

AN ORIENTAL PLOVER IN THE MID-NORTH OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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While observing parties of Inland Dotterels *Peltohyas australis* at dusk on 13 October 1977 at Collinsfield, six kilometres S of Redhill in the Mid-north of South Australia, I noticed a larger wader with white undersides flying among them. With further observations on the morning of 15 October and the evening of 16 October, I obtained the following notes on this bird.

BEHAVIOUR

When first seen on both 15 and 16 October the bird was alone, but it joined groups of Inland Dotterels in flight on the ground several times thus enabling a size comparison, though mostly it remained alone. At first approach it was flushed at a distance of 15 metres, but later became more timid keeping 20-40 metres distant and walking away with slow deliberate steps or running in short or long bursts. Several times the bird ran or crept slowly in a low posture keeping its 'knees' bent, while at other times it ran, fast and tall. When almost still, it was hard to detect although its bobbing action revealed its position several times. A 'chip-chip-chip' call was often given in flight. The bird appeared long-winged, making either short low flights or flying high in a large loop making erratic turns and landing several hundred metres away.

DESCRIPTION

A slender, large-eyed, long-legged plover, larger than Inland Dotterels; back and wings olive grey-brown with feathers finely edged rufous; crown,

rump and uppertail similar to back; tail from above narrowly edged and tipped white; undertail and belly white, separated by an indistinct greyish chest band 10-15 mm broad from a very pale buff (almost white chest; foreneck, throat, face, forehead and eyebrow also very pale buff; cheeks and lores (not extending to the bill) darker buff and hind-neck paler than crown or back; legs long and dull yellow tinged green at the 'knee'; upper- and underwing seen well in flight at approximately 20 metres; entire underwing, including axillaries pale grey; no wing bar on upperwing but outermost primary with a pale shaft.

The grey underwing, lack of a wing bar and the other features noted allow identification of this bird as an Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus* (perhaps in breeding plumage) rather than the similar Caspian Plover *Ch. asiaticus*.

(*The Oriental Plover has been recorded in South Australia on only a few occasions and reviews of its occurrence in the State are forthcoming — Ed.*)

HABITAT

The area inhabited by this plover and the Inland Dotterels comprised several low-flying flat paddocks of salty soil of which about half was bare earth. The remainder was covered in scattered patches of sparse, very short grass and short succulent, fleshy herbs mainly *Mesembryanthemum nodiflorum*, *Spergularia rubra* and occasional samphire *Arthrocnemum* sp.

The plover was last seen on 22 October despite a search for it on 23 October.

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