

UTAH BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE VERIFICATION OF UNUSUAL SIGHT RECORD FOR UTAH

COMMON NAME: Pacific Golden-Plover

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pluvialis fulva*

DATE: July 20, 2008

TIME: 13:00 – 14:30

LENGTH OF TIME OBSERVED: ~90mins

NUMBER: 1

AGE: Adult

SEX: Probable Male in alternate plumage

LOCATION: Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge. This is a first documented record for Fish Springs NWR of this species (if accepted).

COUNTY: Juab County

LATILONG: 39.85806, -113.36694 degrees

ELEVATION: 4370 feet

DISTANCE TO BIRD: ~30 meters at closest

OPTICS USED: 10 x 42 Leica Binoculars; Bushnell 60mm scope with 22-45x eyepiece.

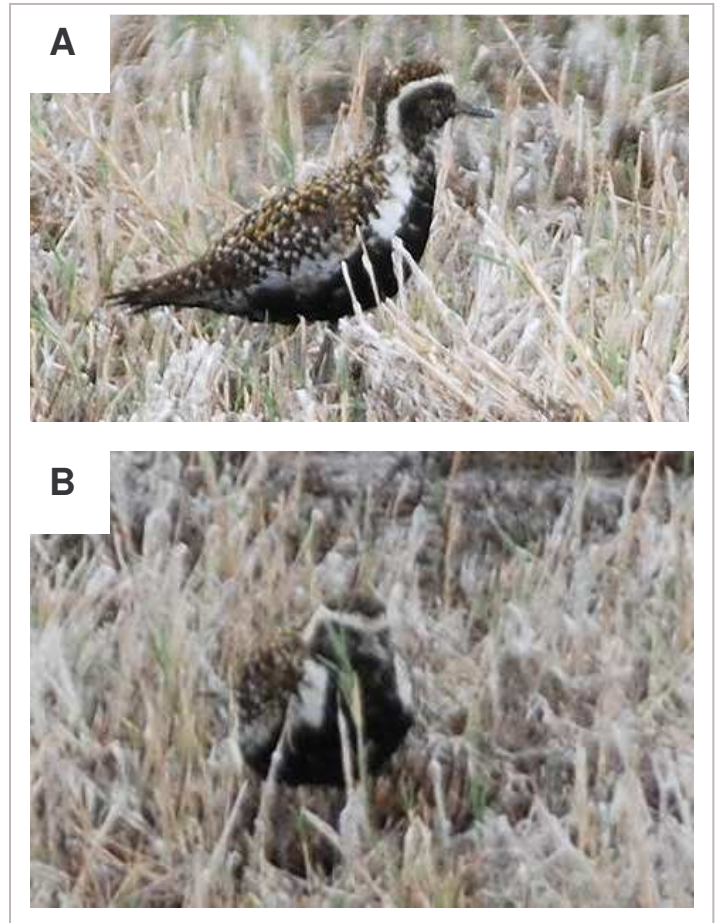
WEATHER: Sunshine, ~85F for an afternoon high; 10-20 mph wind from the South.

LIGHT CONDITIONS: Full to mostly-full sunshine. The sun was behind right shoulder of observer when facing the bird.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF BIRD:

A single bird was found on a small grass and mud island near the western shore of the Ibis Unit. The island was partially covered with salt grass (see habitat photograph on page 4). Observations and photographs were made from a dike on the western side. About 90 minutes elapsed between first finding this bird and taking our last photograph. Identification notes were made in the field and many photographs were obtained. After my initial observations I consulted a Sibley Field Guide to check for additional field marks that could be used to confirm identification. This report is written from those notes and photographs and from comparison to other photographs of American Golden-Plover (AMGP) and Pacific Golden-Plovers (PAGP) posted on various websites. Two recognized authorities on Pacific and American Golden-Plovers identification were contacted (see below) and their opinions obtained.

1. The overall impression of the bird was that of a medium-sized plover. While viewing it, nearby Long-billed Dowitchers and Western Sandpipers allowed for size comparison. The Golden-Plover was slightly larger than the



Long-billed Dowitchers and considerably larger than Western Sandpipers.

- Overall the plumage was black below, a mix of colorful gold, black, brown, and white above separated by a white stripe that extended from the undertail coverts to the forehead. The relatively narrow white stripe extended from the white undertail coverts, along the upper flanks and below the wing, along the side of the neck and then over the eye and across the forehead (see photos A and B). The white stripe was relatively narrow across the forehead and especially over the eye. All consistent with PAGP. The back was colorful, gold mixed with black and brown and white – spangled. This colorful back plumage extended from the top of the head to the tertials. The face was mostly black, consistent with a male.
- The eye was dark.
- The bill was black and relatively slender and longish. Although this is not a definitive field mark it is consistent with PAGP (Oscar Johnson, email communication and see attached manuscript).
- The legs were dark grey.
- Structural features: This is most easily seen in the expanded tail/wing assembly shown in Figure C. The longest tertial can be followed with the row of white dots (see A and C), extending to the white arrow in C. **Only 2-3 primary feathers extend beyond this end of this tertial feather.** Reviewers – Please view with digital version as the paper version loses resolution in my experience. This is consistent with the PAGP. The AMGP usually shows 4-5 primaries extending beyond the longest tertial (see Table 3 in Johnson and Johnson, 2004, Wader Study Group Bulletin, 103:42-49; manuscript attached). **The primaries also do not extend significantly beyond the tail (usually < 9mm; Table 3 in J&J, 2004) giving the bird a short tailed look (Figure A and C).** The longest primary does not significantly extend beyond tail. The end of tail is shown with black arrow in C. This is consistent with the PAGP. AMGP has an extension that is 2-3x this distance (see Table 3 as above).

SONG OR CALL AND METHOD OF DELIVERY: none noted

BEHAVIOR: The bird was resting in the salt grass during all of the observation and moved, at most, a few feet during the entire time I viewed it. It often crouched low when the wind was gusting. It appeared quite wary of us but did not fly.

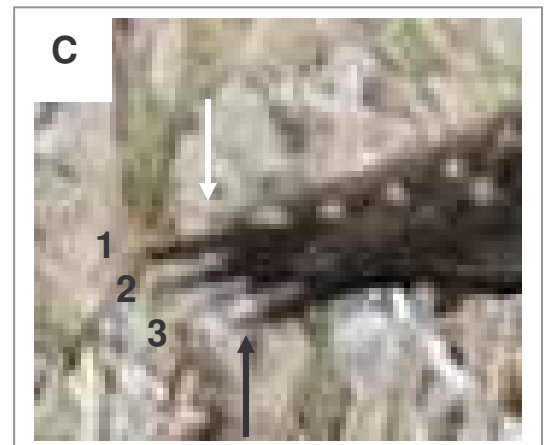
HABITAT: Freshwater ponds in an otherwise dry, desert habitat (see photograph on page 4 – this island of grass and mud was surrounded by the shallow waters of Ibis Unit).

SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW WERE THEY ELIMINATED:

American Golden-Plover: In addition to the comparison made in the description above, the AMGP shows the additional differences with PAGP. (1) The AMGP does not show the narrow white stripe along the flanks and connecting the undertail coverts with the neck stripe in this plumage. (2) In AMGP the neck stripe ends at the mid-breast level and is expanded in appearance. This is not observed with this bird. Dennis Paulson states in email communication that “In the American Golden Plover, the white patches actually converge toward the center of the breast. Not so in Pacific”. As shown in Figure B, the expanded area of the white stripe does not converge toward the center of the breast. This again is consistent with PAGP and not AMGP. (3) An AMGP in this plumage would show mostly black on the undertail coverts, while this bird showed mostly white here and only a small amount of black feathers. This is also consistent with PAGP. I’ve attached another image on page 5 and 6 that shows a better angle of this view and the back of the bird.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILAR SPECIES: According to old personal records, I have observed this species once previously near Vancouver, BC Canada during 1995-96. I cannot recall this bird so it did not help in my identification. I lived for a short period of time in central Illinois (Champaign-Urbana; University of Illinois during 1995) and witnessed the northward spring migration of AMGP, by the thousands. Also while living in western NY I identified a number of AMGP during their fall migration.

REFERENCES CONSULTED: A variety of websites were searched for photographs of American and Pacific Golden Plovers and examined.



I sent photographs of this bird to PAGP and AMGP experts, Dr. Oscar Johnson at Montana State University and Dennis Paulson at the Slater Museum of Natural History (University of Puget Sound). Both confirmed the Pacific Golden-Plover identification. Dr. Johnson also offered his expertise if there are questions from the records committee regarding this bird (owjohnson2105@aol.com).

DESCRIPTION FROM: NOTES TAKEN AT TIME OF SIGHTING , NOTES MADE LATER____, FROM MEMORY__

OBSERVER: Jack Skalicky

SIGNATURE:

ADDRESS: 1433 Harrison Avenue

CITY: Salt Lake City STATE: Utah ZIP: 84105

E-MAIL ADDRESS: Skalicky@biochem.utah.edu

PERMISSION: I GIVE MY PERMISSION TO POST THIS SIGHTING RECORD ON THE INTERNET IN AN AREA:

OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC , RESTRICTED TO THE RECORDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS_____

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THIS BIRD: Another refuge volunteer, Carol Schneier, was accompanying me on my survey route and confirmed the initial PAGP identification. She also took a number digiscoped photographs with her camera with the 60 mm spotting scope (Photographs on pp. 4-5). Photographs shown in A, B, and C were taken by myself with a Nikon D-80 camera and Tamron 200-500mm zoom lens – these were cropped and expanded and sent to me by FSNWR employee Robert Sims.

DATE PREPARED: August 29-Sept 3, 2008 and e-mailed on September 9, 2008.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL: PHOTO , DRAWING_____, TAPE_____, OTHER

RETURN THIS FORM TO:

UTAH BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE
2795 Indian Hills Drive, Provo, UT 84604

OR EMAIL TO:

records@utahbirds.org



Habitat



View showing the amount of white in undertail and vent areas and colorful back feathering. The very thin above eye line is also very obvious here.

