

## **BARC SUBMISSION**

**Eurasian Curlew – Point Douro, Australind, Western Australia**

**19 January 2016 – 26<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

**Submitted by: John Graff<sup>1</sup>, Bruce Greatwich, Greg Harewood, Sue Kalab & Terry  
Wooltorton**

---

### **Summary**

This submission relates to the sighting of a long-staying curlew at Point Douro near Australind (south of Perth) which was observed for over a year from January 2016 to March 2017. We consider that the combination of paler colouration, slightly smaller size cf. associated Eastern Curlews, white rump extending as a triangle up the back, white underwing coverts, and white flanks and belly with sparse dark streaking are diagnostic of Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) of the eastern subspecies *orientalis*. At the time of preparation of this submission, this would constitute the third accepted record of this species for Australia.

## **SUBMISSION**

**Species:** Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), subspecies *orientalis*

**Location:** Point Douro, Leschenault Estuary, near Australind (SW Australia)

GPS co-ordinates: 33.301°S, 115.694°E (approximate)

**Date(s):** The bird was first photographed on 19th January 2016. Once its identity was noticed in February, it was seen regularly through until at least 26<sup>th</sup> March 2017. Presumably the same bird re-appeared in late 2018, but due to the time gap between records, a separate submission will be prepared for these records.

**Circumstances of sighting:** The bird was initially photographed roosting with an Eastern Curlew (*N. madagascariensis*) on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2016 by TW, but was not identified. SK later viewed the image, noted the bird looked unusual, and forwarded the image to BG. BG tentatively identified it as a Eurasian Curlew on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016, based on its slightly smaller size and noticeably paler colouration compared to the Eastern Curlew associating with it. GH visited the site the following day and was able to confirm the identification. The bird was subsequently seen and well-photographed by many observers as it overwintered at the site, remaining until at least 26<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

**Habitat:** The bird was observed using sandbars, mudflats and shallow water that fringe Point Douro, particularly on the northern/north-eastern side of the point, and samphire on the point

**Physical description** (See also Figures 1-4)

A very large brown-grey shorebird with an extremely long, decurved bill. Head and neck streaked brown, with prominent white supercilium. Mantle and scapulars pale brown with dark brown along the central shaft, coverts similar but noticeably paler brown fringing, tertials with dark crossbars along dark central shaft. Foreneck and chest whitish with brown streaking, streaking becoming very limited on belly; vent and undertail coverts clean white. The bird showed an overall pale appearance, particularly cf. Eastern Curlew when seen together with that species. In flight, the bird appeared even paler; underwings were largely white with barring on the primaries and secondaries, a white rump extending as a white triangle up the back, and the largely white flanks and belly were prominent.

### **Elimination of confusion species**

The bird was easily identifiable as a curlew by the long, downcurved bill, brown streaked plumage and relatively large size for a shorebird. The most likely confusion species are Eastern Curlew and Whimbrel (*N. phaeopus*). Whimbrel was readily ruled out by the proportionally longer bill than that species, large size (only slightly smaller than accompanying Eastern Curlews), lack of dark crown and eye stripes, and call (loud two noted “coor-lee” rather than the typical trill of Whimbrel). In comparison to Eastern Curlews seen in association, the slightly smaller size and overall paleness was immediately suggestive of Eurasian Curlew, but is not diagnostic given similarly small pale Eastern Curlews have been observed in northern Australia. However, the combination of white rump (extending up the back as a triangle shape), clean white underwing coverts, and largely white flanks and belly with sparse black streaks (cf. denser streaking and crossbars on Eastern) are diagnostic of Eurasian Curlew – in particular, the eastern subspecies *orientalis*. This combination of characteristics also rules out the remote possibility of Long-billed Curlew (*N. americanus*)

**Previous occurrence:** There are no previous accepted records of Eurasian Curlew for southwestern Australia, though reports exist from the west coast “near Perth” (cited in Morcombe field guide) and Faure Island in Shark Bay (not accepted; BARC Case No. 801). There are currently two accepted records for Australia, from Eighty Mile Beach in 2007 (BARC Case No. 545) and Roebuck Bay near Broome in 2015 (BARC Case No. 861), though at least two other records supported by diagnostic photos also exist.

### **Other observers**

Many observers saw the bird during its long stay, and to our knowledge all agree with the identification. A selection of other observes are included below.

Mark Stanley

E-mail:

Stewart Ford

E-mail:

Phone:

Dan Mantle

E-mail:

Phone:

Plaxy Barratt

E-mail:

Phone:

## **References**

Menkhorst P., Rogers D., Clarke R., Davies J., Marsack P. & Franklin K. 2017. *The Australian Bird Guide*. CSIRO Publishing.

## **Figures**

NOTE: Photos are attached separately to allow submission of higher resolution photos

The photographers listed below consent to BARC displaying their images electronically (fully credited by name).

### **List of attached photos**

Figure 1: The original photo of the Eurasian Curlew (left) with an Eastern Curlew. Photo Terry Wooltorton.

Figure 2: Eurasian Curlew stretching, showing white flanks with very sparse streaking, and clean white underwing coverts. Photo Mark Stanley.

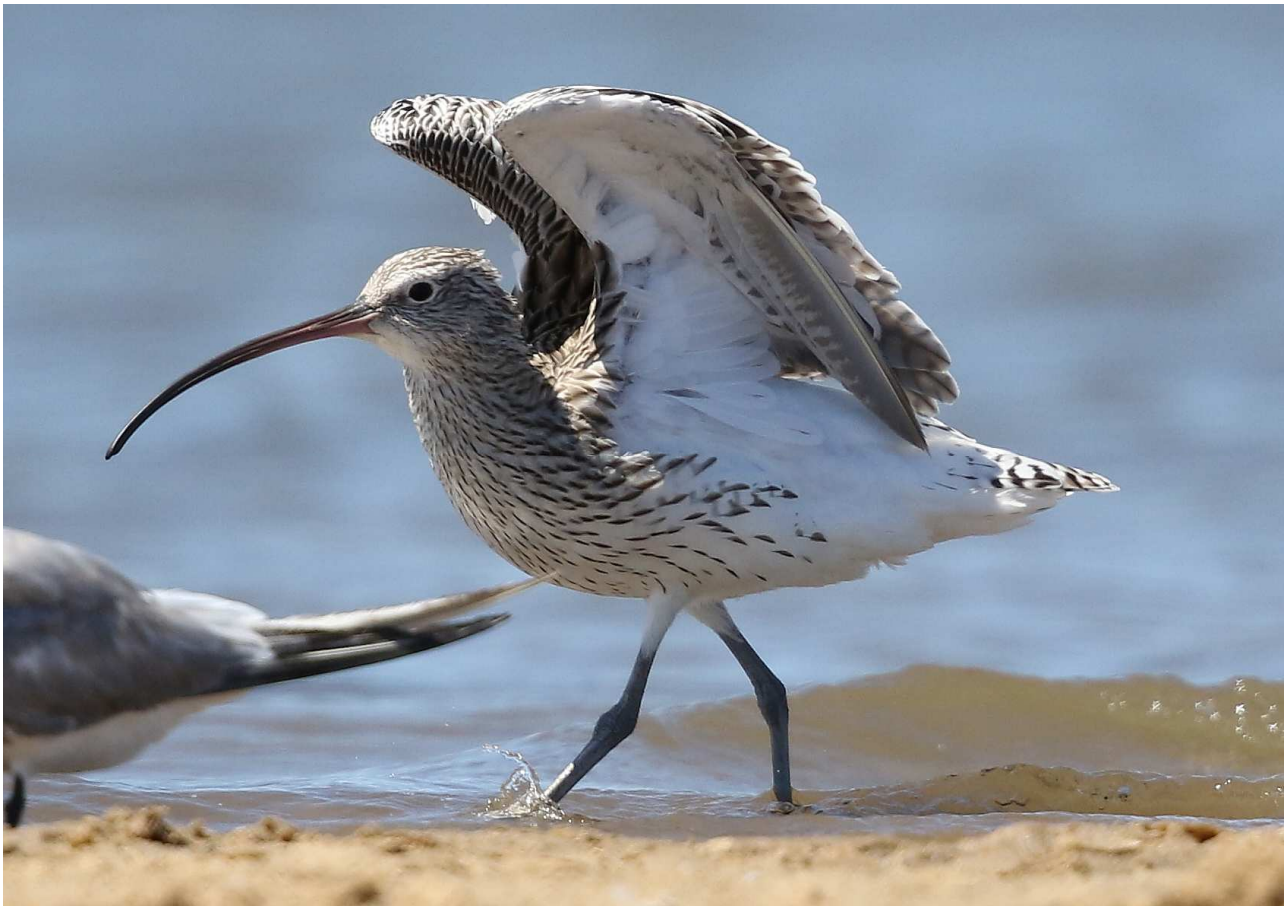
Figure 3: Eurasian Curlew in flight, showing white triangle extending up back. Photo Peter Taylor.

Figure 4: Eurasian Curlew (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) with three Eastern Curlews. Photo Rohan Clarke.

Additional supporting photos can be provided if required, or found online in the eBird database



**Figure 1 - Eurasian Curlew w Eastern Curlew. Photo Terry Wooltorton**



**Figure 2 - Eurasian Curlew. Photo Mark Stanley**



**Figure 3 - Eurasian Curlew in flight. Photo Peter Taylor**



**Figure 4 - Eurasian Curlew with three Eastern Curlew. Photo Rohan Clarke**