

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	Nyil Khwaja, George Swann, Maurice O'Connor, Adrian Boyle, Jane Taylor, Connie Grohmann, Kerry Hadley, Chris Hassell, Franky O'Connor and Nigel Jackett
Your email, phone or address	broome@birdlife.org.au (NK and JT), info@kimberleybirdwatching.com.au (GS), mocnk@westnet.com.au (MOC), aboyle@westnet.com.au , crghrohmann@westnet.com.au , hadleys@wn.com.au , turnstone@wn.com.au (CH), franky.oconnor@gmail.com , nigel.jackett@gmail.com

Section B: Record details	
Common and scientific names Include subspecies if relevant	Buff-breasted Sandpiper <i>Calidris subruficollis</i>
Site location (with GPS if possible)	Eighty Mile Beach 5-8 km south of Anna Plains access track, Kimberley WA 7.8 km is 19° 15' 40.26"S 121° 23' 41.69"E
Date(s) and time(s) of record (First and last date of occurrence if known)	28 Nov 2020 – found 0943 7.6 km south of beach access, re-found 1127 7.8 km south, and again 1236 7.8 km south 29 Nov 2020 – found 1303 5.3 km south of beach access
How many individuals were there?	1
What was the distance to the bird(s)?	Approached to c.10 m
Habitat description	Eighty Mile Beach is an exposed ocean beach backed by dunes and grassland, with extensive mudflats at low tide. Initially found at high tide, roosting in tide rack among beach-washed seaweed and shells, in the company of a small group of Ruddy Turnstone and Greater Sand Plover, but about a metre away from the nearest. We then watched the bird along with its companions move to the shoreline, where it foraged actively in wet sand and shallow water. When first re-found, the bird was roosting up the beach in a large, widely spread mixed wader flock of 2,000+ birds. When found again on the third and fourth occasions, it was loafing and foraging on wet sand as the tide receded, again among large numbers of other waders.

Sighting conditions (e.g. weather, visibility, light conditions)	The weather was hot and clear on both days the bird was seen. When first found, the bird was close to the vehicle which observations were made from. It was early enough in the day that there was no issue with heat haze. There was some haze for observations made later in the day at greater distances, but the bird was still close enough to be made out clearly on each occasion.
How confident are you in the identification (as a %) and why?	100%. The species is distinctive, was seen very well through scopes by a total of 10 observers across 4 different occasions, and clear photographs were obtained. We noted several key field characters all of which are consistent with the ID.
Did you find and/or identify the bird initially? Who else recorded the bird and do they agree with the identification?	GS and NK initially found the bird while counting waders and terns for the annual 'MYSMA' survey of Eighty Mile Beach. We discussed and identified the bird while watching it at close quarters through a scope on this first occasion along with MOC. NK took photos and some video footage. We then left to continue our count, but returned to the area once finished, attempting to re-find the bird so we could show birders from other teams. We succeeded in doing so, watched the bird again for some time, and marked the location, but then left it to look for a Nordmann's Greenshank reported by another team further south! AB re-found the BBS along with CG and JT; they stayed with it until KH, CH and FOC arrived. All had prolonged scope views, and it was still there when GS, MOC and NK returned. The following day, NJ arrived from Broome to search for both species and found the BBS after 4 h. The other 9 of us all met NJ on the way back from our counts and had another look at the bird then. All observers agree with the ID.
What experience have you had with this species?	None of the observers apart from CH had seen the species before, though all are experienced with regular waders at the site, from previous counts, other research, tour guiding and general shorebirding both there and in Broome, which shares all its regular wader species.
Has this species been seen at this location before? When?	No
Have photographs of the bird or discussion of it occurred on the internet? (Please provide the site name, a summary, electronic link, etc.)	eBird checklists - https://ebird.org/checklist/S76895306 , https://ebird.org/checklist/S76784396 , https://ebird.org/checklist/S76894749 Facebook post - https://www.facebook.com/groups/718576241555767/permalink/3495344640545566/
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.



Roosting in tide rack as first encountered. Shows warm buffy wash to most body plumage; dark-centred upperpart feathers; whitish vent and orbital area; fine dark streaking on crown; primary tips projecting just beyond tail; fine, short, black bill, and yellow legs.



Foraging on wet sand. Left: shows buff wash to unmarked breast area not visible above. Right: shows bird picking at wet sand (whitish vent and yellow legs visible as above).



Video grabs. Left: with outstretched wing, shows lack of wing bar and that primary moult has commenced. Right: shows size comparison with Greater Sand Plovers and Ruddy Turnstone.

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	Warm, buffy wash over most body plumage. Fine dark streaking on crown. Rather unmarked face otherwise with no eyestripe or supercilium. Whitish orbital ‘ring’, more noticeable above and below eye than in front and behind it. Dark centres and buff edging to mantle feathers and scapulars. Dark primaries projecting just beyond tip of tail. Dark upperwing with no wing bar, and clean white underwing, both seen when bird stretched its wings. Unmarked underparts mostly warm buff with whiter vent area.
Bare parts	Fine, short, straight black bill. Yellow legs.
Moult details	Primary moult has commenced from the P1 and looks to be, in Australian moult parlance, 5 ² 4 ¹ O ⁷ . This schedule is consistent with typical moult timings of Buff-breasted Sandpiper on wintering grounds in Brazil, where primary moult begins at the wrist, P1 and P2 are dropped in late October, and moult continues out to P10 which is dropped in late January (De Almeida 2009).
Structure and ‘jizz’	Small sandpiper with short, fine black bill, and blank facial expression. Clearly smaller than Ruddy Turnstone and Greater Sand Plover on first encounter, and appeared smaller and slighter than nearby Sharp-tailed Sandpipers on second encounter. Described as having an odd, ‘hesitant’ gait by NJ on 29 Nov. When seen with mixed shorebirds, the warm buff body colour was distinctive, much as the more golden tones of Little Curlew and Oriental Plover usually stand out among grey waders.
Calls	None noted
Behaviours	Mostly seen roosting and loafing, always close to other waders, but usually slightly separate from them. Earlier in the day, content to roost up the beach away from the tide, and was first found in a tide rack. When found after midday the bird was on cooler wet sand presumably to avoid heat stress. During our first encounter, the bird was also seen feeding: wading in wet sand and shallow water around the time of the tide’s peak, and picking at small invertebrates in the wet sand. It generally interacted little with the birds around it, at one stage jumping out the way of a Ruddy Turnstone while both were feeding close together in a similar manner.
Age, sex and/or taxonomy	Plumage suggests non-breeding adult (Hayman et al. 1986, Menkhorst et al. 2017). It was noted as smaller than accompanying Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, and body mass measurements of the two species overlap almost completely (Menkhorst et al. 2017). Based on this we speculated that this individual was probably small in the context of variation within its species, suggesting a female (Hayman et al. 1986). R. Lanctot (pers. comm.) who is experienced with the species in North America suggested the following: ‘...Very difficult to sex. Males are only slightly larger. I would guess based on body posture it was a male but really hard to say for sure unless you can compare with other birds and it is starting to show classic Buffy behavior.’ Overall we feel there is little convincing evidence in favour of either sex.

Section E: Confusion species

Please indicate other species that the bird(s) might be confused with and how they can be eliminated

This species is distinctive and potential confusion species are readily eliminated based on the descriptions and photos above. Sharp-tailed and Pectoral Sandpiper have different facial pattern, deeper bill and obvious streaking on breast (Menkhorst et al. 2017). Juvenile Ruff has similar plumage but is larger and longer-legged, with a narrow white wing-bar on the upperwing (Hayman et al. 1986, Menkhorst et al. 2017). Baird’s Sandpiper has different facial pattern; short, black legs, and lacks buff colouration (Menkhorst et al. 2017). Upland Sandpiper has different facial pattern and bill colour, and clean white underparts (Sibley 2016).

Section F: References and aids

<p>Did you use books, journal articles or on-line sites or pages to help you prepare this submission? Which ones?</p>	<p>Yes (see citations above); also referred to Menkhorst et al. (2017) in the field.</p> <p>De Almeida, J. B. (2009) <i>Wintering Ecology of Buff-breasted Sandpipers (Tryngites subruficollis) in Southern Brazil</i>. PhD thesis, University of Nevada.</p> <p>Hayman, P., Marchant, J. and Prater, T. (1986) <i>Shorebirds: An Identification Guide</i>. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.</p> <p>Menkhorst, P., Rogers, D., Clarke, R., Davies, J., Marsack, P. et al. (2017) <i>The Australian Bird Guide</i>. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.</p> <p>Sibley, D. (2016) <i>Sibley Birds West</i>, 2nd edition. Broadway Books, New York.</p>
<p>Would you like to acknowledge the assistance of others in the identification process or preparation of this submission?</p>	<p>Thanks to Richard Lanctot for providing the information on moult from De Almeida (2009) and commenting on sexing this species; thanks to Robert Gill for putting us in touch with Richard.</p>