

TWO FURTHER RECORDS OF THE RED-NECKED PHALAROPE

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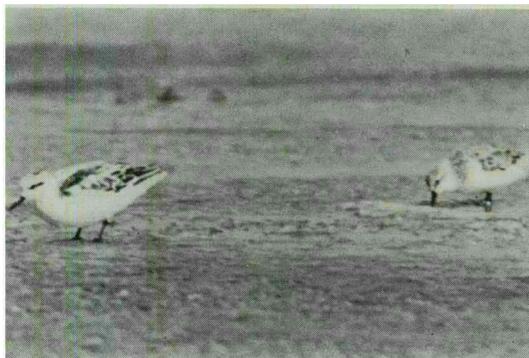
The first of these sightings was made in the saltfields of Price on the western shore of northern St. Vincent Gulf, on 1 February, 1976. These observations were made at a distance of between 10-20 m, from a vehicle parked at a point where swimming Banded Stilts *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*, and possibly the food of these birds, were forced to congregate by a south-westerly wind.

The stilts were feeding in a fairly characteristic manner by swimming with neck straight and held just forward of vertical with bill down at about 45 degrees. The birds pecked food from on or near the surface of the water. The salinity of this water was 167g/litre (TDS) or 4.7 times that of sea-water. At 12.15 hours a scan of the swimming birds revealed a smaller grey bird swimming with them and feeding in much the same manner.

The first view of this bird was from behind. The most striking marking was a thick dark stripe from the crown down the back of the neck to the back. The feathers of the back were grey with thick whitish edging. As the bird moved closer, it was seen to have a black bill which was short, thin and straight. The face was white with a black patch around the eye, the white extended down the front and sides of the neck to the breast. These features identify the bird as a Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. Grey flank feathers and missing wing feathers — noted later that day by J. B. Cox and others — showed that the bird was moulting.

The second record is from the I.C.I. Saltfields, St. Kilda, 30 March, 1976. A flock of 15 Red-necked Stilts *Calidris ruficollis* and one or two Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea* was flushed from the edge of a salt pan as a vehicle approached. The birds alighted on raised mounds of precipitated gypsum some 10 m from the road. One bird with these others, at first thought to be a Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos* because of the distinct white stripe on the wing and a downward position of the wings in flight, alighted on the water. On investigation, this bird was found to be a Phalarope.

This bird was observed from 13.50 hours to 14.16 hours and a description taken. The bill was thin, straight and black, as above, but the plumage differed greatly from the Price bird. The forehead was white mottled with dark grey; crown, nape and a line down the back of



Red-necked Phalarope and Red-necked Stint at Price Saltfields.

the neck to the back, dark grey. The back was dark grey with some of the feathers showing whitish edging. There was a faint white eyebrow and a dark grey line from the eye to the upper neck. On the side of the neck from head to lower neck were feathers of rust with some of white. For part of its length this rust area was between the dark eye stripe and the dark stripe of the back of the neck. The throat was white; across the lower throat were flecks of rust which joined the rust on the side of the neck. Below the rust on the lower neck the centre of the breast was white and the sides of the upper breast were mottled grey and white. The flanks were white streaked with grey. On flushing, the bird did not give any distinctive call. I later examined skins of this species in the S.A. Museum, including ones of females in breeding plumage. Comparison of these with the I.C.I. bird enabled me to identify the latter — by the brightness of the rust on the neck — as a probable female in the process of attaining breeding plumage.

This bird was seen to feed here in water with a salinity in the vicinity of 175g/l (TDS) about 4.9 times that of sea-water. The bird was not seen to swim in circles but did swing to one side then to the other to peck at food.

Other records of the species in this State are from Langhorne Creek (Eckert, 1969) and Whyalla (Cox, 1973).

REFERENCES:

- COX, J. B. 1973. "A further occurrence of the Red-necked Phalarope in S. Aust." S.A. Orn. 26: 116-117.
 ECKERT, J. 1969. "Red-necked Phalarope in S.A." Emu 69: 184-186.
 SLATER, P. 1970. A Field-guide to Australian Birds, Vol. 1.

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