BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee
Unusual Record Report Form

This form is intended to aid observers in the preparation of a submission to document a major rare bird in Australia. Its use is NOT mandatory. Please attach and/or include all relevant information including any digital images. Please Email the completed form/submission to the BARC Chair, Tony Palliser tonyp@bigpond.net.au

BARC considers submissions that include a minimum of the submitter's name(s), the bird species claimed and the location and date(s) of the record. However, more information and evidence will usually be required for BARC to accept a record. So, please submit as much detailed information about the bird as possible.

If you choose not to use this form please make sure all relevant information requested in this form is included in your submission. However, it is our preference that you fully complete sections "A" and "B", or follow their headings, so that BARC has some continuity between all submissions.

Section A: Submitter details	
Your name(s) **Joint submissions are fine**	Barry & Lesley Deacon
Your email, phone or address	

Section B: Record details	
Common and scientific names **Include subspecies if relevant**	American Golden Plover (Pluvialis Dominicus)
Site location **(with GPS if possible)**	Lady Elliot Island, Queensland (north eastern rock shoal and northern end of airstrip)
Date(s) and time(s) of record **(First and last date of occurrence if known)**	First seen and photographed on the rock shoal feeding adjacent to a Grey-tailed Tattler on 14 March 2020 at 4.36 pm approximately one hour before low tide. Second sighting and photographed feeding on the mowed airstrip on 15 March 2020 at 2.02 pm (high tide 12.18 pm)
How many individuals were there?	One (1), but numerous Pacific Golden Plover (all in breeding plumage)
What was the distance to the bird(s)?	Approximately 8 (eight) metres on both occasions
Habitat description	Lady Elliot Island is a small coral cay in the southern Great Barrier Reef approximately 90 kilometres E of The Town of 1770. It is being revegetated with native endemic trees and shrubs after guano mining but part of the island has been maintained as an untreed area for the resort and air strip. Sightings were made on the exposed tidal rock shelf fringed by reef at the head of a small lagoon and on the mown grassed airstrip which has taller grass and dwarf poinsettia along the edges.
Sighting conditions **(e.g. weather, visibility, light conditions)**	Lightly overcast, 25 – 30 knot ESE winds both days. Clear visibility, with good light.
How confident are you in the identification (as a %) and why?	Because it was so different to all of the other Pacific Golden Plover on the island that were all in some stage of breeding plumage, we suspected it may have been a Grey Plover. It appeared slightly larger and was standing more erect than the Pacific Golden Plovers near it on the airstrip, but it did not look completely right. On a closer look at back of camera images, I was not convinced it was not a Pacific Golden Plover. As we did not have any reference books or materials with us, I (BD) sent an image to an eBird Regional Reviewer for clarification

	assistance and was advised, in his opinion, it was more likely a Grey Plover. I subsequently posted the image as a Grey Plover on eBird. Later I was contacted by Elliot Leach who suggested the bird may in fact be an American Golden Plover. Elliot asked if he could post the images on the Australian Twitchers Site to seek further clarification. A number of specialists have reviewed the images supplied and there is a general consensus that the bird is an American Golden Plover albeit that there is not complete agreement in evidence for this ID. Since following this debate on the Australian Twitchers site, studying the pictures and information on vagrant waders in both the CSIRO Australian Bird Guide and the Pizzey & Knight Field Guide to the Birds of Australia, and also looking at images on the internet of American Golden Plover, I am 95% certain that this is the species that we sighted.
Did you find and/or identify the bird initially? Who else recorded the bird and do they agree with the identification?	Refer above. Only seen by the submitters. We are aware that others were interested in travelling to Lady Elliot Is to also subsequently view the bird but cost and now travel issues have not made this possible.
What experience have you had with this species?	None, but reasonably familiar with Pacific Golden Plover.
Has this species been seen at this location before? When?	Not that we are aware. A submission to BARC (Case 409) for an American Golden Plover on Lady Elliot Island on 31 October 2002 was not accepted.
Have photographs of the bird or discussion of it occurred on the internet? (Please provide the site name, a summary, electronic link, etc.)	Yes, two (2) images were taken on 14 March on the rock shelf, and five (5) images were taken on 15 March on the airstrip The sighting has been subject to significant comment on Facebook – Australian Twitchers Site under a post by **Esteban Du Plontier** Notable notations include: **Killian Mullarney** I have seen a number of examples of what are almost certainly PGP that have a stronger than usual resemblance to American Golden, but to my eyes, the current Lady Elliot candidate is in a different league; if this were to prove NOT to be an American, we would have to re-think a lot of what we consider reliable means of identifying these two, at least in a vagrant context. I am curious to know if anyone has managed to obtain sound-recordings? Also, some open wing shots might help establish moult information, which differs significantly between the two. **Angus Daly** I am definitely keen to hear others thoughts ie Jeff, Rohan, Wendy Ryan Danny Rogers, Kevin, David, David W. As suggested by Killian's comment, I would be concerned with all other Aus records of AGP's if this individual was deemed to be a PGP. Despite discussion and suggestion in the sub-thread on plumage and other features ruling out AGP, I think we need to use all features to get to a conclusion. We also have to be careful using features such tibia length and bill length, both of which overlap in the species and would have to be measured in the hand to be definitive in non-extreme individuals. Number of primaries projecting beyond the longest tertial is slightly problematic but not a smoking gun as photos AGP's of with only 3 do exist (particularly in March April). To me the plumage strongly favours AGP as I have never seen, nor can I find an image of a PGP even close to this bird (despite being wary of plumage wear and aspect mixing of what I think is a first-cycle individual in first pre-alternate moult). Although subjective and not conclusive I think the tibia actually do appear rather short compared to a typical PGP and the bill does not appear to be out of the range for an AGP. The attenuated shape is also good in my eyes for AGP. I would appreciate further comments. **Jeff Davies** Coming to this a bit late, reasonably short extent of

exposed tibia, three primary tips well clear of longest tertial(look at distance between third primary in and longest tertial), underside of supercilium well defined giving a pronounced discrete white supercilium, basic tertial tips rather rounded rather than pointy, what's not to like about this bird as an AGP?

Rob Morris The long pointy back end created by the primaries is also a good clue and the bill doesn't look outside the range for AGP.

Wendy Ryan Danny Rogers The primaries look fresh to me too, those crisp little white tips to the outer primaries don't last for long. But I doubt that p7 is still growing. I can't see any colour difference between p7 and the outer primaries, and primary moult of Pluvialis starts from the inside & moves out – so it would be bizarre to see p7 in growth while the outer primaries are full grown. In mid March you'd expect both PGP and AGP to have just about completed primary moult: some birds all done, perhaps a few still growing p10.
I sometimes wonder how perfect the primary projection character is. If p7 had been 1-3 mm longer in this bird, it would have projected beyond the longest tertial, we'd say four primaries were exposed, and we'd feel much happier about calling the bird an AGP. But when I've had Pacific Goldens in the hand, I've found that gently opening or closing the wing a fraction can alter the amount of primary tip apparently projecting beyond the tips of the tertials.
Oscar & Patricia Johnson's paper on ID of these things is worth revisiting: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/.../d7fd77cdcf128cfb1f01...

They did have confidence in primary projection as an ID character, but it was a study of birds in the hand and I imagine they were very systematic about how they recorded it. It's hard to be so systematic in the field: hard enough to make out exact primary projection at all, and harder still to be sure that the bird hasn't made life even more difficult by not being exactly side-on, or drooping a wing a fraction.
Also of interest in the Johnson's paper was their confidence in the length of primary projection beyond the tail tip: 0-9 mm in Pacific Golden, 12-22 mm in American Golden. In the Lady Elliott bird, taking a ruler to the side-on image, measuring bill length and the tail-to-primaries ratio, and then assuming that the bill was probably between 22 and 24 mm long (as it is in nearly all PGP and AGP), I come up with the primaries projecting 13.5 to 15 mm beyond the tip of the tail. Which puts it squarely in AGP territory – though as with primary projection beyond tip of tertial, I am sure this measurement could be affected by posture.
The Johnson's looked at a number of other mooted ID characters. One of them was how close the tertials extended to the tip of the tail: they considered that the tertial tips nearly always fall about level with the tip of the tail of Pacific Golden, but that it is common for the tertial tips of American Golden Plover to be about level with the middle of the tail.
I don't think rear end structure is completely diagnostic in this Lady Elliott bird, but to my eyes it looks better for AGP.not dissimilar to this April AGP.

David James Yet another late entry from me, and it will be too long for most. I must admit I'm pretty rusty on this pair and still getting up to speed. Heads up though, I'm going to need stronger convincing that this is an AGP.
This is an interesting bird and it is hard to make a firm call on it. Excellent work from those that found it and publicised it because this is awesome progress. On face value it looks very grey, but it has spent the summer in Australia and the non breeding contour feathers are very worn and faded. So faded in fact, I suspect it is a first year bird. Again on face value, it looks fine and slender with a short tibia and possibly a fine bill, as pointed out by Demitris B. However, I'm not sure that these kinds of features can be judged accurately enough by eye to be diagnostic. The bill measurements overlap, and there is individual variation to consider (21-26 mm bill length in PGP, so presumably similar variation in bill depth and shape). The tibia is not something easily measured since it is anchored to the hips inside the

	body- i.e. no measurements to guide on how it might rule out one or the other. Also, the tibia will look shorter if the belly feathers are fluffed in e.g. cold weather (maybe not so relevant) or if the bird has a fatty belly ahead of migration. The fine, slender, upright body shape looks good but is not diagnostic. The big bold supercilium suits AGP, but some PGPs have more super than others.Danny Rogers noted that the primaries are fresh and fully grown, which I totally agree with. He also raised the point that the extent of primary projection varies between individuals perhaps more than is typically acknowledged (as with most field characters). I looked at hundreds of skins in Australian and NZ museums in the 1990s, and I found that the primary extension varied more than the literature suggested, and thought this might be due to the prep methods (i.e. AGP can't be identified on primary projection in skins). Perhaps this parallels Danny's comments on how the wing is held. The tertials are always the key, troublesome as they may be. Oh oh, this bird is moulting the tertials (orange arrows in the marked up pic), and that is a red flag. The rear end structure is about 3 things: primaries beyond the tail tip, primaries beyond the tertials, and tertials behind the tail tip (blue lines in the marked up pic). The primaries beyond the tail tip is dependent on how the wings are held, so generally considered unreliable. Ideally, for AGP, there should be 4 primaries beyond the longest tertial and the longest tertial should fall well short of the tail tip. I'm a big fan on 4 primaries, not happy with an AGP out of range without 4 extending Ps. I only see 3 on this bird. I accept Danny's argument that this could vary because we are talking about millimetres. The tertials fall well short of the tail tip. On the face, this is AGP, but there maybe moult in the tertials. That could mean that the tertials might not be at full length, and they would cover even more of the primaries extension when fully grown. That gives me concerns that this is not an AGP but a PGP late first cycle moulting in 2nd cycle breeding tertials that will cover more of the primaries before long. And how about the plumage of new tertials? Some have white spots and some have bright golden spots. The colour intensity of breeding plumage spots seems to depend on when they moult in, i.e. the first breeding plumage feathers have white spots but the closer to the breeding season the brighter the spots become on new feathers. But AGP does not have a lot of tertials with bright spots at the best of time. The gold spots on the new tertials at least cancel out the fine bill, short tarsus, slender neck, and broad super. **Wendy Ryan Danny Rogers** Hi David. I'm happy to continue the facebook discussion on this bird – it might help whoever is going to write up the BARC submission. But I can't say much about the tertial shape character. I only learned about it from Jeff recently. Skimming through photos, it looks very encouraging to me – I'm sure that on average AGP has more rounded tips to its tertials. And the Lady Elliott bird looks more like AGP than PGP on this feature. But I haven't got enough experience with it to understand how the roundedness of the tertial tips varies with wear and what sort of overlap there might be with PGP. Can you clarify your thoughts on the age of the bird? Early in your post you said you suspect the bird of being in its first year (i.e. hatched in 2019), but later you mentioned second cycle moults, so I wondered if you were thinking hatched 2018. I've also been thinking about the age of the bird, because of its important implications for ID. I think we are all agreed that the outer primaries are nice and fresh. That's what we'd expect in adult AGP and PGP. It's also what we'd expect in a first year AGP – they replace all their primaries in their first austral summer (Jukema et al 2011). But it's not what I would expect in a first year Pacific Golden Plover: they hold their juvenile primaries through their first year of life, not replacing them until second prebasic. In March the retained juv primaries of a PGP are getting on for nine months old, the ground colour is browner than the black new primaries of adults, and they've lost their white tips (as you noted in HANZAB). In good scope views in Vic I feel quite confident about ageing them on primary wear at this time of year – easier to age than most of our

	wader species on this basis as they reveal more of their primary tips. I just can't interpret the primaries of that Lady Elliott bird as retained juvenile feathers. It seems to me that if we can nail the bird as a first year, then it's convincing evidence for it being an AGP. But it's hard to see any feathers that are diagnostically retained juvenile. The old feathers in the mantle and scaps look basic-patterned to me: pale fringed, no evidence of distinct spots on the edges or tips. There's one image (bird facing right, standing in grass) that reveals an interesting old tertial or tertial covert – it seems more densely spotted on the outer edge than the surrounding feathers in the same tract. Still pondering about whether that is a retained juv feather. If it is, then I reckon the bird is an AGP! If the bird was an adult, then there's still things to debate – one of them being how an adult PGP could end up looking so grey in March.
Do you permit BARC to display your images etc. electronically (credited with your name)	Yes

You may choose to delete or ignore this page, but please include as much of the requested information in your submission as possible, especially Sections C and E.

Section C: Supporting evidence

Please include evidence that supports the identification, such as photographs, video, call recordings, etc. Digital images can be pasted into this document below, at the end, or provided separately. Digital video and sound recordings can be sent separately to this form. Label photos etc or insert captions to make note of relevant features they show.

Section D: Description of the bird(s)

Please provide a description of the bird(s) including all identification features recorded. Provide all possible details that might corroborate the identification.	
Plumage	Refer to Facebook discussion above
Bare parts	Ditto
Moult details	Ditto
Structure and 'jizz'	Ditto
Calls	No call heard
Behaviours	Typical Plover species feeding behaviour
Age, sex and/or taxonomy	Refer to Facebook discussion above

Section E: Confusion species
Please indicate other species that the bird(s) might be confused with and how they can be eliminated
Pacific Golden Plover (refer to comments on Australian Twitchers Post above) Grey Plover. Darkish under wings but not diagnostic black 'armpit' patch when flying.

Section F: References and aids	
Did you use books, journal articles or on-line sites or pages to help you prepare this submission? Which ones?	The Australian Bird Guide – Peter Menkhorst et al The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia – Graham Pizzey & Frank Knight Field Guide to Australian Birds – Michael Morcombe The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds – Peter Slater et al
Would you like to acknowledge the assistance of others in the identification process or preparation of this submission?	No