showed a faint white wing bar when it flew, a field mark of the European Golden-Plover. Other critical field marks were not noted, and we did not make much of the wing stripe at the time. We discussed the identification of the European Golden-Plover, but, quite naturally, did not seriously consider that species a possibility. Instead we focused our discussion on the field identification of the American (*P. dominica*) and Pacific (*P. fulva*) golden-plovers.

We determined to relocate the bird the next day and collect a voucher specimen of what we figured to be a Pacific Golden-Plover. We based this assumption simply on the fact that the bird was brightly colored, and also because that species would be the most likely golden-plover to occur in Alaska in the winter. The Pacific Golden-Plover winters locally in very small numbers in California (Garrett and Dunn 1981, Harris 1996), and it has been found casually in winter from Oregon (Gilligan et al. 1994, Contreras 1998) to the coast of southwestern British Columbia (Campbell et al. 1990). More recently, the Pacific Golden-Plover has been reported in winter at the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia, only 150 km southwest of Ketchikan. One at Massett 15 December 1991–February 1992 was reported as the first winter record for the Queen Charlotte Islands (AB 46: 304, 1992); two golden-plovers at Sandspit, 27 December 1997, were considered "about" the fourth winter record for the Queen Charlotte Islands (NASFN 52:245, 1998). Although the American Golden-Plover has been collected in mid-winter in the southeastern United States (Paulson and Lee

NOTES

1992), there are no substantiated midwinter records on the west coast of North America. No golden-plovers had previously been reported in Alaska in the winter.

On 14 January 2001 we relocated the bird with the same flock of shorebirds and again noted that it was relatively brightly colored. When it flew a short distance we saw that the bird indeed had a distinct narrow white wingstripe across the base of the flight feathers. At one point the bird flapped its wings and we were both stunned to see that it clearly had white axillaries and underwing coverts. We then noted that the bird appeared rather dumpy, with proportionately short legs, a chunky body and a neckless look, subtly different from the slimmer bodied, longer legged, and longer necked appearance that we are used to seeing in the Pacific Golden-Plover. We also noted that the bird had a shortish, slightly conical, deep-based, fine-tipped bill, and a uniform face pattern that lacked a strong supercilium (the supercilium looked to be the same dull yellowish color as the auriculars). All of these field marks led us to believe that the bird was probably a European Golden-Plover. (Excellent treatments of the field identification of the golden-plovers can be found in Hayman et al. 1986, Jonsson 1992, Beaman and Madge 1998, and Svensson et al. 1999.) We saw the bird fly again three or four times, but the underwings did not look especially white; either the light was not good or we did not have the right angle. Each time it flew we noted the narrow white stripe on the upperwing, which could be seen clearly from at least 100 meters. We agreed that we had never seen a Pacific or an American golden-plover with such a distinct wing stripe. We collected the bird and were again stunned to see that the bird had white axillaries and underwing coverts.

We forwarded the specimen to the University of Alaska Museum (UAM), Fairbanks, where our identification was corroborated by Daniel D. Gibson. Gibson prepared the specimen as a study skin and preserved partial skeleton, frozen tissues, stomach contents, and guts (lower digestive tract for disease screening). The specimen (UAM 12100) is a first-winter male, with mass 199.5 g (heavy fat), wing chord 181 mm, tail length 71.0 mm, bill length (from distal end of naris) 14.3 mm, bill depth 5.2 mm (at distal end of naris), bill width 4.9 mm (at distal end of naris), and tarsus length 45.0 mm (D. D. Gibson in litt.). The bird's stomach contained six species of gastropod mollusks up to 3 mm in length—four snails (*Lacuna vinita*, *Margarites helicinus*, *Lirularia succincta*, *Littorina scutulata*) and two limpets (*Lottia* sp. and *Tectura* sp.)—plus at least one crustacean fragment (Tanaidacea; Nora R. Foster, UAM, in litt.).

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NOTES

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