

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* at Seaford Swamp, Victoria, 1st April 1984:
Submission to BARC (3rd August 2018)**

By MIKE CARTER

Introduction:

Subsequent to my arrival in Australia in 1964, I spent much time birding on the remnants of the Carrum-Carrum swamps south-east of Melbourne and knew them well. So when in 1984 a botanical study of Seaford Swamp (38° 05' S, 145° 08' E) to be conducted by Monash University was commissioned, I was asked to lead a guided tour of the area for the benefit of the research team led by Professor Mike Cullen. This took place on 1st April 1984. Together with Peter Lansley and Sean Dooley, we were halfway into the tour when we spotted a Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*. As our excitement was obvious Mike Cullen said that their introduction to the swamp was sufficient and that they would continue without us thus freeing Peter, Sean and myself to study the bird at our leisure. My photos of the bird, Kodachrome slides, have deteriorated with time but the best three were converted to digital images in July 2018. Together with an edited version of a description that I dictated whilst studying the bird through a telescope written in my field notebook by Sean Dooley, these form the substance of this submission.

We observed the bird for about an hour. It then flew off to the NNE climbing high and away and was not seen again. Other shorebirds present were Black-winged Stilt (15), Double-banded Plover (4), Black-fronted Dotterel (~20), Masked Lapwing (8), Common Greenshank (2), Wood Sandpiper (4) & Curlew Sandpiper (9).

The subject bird is listed in Drummond (1985) but the date of occurrence is given incorrectly as 11th April and that error is repeated in Higgins & Davies (1996). Although there is eight weeks between the sightings, it is thought by some possibly the same individual that had frequented Point Cook Metropolitan Park from 13th January to 4th February that year (Drummond 1985 has a photo of that bird taken by David Eades). Point Cook lies to the SW of Melbourne some 36 km to the NW of Seaford Swamp. Neither of these reports has been assessed by BARC or its predecessor, the RAOU Records Appraisal Committee.





Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Seaford Swamp on 1st April 1984

Description

This is an edited version of the description written in my field notebook by Sean Dooley as I dictated during the observation. A copy of these field notes, reduced in size, is attached.

The subject bird was predominantly yellow-buffish in colour and resembled a cross between a calidrid and a small plover. It was slightly larger than accompanying Curlew Sandpipers being both longer and taller. Its head was small and rounded (spherical) and it appeared long necked especially when alert. Wings were long and pointed and reached slightly beyond the tip of the pointed tail.

Its bill was longer than that of a plover but shorter than that of a sandpiper – a little shorter than the length of its head. It was slightly more than half the length of those of nearby Curlew Sandpipers, slender, finely tapered, pointed at the tip and slightly decurved.

The legs were long, yellow to orange yellow in colour but appeared pale brown in some lights.

Its eye was black, small but prominent being emphasised by a faint pale eye-ring and surrounded by a large pale facial 'disc'.

The feathers of the upperparts had dark centres and paler edges producing a scaled effect but the upper breast appeared finely spotted as did the crown. The flanks and underwing coverts were white but only

visible in flight or when the wings were raised. In flight the upperwings, back, rump and tail were featureless and uniform in colour. The underside of the primaries and secondaries were brownish. A pale buff collar ran around the neck. The overall buffish wash was most intense on the breast.

Identification

The distinctive shape, overall yellowish-buff appearance with whitish lower flanks & underwings, absence of bar on upper wing and patterning on the tail, makes the identification as a Buff-breasted Sandpiper straight forward. Confusion with female Ruff (Reeve) *Philomagnus pugnax* may be thought possible but the subject bird has a shorter finer bill than that species, a plain face lacking any hint of an eyeline or supercilium and didn't have a wing bar or pale patches (ovals) on the sides of the rump or tail (Hayman *et al.* 1986; Chandler 1989; Higgins & Davies 1996; Beaman & Madge 1998, Paulson 2005, van Duivendijk 2011; Menkhorst *et al.* 2017).

Status

To date BARC has accepted 10 records of this species. The most recent is Case 988 which was a bird that was present at Lake Murdeduke, Victoria from 13th January to 16th March 2017.

Acknowledgements

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References

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SWAMP 1/4/84

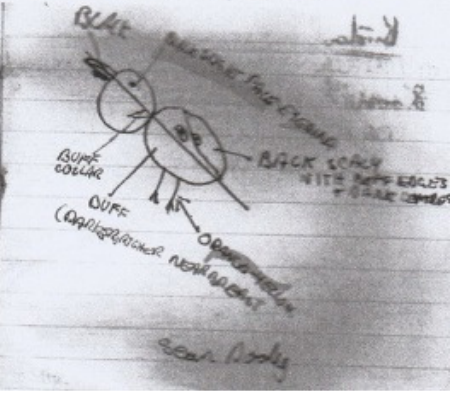
Least Teal	2
Lesser Grebe	1
Lesser Grebe	40
Lesser Grebe	3
Black Shouldered Kite	1+2
Flamingo	9
Wedge tailed Swallow	50+
Mashed Lapwing	8
Mountain Duck	4
Black Fronted Plover	20+
Curlew Sandpiper	4
Royal Spoonbills	3
White Wagtail	5
Starling	20+
Silver Gull	5
White Headed Stilt	15
Double Banded Plover	5
Crowhawk	2
Hoary headed Grebe	1

BUFF BREASTED SANDPIPER
 UNDERPARTS WASHED WITH BUFF
 MORE INTENSE ON RUMP WITH
 BROWING. CLOSER THAN CURLEW SOY
 SMALL HEAD, SHORT ~~NECK~~
 WHITE FLANKS
 LONG NECK
 FEATHER EDGING VERY BUFF BROAD
 EDGING TO ALL WING COVERTS.
 BILL SLIGHTLY BENT

Least Sandpiper	4
Lesser Grebe	6
Black Fronted Plover	20+
Lesser Moorhen	8
Swamp	20
Spotted Tattler	5+
Domestic Pigeon	4
Magpie	4
Black Fronted Cuckoo Shrike	1
White Plumed King	1
Little Grassbird	2
White faced Heron	4
Indian Pygmy	10
Silver Gull	

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER
 2ND WING COVERTS APPEARED
 LONGER + TALLER THAN CURLEW SAND.
 TYPICAL SMALL HEAD APPEARANCE
 WITH LONG NECK. VERY SPHERICAL HEAD.
 WHOLE OF BIRD GENERALLY YELLOWISH
 BUFF EXCEPT FOR UNDERWING
 COVERTS + FLANKS WHICH ARE DARK
 WHEN PERCHED WHICH WERE UNIFORM.
 UPPER WING COVERTS + TAIL WITH
 LARGE DARK CENTRES FORMING A
 SCALY APPEARANCE WITH BROAD
 BUFF EDGES TO ALL THESE FEATHERS.
 VERY LONG WINGS
 IN FLIGHT UPPER WINGS, BACK AND
 TAIL + HEAD UNIFORM
 BUFF COLLAR GOING ALL ROUND BACK
 OF NECK CROWNS SMALL DARK
 CENTRES TO THE FEATHERS.

PARTICULARLY STRONG IN PATTERN
 BUT DARK WITH LARGISH PALE AREA
 AROUND IT ILL OBTAINED RIMS.
 BILL SHORT, BLACKISH FINE ATTIRE. FINELY
 TRACED, LENGTH ABOUT AS LONG AS
 TIBIO SLIGHTLY MORE THAN HALL
 WINGEN SANDPIPERS ALL BUT FINER.
 SLIGHTLY DECORATED
 LEGS YELLOWISH APPEARING PALER THAN
 IN SOME LIGHT LONG LEGS STOOD TALL
 BUILT FEATHERS ON WINGING BROWER



Scan of Field Notes