

Birds Queensland

Rare Bird Report Form

Please complete and mail to: **Birds Queensland Records Appraisal Committee**
PO Box 2273
Milton Queensland 4064
Australia

or email to David Stewart at

Observer's name: Ged Tranter

Address:

Email:

Contact phone:

Other observers present: None at the time of finding, joined by four other birders a little later – see below.

Species name: **Buff-breasted Sandpiper - *Calidris subruficollis***

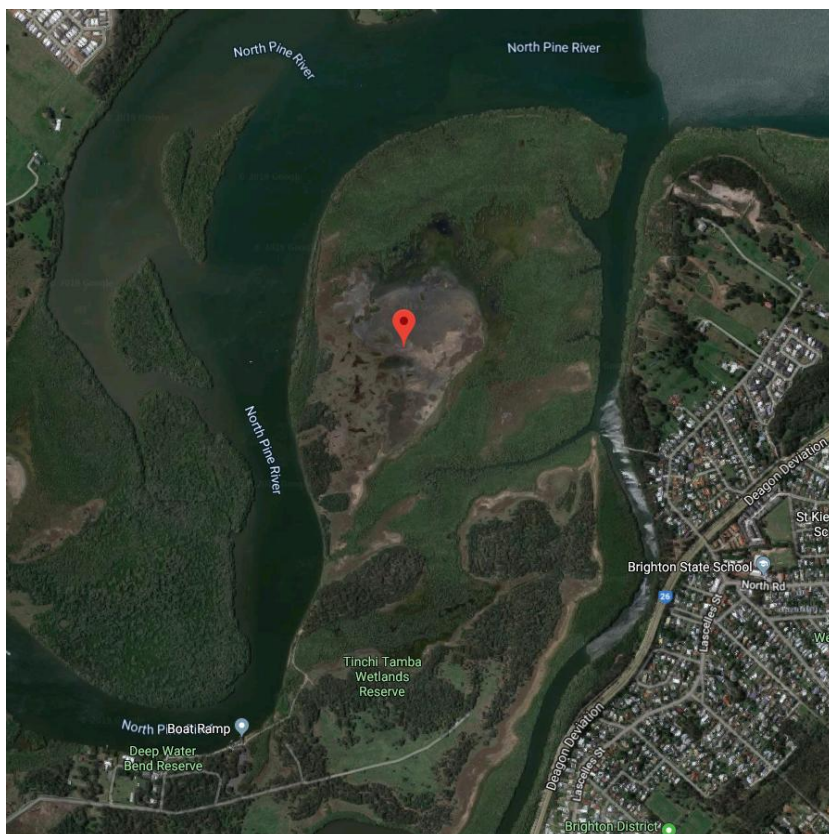
Date of observation: 27/10/2018

Number of birds observed: 1

Location:

Peninsula wader roost at Tinchi Tamba Wetlands Reserve, Bald Hills, Brisbane.

Actual location @ -27°17'15.65"S, 153° 2'25.78"E



Habitat description:

Wader roost at the end of the peninsula – a mixture of samphire saltmarsh plains and clay pans which are periodically inundated by saltwater on only the highest of tides, also topped up by heavy rainfalls. Through most of the year there is a fair covering of water, attracting reasonable numbers of waders during summer.

Sighting conditions:

First located at 3.45pm whilst scanning with the scope, weather and lighting conditions were good, typical spring weather in Brisbane. Sunny, scattered cloud, warm @27c, light wind 10-15knts. Bird observed initially for 15 seconds, it then flew a distance of @50m with a flock of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers where I was able to observe the bird for a more extended period of perhaps 2 or 3 minutes, before it flew again with the Sharp-tailed flock.

Optical or other aids used:

Swarovski ATX 85 spotting scope
Hawke Frontier ED 8x43 binoculars

Distance from bird/height of bird above ground: 35m away on mudflat when first located.

Prior experience with this species:

None. At the time of finding this was my first sighting of this species.

How confident are you of your identification?: 100%, no doubts as to ID, knew as soon as I saw it.

Description of bird:

Fortunately, BBSP is one of the more distinctive waders and immediately stood out from the flock. Similar in size to, but a touch smaller than the Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, the first point of difference was in the leg colour – a bright yellow. Bill was short in length, colour was a solid black/dark, not bi-coloured in any way. Head shape was rounded and ball-like, with the black eye standing out on an otherwise pale brown face, light streaking on the crown descending onto the lores. Overall the bird was a light sandy brown colour, paler on the underparts (even lighter towards the undertail), with some light streaking on the breast and chest, underparts were otherwise unmarked. Upperpart base colour a nice sandy-brown with darker centres to mantle/scaps/coverts and flight feathers giving a simple, uncomplicated two-tone appearance.



L to R: Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pacific Golden Plover and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.



Pacific Golden Plover (left) with Buff-breasted Sandpiper (right).



Close-up of same photo from above



Profile shot of Buff-breasted Sandpiper showing key features well – bright yellow legs, short black bill, sandy-brown plumage showing dark centres to upperpart plumage.

Behaviour of bird:

The bird was in a flock of @25 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, wading and actively feeding/walking in the shallow pools on the clay pan. All of the birds on the site were very active at the time, constantly on the move. I initially scoped it at a range of 35m after scanning the flock left to right, it was in the centre of the flock and stood out straight away. I only managed to observe the bird for 15 seconds before it and the Sharp-tailed Sandpipers flew to another area of the clay pan. The birds weren't reacting to my presence and moved spontaneously – as they continued to do so for the rest of the afternoon. I followed it with binoculars and moved to its new position 70m away, where again it was very busy, never stopped still, wading and feeding in the shallow water. It was at this point that I managed some record shots as it was feeding, approaching to 20m. It flushed for a second time after a few minutes, moving to another area of the clay pan, I didn't attempt to relocate at this point, instead I called a few friends and posted to Facebook at around 4pm. Bird didn't call.

How was it distinguished from similar species?:

The most similar species would be Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, a number of key features differentiate it, in no particular order – short dark bill, not brown/black as in STSP; atomic yellow legs, contrasting with the pale olive/green of the STSP; distinctive head shape being a rounded ball, with a beady black eye.

Reference books used:

The Australian Bird Guide, Menkhorst et al.
Shorebirds of the Northern Hemisphere, Chandler.

Other comments:

The bird was relocated by myself and four other birders that evening at around 5.15pm on the clay pan – Andy Jensen, Gus Daly, Elliot Leach and Steve Murray. We watched the bird for perhaps 30 minutes before it spontaneously flew with 6 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, this time gaining height and disappearing in a westerly direction. The site was well searched the next day, but wasn't relocated.

-----[Office Use Only] -----

Received: _____ BQ RAC Case No.: _____ BARC Case No.: _____ Recommendation: