

LOUISIANA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of unusual birds. It may be used flexibly and need not be used at all. Leave blank any details not observed. Attach additional sheets if necessary. Please print or type. Attach drawings, photographs, etc. Include all photos if an obscurely marked species. When completed, mail to the Secretary of the LOS Bird Records Committee.

1. Common and scientific name: MONGOLIAN PLOVER (Charadrius mongolus)
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g. 2ad. in breeding plumage): one worn juv. completing body molt to first basic plumage.
3. Locality: LOUISIANA: Cameron Par.; 7 mi. W old mouth Mermentau River = "Rutherford Beach".
4. Date(s) when seen: 18 October 1986.
5. Times of day when seen: first observed approx. 8:30 AM for a few moments (approx. 5 mi. W old mouth Mermentau River); refound approx. 10:00 AM.
6. Reporting observer and address: Donna L. Dittmann
Steven W. Cardiff (collected specimen)
LSU Museum of Zoology
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also identified the bird:
Gary H. Rosenberg
LSUMZ
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird: None.
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): see #14.
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): 8 X 40 Leitz (DLD) and 10 X 50 Bushnell (SWC and GHR) and 20X Bauscope Sr. telescope - all in good condition.
11. Distance to bird: The bird was extremely wary. It was probably closest during the first observation when it landed behind the vehicle and was viewed in poor light approx. 50 ft. away; also seen as close as 100 ft. away through telescope just prior to collection.
12. Duration of observation: Total combined period the bird was under observation was approx. 15 min., which included slowly stalking the resting bird on the beach.
13. Habitat: "sandy" gulf beach.
14. Behavior (flying, feeding, resting, etc. - include and stress any habits used in identification): SWC first was aware of the bird some distance ahead of us on the beach as we were slowly driving E to W along the beach censusing gulls... (although in good light at this point, the bird was extremely wary and could only be glimpsed as it flushed ahead of us several times). We did not concentrate our attention on the bird until it suddenly flew towards us and landed briefly in front of the car. It then took off, calling as it flew a short distance past us to the east and landed behind the car. At this point the bird was backlit, but we could see the shape and posture well. The bird quickly flushed again, flying even farther to the east and again landing on the beach. We backed up to get closer, but before we were able to stop, it flushed again and flew out over the gulf and out of sight to the west. We noticed during this initial observation period that the bird had an injured right leg/foot and walked with a limp. Figuring that the bird had escaped us, and only slightly suspicious that it could be anything other than a Wilson's Plover, we continued west on the beach census. Approx. 7 mi. W of the old mouth of the Mermentau River is the mouth of a tidal estuary that was not crossable with the car at that time. Scanning through the

telescope from the estuary. SWC miraculously spotted a crippled, dark-backed plover standing on the beach at least 1/4 mi. west of the estuary. Assuming this was the bird we had lost earlier, and becoming increasingly suspicious of its ID (because of the bird's strange call - unlike any Wilson's vocalizations we were familiar with, and by virtue of the fact that we had not seen a Wilson's Plover on this beach since early August), we headed down to where the bird had settled into a depression in the sand and was roosting with two Snowy Plovers. During the next 10 min., we slowly approached the resting bird, alternately stalking closer and viewing the bird through the telescope. The bird was squatting facing us and had its bill tucked into the back feathers most of the time. Thus, we could not get very satisfying looks. Several times we commented on how the bird reminded us of a miniature Mountain Plover, and we did begin considering that the bird might be a Mongolian Plover. Finally, we decided the bird should be collected while we had the opportunity, because we did not want to risk losing track of it again or having it flushed by another vehicle (and also because we had not been able to see any diagnostic field marks). DLD had the best looks at the plover as she watched it through the telescope while SWC maneuvered for a shot. The bird stood up briefly allowing Dittmann to view the olive-colored legs, complete breast band, uniform dark brownish-gray upperparts, white eyebrow, and white throat, then flushed with the two Snowys. With the bird in hand, DLD was immediately fairly convinced that the bird was indeed a Mongolian Plover. However, it took comparative material to convince SWC and GHR.

15. Description (Include only what was actually seen, not what "should" have been seen. Include if possible: total length; body bulk; shape, bill, eye, and leg characteristics; color and pattern of plumage, etc. Stress field marks):
Description based on specimen. Iris dark brown; bill black; tarsi dull light grayish-olive; feet dark gray; ankle area, soles of feet gray. Underparts: throat white; breast band brown suffused with very pale yellowish-buff; remainder of underparts creamy-white. Upperparts: dark grayish-brown with a hint of olive iridescence; crown and back with darker shaft streaks; nape area slightly paler and with a hint more olive, but lacking a complete white collar around the back of the neck; wings uniform dark grayish-brown with a slightly darker shoulder area and white edges to the greater secondary coverts, forming a weak wing-bar in flight; primaries blackish-brown; inner secondary coverts still retaining whitish-buff fringes characteristic of juvenal plumage; tail pale brownish-gray with dark brown basal 1/5, outer pair of tail feathers white with pale gray inner 1/3 of inner web; face pattern very distinct with broad creamy-white forehead patch continuing as a broad superciliary stripe and dark grayish-brown cheek patch; the bird was approx. the same size as a Wilson's Plover, but carried itself in a more upright posture and had a proportionately shorter and slimmer bill (intermediate between Wilson's and Semipalmated, although appearing much more Wilson's-like in the field).
16. Voice: The bird was heard three times = a fairly high-pitched and drawn out "drrrit" or trilled "prip-ip-ip"; more musical than somewhat similar call of Baird's Sandpiper.
17. Similar species (include how they are eliminated by your observations): Wilson's Plover is surprisingly similar in basic plumage, but is eliminated because it possesses a complete white collar around the back of the neck, flesh-colored legs, and a relatively longer and heavier bill. Bill too short for Greater Sand-Plover (*C. leschenaultii*).
18. Photographs (Was it photographed? By whom? Attached?): No.
19. Previous experience with this species: DLD has seen this species on four occasions involving two different birds (one adult in alternate plumage and one juvenal) in California. SWC and GHR have no prior field experience.
20. Aids: List books, illustrations, birders, etc. used in identification:
 - a) at time of observation: National Geographic Society Field Guide.
 - b) after observation: specimens at LSUM2, including on alternate plumage Mongolian Plover; various books.

21. This description written from: _____ notes made during observation: X notes made after observation; X memory.

22. Are you positive of your identification? Yes. If not, explain:

23. Signature of reporter: *Steven W. Cardiff* *Donna L. Dittman*

24. Date and time of writing this account: 25 February 1987