

ANOTHER ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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The Oriental Pratincole, *Glareola pratincola*, is a regular summer visitor to the northern parts of Australia and often occurs in large numbers. Further south it is regarded as rare; and Condon (1969) lists only one record for South Australia, this being a specimen taken at an uncertain locality—Meningie or possibly Milang—in 1905. This is the only previous record we can find for South Australia.

During a visit to Mosquito Point, a low-lying peninsula located in the north-eastern sector of Lake Alexandrina, on December 22, 1973, an Australian Pratincole *Stiltia isabella*, and an Oriental Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, were found together, by ourselves and D. H. Close. Both birds were subsequently watched for about 45 minutes; and Brian Finch obtained several clear photographs (using a telephoto lens), including ones of both birds together on the ground. Despite our disturbance, both birds did not leave the original area of bare earth and, when put to flight, merely circled us quite closely before alighting. They usually allowed an approach to 20 metres before moving and were obviously reluctant to leave the area. They were in the same place even on our return to it $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours later.

The description below is based on field-notes agreed on by the three observers shortly after their observations. Judging from this description, the bird was an adult in partial summer plumage. It should be pointed out that Condon and McGill (1967) misleadingly say that

the Australian Pratincole has a forked tail, although Condon illustrates it correctly; that the underwing is described as white, with "chestnut axillaries" in the Oriental Pratincole, when in fact in the field it appears all dark; and that the chestnut is not confined to the axillaries, but extends from the wrist to these feathers. The illustrations in P. Slater's *Field Guide to Australian Birds* are also misleading, as they show both pratincoles with the wrong colours and too upright a posture.

DESCRIPTION

The Oriental Pratincole was larger and stouter than the Australian species. The legs were shorter as was the neck, and when on the ground it had a more horizontal carriage. The difference in size was also apparent in flight. The wings were broader below the wrist joint, and the tail was clearly seen to be forked, whereas in the Australian bird it was rounded. In the latter the legs extended slightly beyond the tail-tip, while in the Oriental they did not. The flight of both species was much the same, very swallow- or tern-like with the long, pointed flexible wings beat with leisurely strokes, and with frequent erratic turns and swoops to near the ground. When landed the Oriental was more difficult to find, on account of its colouration, than was the Australian bird. Forehead to nape, cheeks, back, upperwing coverts and scapulars dark olive-brown. Closed wing darker. Rump and tail white contrasting greatly with the dark back, similar to the shape of the white rump of the Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola*, also seen nearby. The black margins to the forked tail were wider on the central feathers than on the outer. A dark broken line extending from the bill, through the eyes, and around a yellow-buff throat patch. Breast greyish, shading to white on the belly and undertail coverts. Underwing coverts a rich chestnut-red. Underside of primaries glossy grey. The bill was dark, short, with the upper mandible decurved near the tip. Legs were greyish.

REFERENCES

- Condon, H. T. (1969), *A Handlist of the Birds of South Australia*.
 Condon, H. T. and McGill, A. R. (1967), *Field Guide to the Waders* 4th Ed.