

THE TEREK SANDPIPER IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

By JOHN ECKERT

The Terek Sandpiper (*Tringa cinerea*) appears to be one of the world's less plentiful waders. Its breeding range extends from Siberia, through Russia to Finland, but it is a vagrant only to most of western Europe and virtually unknown from America. The winter range includes South Africa, Malaysia and Australia, and since 1961 it has been recorded on a number of occasions from New Zealand.

In Australia it is by no means a common bird and although fair numbers are seen in the north it is extremely rare in southern parts. Until the early 1960s, three records from the south-west of Western Australia and a few from Victoria would have summarized its known southern occurrences. Increased interest in waders since then has no doubt contributed in part to the more frequent southern sightings, the species having been noted annually in Victoria in recent years. The presence of a bird considered to be a Terek Sandpiper within South Australia was reported on February 5, 1961, (Alan Lendon, *Emu*, 65 (1965) p. 114).

On May 14, 1967, M. Streeter, a visiting Victorian bird observer, and myself obtained good views of a Terek Sandpiper at Pottallock Plains, south of Wellington, at a swamp that was being reclaimed and at which a large number of waders overwintered. The late date suggested that the Terek Sandpiper might also spend the winter there but it was not seen again; nor was it possible to obtain a specimen.

During early December 1967, Peter Vaughton, John Endersby and Ted Milne, members of the Strathalbyn Naturalists Club, spent several days at the Coorong. Upon their return on December 8 I was informed by Peter Vaughton that before their departure that morning they had observed a bird that they felt sure was a Terek Sandpiper. Peter Vaughton, who had first seen the bird, supplied the following notes:—'The bird was first noticed when feeding with Curlew-Sandpipers (*Ereunetes ferruginea*) at a distance of some thirty yards, the bright orange legs drawing attention to it initially. The size was similar to that of the Curlew-Sandpipers. The upper parts appeared greyish

and lacking in mottles; the under-parts were white. It seemed far more energetic and alert than the Curlew-Sandpipers, running distances of two or three yards then stopping. The bird soon became alarmed and flew showing a whitish bar at the rear of the wing which extended well towards the wing tips. When it alighted it was possible to study the bill which was long, dark and definitely upturned. It remained a short time wading in and out of deepish water and running about the sand before it flew from sight.'

From this description it seemed fairly certain that their identification had been correct. On December 10, R. Cleggett and I visited the spot, near Landlock on the Coorong, where the bird had been seen and within half an hour had located it sleeping on a pebbly spit, the bright orange legs again being the feature which first caught the attention. A Greenshank flew off in alarm at our approach and roused the sleeping Terek Sandpiper which departed also. However it was located again on several occasions during the day and good views obtained of the bird feeding and in flight.

The flight appeared strong and direct, the pale bar at the rear of the wing being a prominent feature. The pale rump mentioned by some writers was not evident in this bird which appeared wholly light-grey above except for the wing-bars. When feeding it showed the rapid movements which seem to characterise this species. It appeared to be whiter below than the normal Curlew-Sandpiper and to me seemed to resemble a small, hunched Greenshank in appearance. On this occasion the bird seemed to favour the rocky portions of beach as feeding grounds although by no means confining itself to these portions. It was not heard to call on this day.

The following weekend I again visited the locality and located the bird some three miles east of Landlock. I was not aware of its presence until it rose from a sandy spit with a small flock of Curlew Sandpipers. Then it drew attention by its musical call which I rendered as 'Teerrr-da-weet, teerrr-da-weet-
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a-weet.' It then flew off strongly some two miles to the west, ascending to a great height as it went, a tendency noticed the previous week. It was later secured as a specimen and was taken to the S.A. Museum by Peter Vaughton on December 21; here the Curator of Birds, Mr. H. T. Condon, confirmed the identification, thus proving a substantiated record of the presence of the Terek Sandpiper within South Australia.

[This paper was received while the previous issue containing Muriel R. Daley's sight record with photograph (pp. 2, 23) of a Terek Sandpiper at the I.C.I. Saltfields was being printed. --- Ed.]