

**Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* at Pioneer Bay, near The Gurdies, Western Port Bay, Victoria, 23 November to 21 December 1996**

**Submission to BARC seeking endorsement of a long accepted report**

By MIKE CARTER & XENIA DENNETT  
19 July 2018

**Introduction:**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1996, during a regular survey of shorebirds conducted by the Bird Observers Club, a Common Ringed Plover was found by Xenia Dennett and Christine Hudson (deceased) at Pioneer Bay, near The Gurdies, Western Port Bay, Victoria. It remained at that site until at least 21<sup>st</sup> December 1996. During its stay it was seen by numerous birders and wader experts including John Barkla, Richard Loyn & Fred Smith. The area is tidal and unusually for a Ringed Plover which tends to prefer sandy or gravelly substrates, the surface here is soft mud. Red-capped Plovers that frequented the area afforded useful comparison.

The accompanying photos that together with the painting by Rex Davies comprise the substance of this submission were taken by MC on Kodachrome colour transparency slide film on 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> December 1996 and recently converted to digital images. Photocopies of the completed Unusual Sightings Record form, the ensuing report published in The Bird Observer and a painting of the subject bird by Rex Davies originally given to Christine Hudson but now in the possession of Bill Ramsay, are also attached. This report has long been regarded as reliable but has not been assessed by BARC.







**Description:** This was a robust small plover, noticeably stockier and larger than Red-capped Plover, with brown upperparts, white underparts, blackish breast band, complete white collar and dark, patterned head. The bill was longer and more substantial than that of Red-capped Plover and was wholly dark. Legs dull yellow. Iris dark. No visible yellow eye ring. A white wing bar was visible in flight. A whitish supercilium, poorly defined but quite broad, extended from half way between bill and eye almost to rear of ear-coverts. Forehead brown, with a narrow pale band above bill. Dark loreal line was as broad as bill was deep. Continuous around the hind-neck was a broad white collar.

**Identification:** The Ringed Plover is one of the small *Charadrius* plovers that have a white collar and black breast band. Other similar species are eliminated by the criteria indicated below (Hayman *et al.* 1986; Chandler 1989; Mullarney 1991; Unknown Japanese 1991; Dunn 1993; Marchant & Higgins 1993; Beaman & Madge 1998, van Duivendijk 2011; Menkhorst *et al.* 2017).

The rather plump, dumpy appearance, dark brown, not sandy coloured upperparts, absence of bold yellow orbital ring and presence of a substantial amount of white in the upper-wing, eliminate Little Ringed Plover.

The following combination of rather subtle features eliminates Semipalmated Plover.

- 1) Broad loreal stripe,
- 2) Breadth and prominence of supercilium behind the eye.
- 3) The bill was too long,
- 4) Absence of any trace of a yellow orbital ring,

### **Status**

To date BARC has accepted five records of this species these being:

1. Case 133, Boonaroo, Qld., 1983
2. Case 330, Marlo, Vic., 2002
3. Case 476, Rottnest Island, WA, 2005
4. Case 527, Mandura, WA, 2007
5. Case 985, Stockton NSW, 2017.

There are however, about 16 reports including the subject of this submission not yet assessed by BARC that are likely authentic although some may be misidentified Semipalmated Plovers.

## Bird Reports Series 120 (PART 1)

### *Unusual sightings*

*Every effort has been made to check the accuracy of these reports. Please ask to see the originals before quoting from them.*

#### Northern Territory

Recycling Works, Alice Springs      Oriental Pratincole (5; only 1 other single record of this species in Alice Springs Dec 65)      Bryce Ponsford 8.12.96

Recycling Works, Alice Springs      Pectoral Sandpiper (2; very few records of this species in Alice Springs)  
Red-necked Stint (4)      Bryce Ponsford 25-26.12.96

#### New South Wales

At sea off Sydney      Mottled Petrel      Tony Palliser 24.11.96

Kinchega N.P, SE of Broken Hill      Little Shearwater (3)  
Square-tailed Kite (Noisy Miners produced alarm calls when kite appeared)      Paul McDonald 13.12.96

At sea off Sydney      Gould's Petrel (5)  
Black-winged Petrel      Tony Palliser 14.12.96

Tullakool Salt Works N of Barham      Buller's Shearwater (4)  
Ruff      Phil Maher 21.12.96

Pitt Town Lagoon nr Windsor      Oriental Pratincole      Alan McBride 27.12.96

Urunga Golf Course nr Nambucca Heads      Comb-crested Jacana

At sea off Sydney      Australian Shelduck      Neville Crompton 7.1.97

Little Corella (±8)      Tony Palliser, Mike Carter 18.1.97

Tahiti Petrel

Black-winged Petrel (2)

Gould's Petrel (8)

Buller's Shearwater

Little Shearwater

Buller's Shearwater, White-necked Petrel      Tony Palliser 26.1.97

At sea off Wollongong

**Victoria**

Adobe Flats, Mallacoota      White-headed Pigeon (2 adults, 1 juv)      Peter Kurz 25-31.10.96

Rotamah Island, Gippsland Lakes      Pied Butcherbird      Glen White, R & J Sheppard 26-29.10.96

Between Sealake & Ultima      Wandering Whistling-Duck (6)      Chris Doughty 28.10.96

Warburton      White-headed Pigeon (3)      Diedre Hunt 29/10 to late Nov 96

Don Valley nr Warburton      White-headed Pigeon (m)      Zoe Wilson early Nov 96

Mallacoota Inlet      Beach Stone-curlew      Bob Semmens 13.11.96

Lake Tyers Beach, East Gippsland      Beach Stone-curlew      Ken Sherring 14.11.96

Pioneer Bay, E Western Port Bay      Ringed Plover      Xenia Dennett, Christine Hudson 23.11-21.12.96

501 Swanston St, Melbourne      Buff-banded Rail (photographed)      Heather Niggendyker 9.12.96-13.1.97

Swan Hill Sewage Plant      Red-necked Phalarope      Phil Maher 15.12.96

Avoca Floodway nr Mystic Park      Oriental Pratincole (2)      Phil Maher 15.12.96

Mallacoota Adobe Flats private dam      Pectoral Sandpiper (11)

Andrews North      Australian Shelduck (m; rare in far east Vic.)      Peter Kurz, Margaret Itman 16.12.96

Eastern Treatment Plant, Werribee      Dollarbird      Peter Bright 19.12.96

Mallacoota, E Gippsland      Scarlet Honeyeater      Danny Rogers 24.12.96

**Queensland**

Ross River, Townsville      Pectoral Sandpiper (8; with a group of ±70 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers)      Martin Hulzebosch 2.1.97

Mt St John, Townsville      White-headed Pigeon      Bob Semmens 14.1.97

Ross River, Townsville      Barn Swallow (2)      Frank & Di Harrison 6.8.96

Whitsunday Island Group      Australian Spotted Crane      Frank Harrison 21.9.96

Townsville Common      Double-eyed Fig-Parrot (4)      Frank & Di Harrison 24.9.96

Townsville Common      Great-winged Petrel (found with broken wing, died later)      Barry Nolan *et al* 2.10.96

Blakeys Crossing, Townsville      Pectoral Sandpiper (juv)      Frank Harrison, Townboc members 6.10.96

Turf Farm, Gordonvale nr Cairns      Red-backed Button-quail      Frank Harrison 8.10.96

Bowen Saltworks      Common Starling      Frank Harrison 13.10.96

At sea off Southport      Pectoral Sandpiper      Andy Anderson 15.10.96

Reeve (juv)      Frank Harrison *et al* 25.10.96

Soft-plumaged Petrel (2; 1 bird dark phase)      Paul Walbridge 26.10.96

Mottled Petrel (37)

Wandering Albatross

White-tailed Tropicbird (2)

Marsh Sandpiper (300+)      Frank Harrison, Barry Nolan 12.11.96

Pectoral Sandpiper

Australian Pelican (250+; pelicans were dead & dying due to blue-green algae)

sighting of two **Oriental Pratincoles** at the Avoca Floodway near Mystic Park is also a rare Victorian record: These birds are summer migrants to Australia from the northern hemisphere. Flocks of many thousands visit flat plains near water in northern Australia, but in Victoria they occur only as rare vagrants (*Atlas of Victorian Birds*). Alan McBride's report of an Oriental Pratincole at Pitt Town Lagoon, NW of Sydney, NSW (27.12.96) is a further record of the recent southern movements of these birds. As in Victoria, Oriental Pratincoles are vagrants to NSW. An early NSW record was of a bird shot at Botany Bay near Sydney (1877). More recent reports were of birds observed at Bakers Lagoon near Sydney (May 1971 and Dec 1987).

Glen White and Rob and Jaqui Sheppard observed a **Pied Butcherbird** at the RAOU Bird Observatory, Rotamah Island, Gippsland Lakes, Vic (26-29.10.96) and Thierry Roland, the Observatory Warden, photographed the bird. Pied Butcherbirds are widespread over much of Australia, although they are vagrants on the Nullarbor Plain, WA and in southern SA. In Victoria these birds are mainly found along the Murray River and its tributaries. Further information obtained after the report of the Pied Butcherbird at Nagambie (*Interesting Sightings, Series 119 part 2* (the most southern part of the species in Victoria to date) indicates that a Pied Butcherbird was recorded at Cape Schanck, southern Mornington Peninsula (Sep 82) and at Mallacoota aerodrome, east Gippsland (18.3.85).

Chris Doughty reported six **Wandering Whistling-Ducks** in NW Victoria between Sealake and Ultima (28.10.96). Wandering Whistling-Ducks are vagrants to Victoria. The normal range of these birds in Australia is from Broome, WA coastally and near the coast to NE NSW. Victorian reports of a group of these birds at Healesville (1980-81) were probably birds that had escaped from the Healesville Sanctuary.

**White-headed Pigeons** returned to the hills east of Melbourne (Oct-Nov 96). Three birds were recorded at Warburton in Diedre Hunt's garden (29.10-late Nov 96) and one bird (a male) visited Zoë Wilson's garden in Don Valley (early Nov 96). A later report was also received of a White-headed Pigeon at nearby Powelltown (Dec 96). The White-headed Pigeon is nomadic, with erratic movements (*Atlas of Australian Birds*). The recent Victorian sightings of White-headed Pigeons at Mallacoota, East Gippsland, (*Bird Report Series 119 part 1*) and the above reports, are records of these birds moving into Victoria beyond their usual southern limits in southern coastal NSW.

Ken Sherring photographed a **Beach Stone-curlew** at Lake Tyers Beach, 12km east of Lakes Entrance, East Gippsland, Vic (14.11.96). This appears to be the most westerly record of the species in Victoria. Strong winds had been blowing along the East Gippsland coast at the time and it is possible that the Beach Stone-curlew sighted by Bob Semmens at Mallacoota the previous day (13.11.96) was the same bird that had moved approx 150km SW to Lake Tyers.

Xenia Dennett and Christine Hudson recorded a **Ringed Plover** at Pioneer Bay, in eastern Western Port Bay, Vic, whilst on the BOCA's long-running Western Port wader survey (23.11.96). Ringed Plovers are northern hemisphere birds, accidental to Australia. *The Atlas of Australian Birds* lists only seven records of the species between 1951-1981, which includes two Victorian records; one bird near

Queenscliff (24.2-5.4.81) and one at Jack Smith Lake, Gippsland Plains (28.2-31.5.81).

Danny Rogers recorded a **Scarlet Honeyeater** at St Andrews North, near the Kinglake N.P., north of Melbourne, Vic (24.12.96). These birds occur along the eastern coast and adjacent ranges of Australia and in Victoria. They are summer migrants to East Gippsland. Earlier records of Scarlet Honeyeaters west of their usual range in Victoria include vagrants which visited Drouin South, Gippsland (Oct 83); a male in a garden opposite the Kinglake N.P at St Andrews (Oct 85) and the most westerly records of the birds, at Port Fairy (25.11.85) and Lower Gellibrand (13.11.85) in Western Victoria.

Heather Niggendyker, who works in a building in Swanston Street, Melbourne, Vic, often visits the small courtyard garden of the Ansett Building, 501 Swanston Street, between 11.30am and 12 noon. Imagine her surprise when she observed a **Buff-banded Rail** foraging among the dense patches of reedy material and at a water drain running through the area (9.12.96). Heather photographed the rail which was sighted nearly every day until 30 December. It was still in the garden 13.1.97 and had become used to people and appeared to be waiting for the workers to feed it. We were informed by the staff at the Melbourne Zoological Gardens, a distance of about 2km from the Ansett Building, that Buff-banded Rails have been known to arrive at the Zoo and live there for short periods. Some of these birds are summer visitors to southern Victoria from farther north. In north Queensland, they become used to people and are sometimes seen close to habitation. On Heron Island off Queensland, Buff-banded Rails live among the residents of the island and if encouraged will follow visitors into their cabins.

*Every effort has been made to check the accuracy of these reports. English names in this report are according to Christidis & Boles 1994.*

*Please ask to see the originals before quoting from them.*

Send your reports to the BOCA or to Peggy Mitchell, 82 Winona Road, Mt Eliza, Vic 3930. Phone 03 9787 3657.

## A Legacy for Birds

*Birds enrich our lives in many ways, but they cannot speak for themselves. Your bequest to the BOCA will give them a voice.*

Bequests to the Club can incorporate virtually anything of value, including books, paintings, shares, money or real estate. Your Will should clearly state your wishes.

It is usually sufficient to include a brief clause specifying the item and naming the Bird Observers Club of Australia (an incorporated company) as the beneficiary.

We recommend that you consult a solicitor for advice, to ensure that your bequest is valid.

*Thank you for giving this your consideration.*

**Bird Observers Club of Australia  
183 Springvale Road, Nunawading, Vic. 3131**



**Common Ringed Plover in Western Port Bay Nov/Dec 1996**  
 Painting by Rex Davies.

### **Acknowledgement**

Photocopies and Images on pages 5 to 9 were kindly provided by Bill Ramsay.

### **References**

- Beaman, M. & Madge S. (1998), *The Handbook of Bird Identification for Europe and the Western Palearctic*, Princeton, New Jersey.
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- Marchant, S. & Higgins, P.J. (Eds.) (1993), *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand & Antarctic Birds Vol. 2, Raptors to Lapwings*, Oxford, Melbourne.
- Hayman, P., Marchant, J. & Prater, T. (1986), *Shorebirds; an Identification Guide to the Waders of the World*, Croom Helm, Sydney.
- Menkhorst, P., Rogers, D., Clarke, R., Davies, J., Marsack, P. & Franklin, K. (2017), *The Australian Bird Guide*, CSIRO, Victoria, Australia.
- Mullarney, K. (1991), "Identification of Semipalmated Plover, a new feature", *Birding World* 7: 254-258
- Paulson, D. (2005), *Shorebirds of North America: The Photographic Guide*, Christopher Helm, London.
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Bird Observers Club of Australia  
UNUSUAL SIGHTING RECORD

Name: Xenia Dennett and Christine Hudson  
 Address 100 Mountain View Pde | 5/2 Jilmax Court  
Rosanna Vic 3084 | Nunawading Vic 3131  
 Tel. No. 9457 2816 | 9877 6294

Which species did you see?

Ringed Plover

Date of observation 23.11.96 Subsequent observation dates: 24.11.96  
30.11.96

Location (be as precise as possible: include distance from nearest town)

Pioneer Bay near The Gurdies, eastern Western Port Bay  
(Private property: Bynoe Bay - about 2 km from The Gurdies)

Physical description of bird (describe size and shape, colour, call etc.). Please describe only what you saw and include comparisons with other species (for example, 'larger than a Blackbird').

Immediately recognised as an atypical wader for Western Port Bay: -  
 Dark complete band on white breast (higher & different shape from Black  
 Dotterel) and a complete white ring around throat, neck and nape.  
 Plumper and bigger (about a tail length longer) than Red-capped Plover in its  
 feeding group.  
 legs yellow/orange; short (approx. head size) straight, dark bill; pale (not white  
 frons; pale (same as frons) supercilium, which ran from eye centre back  
 crown, mantle and wings grey-brown; lores, ear coverts, breast band  
 darker brown; breast band darker at top all round bird and broken up  
 (not solid) at bottom on breast, especially at middle front; white underparts  
 ageing not obvious; upper wingbar observed in outstretch wing + in flight

Did you make any sketches or field notes at the time of sighting? If so, please attach copies to this form. (white wings)

Yes - available on request

HABITAT: What kind of habitat was the bird seen in (for example, garden, wetland, dense forest etc.)?

Sandy beach and adjacent mud-flat.

Where was the bird: e.g. on the ground, in a tree, flying? Mostly at the high tide mark of the beach, but also up to 50 metres out on the mudflat and roosting near the top of the beach.

The bird was mostly solitary, but sometimes associated with Red-capped Plovers.  
 What was the bird doing while you watched? Foraging, feeding, preening, sheltering (from squalls, wind), flew short distance twice, roosting once.

For how long did you watch it? 23.11.96 1 1/2 hours 30.11.96 2 hours  
24.11.96 2 hours

Was it feeding? Yes

Did it call? If so, did this assist with identification? No

Distance and/or height of the bird away from you From 7 metres up to 50/100 metres

Sighting conditions 23.11.96 11:30 am → Fine, sunny, no wind  
24.11.96 1:40 pm → Fine, sunny, no wind, some glare  
 Time of day, weather 30.11.96 2:10 pm → Frequent rain squalls, strong wind, rare sunny b  
 How good was the lighting? \_\_\_\_\_

Optical aids used? Binoculars: Pentax 8x40 Leitz 10x40B

Telescope: Optholyph x20

please turn over



Generally speaking, how long have you been reasonably good at field identification? Years  
(Involvement with Western Port survey for 1-3 years)

Have you ever seen this particular species before? No

If you have, how often? How long ago? N/A

In what district of Australia? N/A

What books (if any) did you consult for help in identification?  
On the day: Simpson & Day, Slater, Brett Lane "Shorebirds in Australia"  
Since: Hayman et al "Shorebirds: An Identification Guide to the West of the World"  
plus sundry others

Were other experienced observers present? Did they agree or disagree with your identification? Please give names and addresses if possible.

Christine Hudson returned on 24.11.96 the following day with John Burkle and Richard Loyn joined us late in the afternoon. Both John and Richard confirmed the sighting. During the subsequent seven days the sighting has been verified by a number of expert witnesses.

Other comments (e.g. photographs taken? Recording of calls? Was it a roadkill?)

On 30.11.96 attempts were made to photograph the bird with a 200mm telephoto lens and also through a telescope.

Why do you consider the sighting unusual? Please comment on the significance of this record (e.g. rarity, location, habitat, distribution, seasonal occurrence, etc.)

- Very rare vagrant migratory bird for Australia
  - only second sighting of the Ringed Plover in Victoria
  - also a very rare bird Australia-wide
- Richard Loyn considers this sighting to be the rarest bird to be recorded for Western Port Bay
- It is the first sighting of a Ringed Plover in Western Port Bay in over 20 years of continuous regular, quantitative surveys by the BOCA Western Port S and this sighting occurred as part of this regular survey. It thus demonstrates the value of regular quantitative surveying.

### Note

We will follow up this Unusual Sighting Record with an article for "The Bird Observer" and possibly "The Birdwatcher"

Please note: Only records with full details given will be considered for an Unusual Sightings listing. The attachment of field notes written at the time will be helpful in case of dispute. Copies of these records are made available to other interested enquirers.

Please return completed form to  
Bird Observers Club of Australia, P O Box 185, Nunawading Vic. 3131.