

A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RECORD OF THE LITTLE RINGED PLOVER

KENT TRELOAR AND LEN UNDERWOOD

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The Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* has been recorded in northern Australia on four occasions (see McKean *et al.* 1976, Jaensch 1982). On 22 November 1980, we identified a wader at a freshwater swamp 0.5 km E of Minlaton on Yorke Peninsula as a Little Ringed Plover in non-breeding plumage. This is the first South Australian record of this species and the following description is based on our field notes:

Typical dotterel shape, similar in size, shape, stance and proportions to a Red-capped Plover *Ch. ruficapillus*; white below, grey-brown above. White throat and neck collar with blackish collar and brown breast band below it. Sandy white patch on forehead and black band extending from bill to just behind the eye being generally the same width as the bill but widening behind the eye and white on the sides of the tail. Bill black and legs yellow-orange. No trace of a band over the frons or of an eye ring. Seen to fly several times and there was definitely no wing bar. We did not hear the bird call; twice seen bobbing its head.

The complete lack of a wing bar is a diagnostic feature of *Ch. dubius*. We noted the leg colour as 'yellow-orange' although Pizzey (1980) described the legs as being 'dull pink' and Prater *et al.* (1977) said that the legs are 'dull flesh sometimes yellowish'. The leg colour of the Minlaton bird was not bright but was brighter than a Black-fronted Plover *Ch. melanops*. What was presumably the same bird was observed on five subsequent occasions under varying weather conditions,

being last seen on 4 December 1980. It was approached to within 10 metres. Photographs of the bird were obtained but are unfortunately unsuitable for publication.

Although seen feeding in close proximity to Red-capped Plovers Red-kneed Dotterels *Erythrogonys cinctus*, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata* and Red-necked Stints *C. ruficollis*, the Little Ringed Plover at no time appeared to associate with these species. When flushed, it rose sharply and rapidly with a zig-zag flight, becoming lost from sight over nearby gum trees *Eucalyptus* sp. It waded briefly on only several occasions and for the most part fed in mud very near the water's edge. The manner of feeding was typical of a plover, pecking the ground once then taking three or four quick steps, standing upright then repeating the movements.

The Little Ringed Plover was subsequently recorded elsewhere in South Australia in the summer of 1980-81 (see Jaensch 1982 for discussion).

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Kent Treloar, 15 West Terrace, Minlaton, S.A. 5575
 Len Underwood, Box 160, Minlaton, S.A. 5575