

THE LITTLE WHIMBREL (*Numenius minutus*) AT ST. KILDA

by MARK BONNIN

There are few records of the Little Whimbrel from South Australia. Condon (1962) lists two: one from Encounter Bay in March, 1902, and one from Lake Alexandrina in January, 1930. Eckert (1969) reported seven at Langhorne Creek between September, 1967 and January, 1968.

A pair of birds believed to be of this species was seen on the I.C.I. Salt Fields on November 29, 1970, by Messrs. A. H. Lendon, D. W. Brummitt, F. L. Collison and the writer. Approximately twelve Grey Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*) were under observation when a pair of waders alighted on the sand bank amongst them. Observations were recorded at the time and are reproduced herewith.

They were actively feeding. They occasionally stretched the wings upwards in a manner reminiscent of the behaviour of terns. Short flights of a few feet were often taken during which the undersurface of the body and wings was clearly seen. The birds were very slightly longer than the Grey Plover and of a much more delicate build. The head was small and not rounded on the

back, the contour falling abruptly to the neck, which was relatively long and thin. The colour was uniformly brown, the shade on the back being darker than that of the rump. The undersurface of the wings was brown, the periphery being of a lighter shade than the proximal part. At the distance of observation, which was perhaps one hundred yards, no definite colour pattern was discernible. The bill was long, dark and down-curved, best seen in flight when silhouetted against the sky. After some fifteen minutes of observation the birds took to flight and called a loud "tchew-tchew-tchew" on several occasions. The call was harsher and of lower pitch than the familiar alarm call of the Greenshank. The flight was rather untidy to watch and seemingly aimless. They flew together to a considerable height, circled around the observers and on two occasions dropped quite suddenly before flying off.

REFERENCES

- Condon, H. T., A Hand list of the Birds of South Australia, *S. Aust. Orn.*, 23: 105 (1962).
Eckert, H. J., Bird Report, *S. Aust. Orn.*, 25: 78 (1969).