

## Bird Notes

# First record of Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* in South Australia

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The Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* breeds in Alaska and Canada and inhabits coastal areas in North and South America during the non-breeding season (Message and Taylor 2005; Paulson 2005; Chandler 2009). It is vagrant to Australia and this note reports on the first South Australian record of the species.

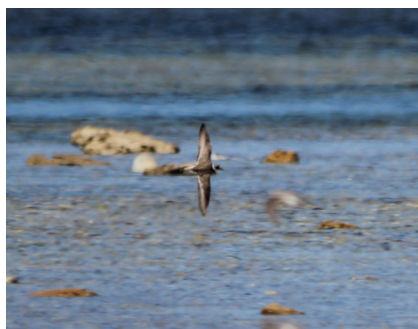
### The initial observation

On 4 November 2014 at approximately 11 am in Livingston Bay, Carpenter Rocks, in the South East of South Australia (SA), two of the authors (MC and HV) saw what was instantly recognised as an unusual plover on a sandy beach. It was feeding in a clump of weed, just back from the tide edge, along with a small group of Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. The immediate impression was of a plover with a white collar and a narrow black band across the white breast. The upperparts were dark. At this time, the bird was not seen in flight.

We are very familiar with the Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus*, also with breast-bands, and the Hooded Plover *Thinornis cucullatus*, also with a white collar, however it was obviously neither of these species. The only species which came to mind at the time was the Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, which MC has seen several times in north-west Western Australia. Shorebird experts were later contacted for advice on identification.

### Subsequent observations

On 5 November 2014, the plover was seen on Pelican Point, ca 3 km SE of Carpenter Rocks, by MC along with other members of the visiting Victorian Wader Study Group. The bird was seen and photographed by many people following the original sighting. The last known sighting was reported on the Australian Twitchers Facebook page on 2 December 2014.



**Figure 1.** Semipalmated Plover in flight, showing prominent wing bar; Pelican Point, South East, SA, 9 November 2014. Image Bob Green



**Figure 2.** Semipalmated Plover showing loral stripe and webbing between toes; Pelican Point, South East, SA, 9 November 2014. Image Bob Green

### Points of identification

On 9 November photographs of a quality suitable to positively identify the species were obtained. These photographs show:

- The distinct wing bar in flight (Figure 1) ruling out Little Ringed Plover which does not have a wing bar.
- Webbing between all front toes, as shown in Figure 2.
- A narrow strip of white between the gape and the loreal stripe, and the loreal stripe narrowing above the gape (Figure 2), features absent in both Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Little Ringed Plovers.
- A very narrow yellowish orbital ring, which was observed in the field but is less visible in photographs, also ruling out Little Ringed Plover which has a much more prominent orbital ring.
- The narrow white neck ring (Figure 3), as distinct from the broader ring of Ringed Plover.
- The slightly larger size of Semipalmated Plover compared with Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus* (Figure 4).
- The saline coastal habitat, suggesting that Little Ringed Plover is unlikely as this is generally a bird of freshwater wetlands (Marchant and Higgins 1993).



**Figure 3.** Semipalmated Plover showing narrow white neck ring (with two Red-necked Stints *Calidris ruficollis* behind); Pelican Point, South East, SA, 9 November 2014. Image Bob Green



**Figure 4.** Semipalmated Plover (right) with two Red-capped Plovers (left); Pelican Point, South East, SA, 9 November 2014. Image Maureen Christie

**Table 1.** Semipalmated Plover records in Australia accepted by BARC.

Submission No.	Location	Date
873	Broome, WA	23/10/2009
648	Tuross Estuary, NSW	22/5/2010
646	Clonmel Island, Victoria	17/6/2010
871	Carpenter Rocks, SA	4/11/2014
982	Airport Ponds, Lord Howe Island, NSW	29/3/2017
1086	Shoalhaven Heads, NSW	2/10/2019

The sighting was reported to the Birds SA Rarity and Distribution Subcommittee (Black *et al.* 2020) and to the BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC Submission No 871). At the time of submission this was the fourth Australian record of this American vagrant accepted by BARC, however two other records have subsequently been accepted (Table 1). The submission was unanimously accepted and members of BARC also noted that, given the solid black face stripes and breast band (not infused with brown), it was likely that the bird was an adult male.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank Danny Rogers for help with the BARC submission, Clive Minton for invaluable assistance with identification, members of the Victorian Wader Study Group for assistance with relocating the bird when it moved from Livingston Bay to Pelican Point, an anonymous referee, and Philippa Horton for suggestions which improved an earlier draft.

#### REFERENCES

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