

## A WILSON'S PLOVER (*Charadrius wilsonia*) ON NORTH MONOMOY ISLAND

by Stephen Dinsmore and Robert C. Humphrey

**Date.** May 31, 1987 (ca. 4:00 P.M.)

**Location.** North Monomoy Island, Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge, Chatham, Barnstable County, Massachusetts

**Observers.** Stephen Dinsmore, Manomet Bird Observatory, and Robert C. Humphrey, Monomoy NWR

**Weather.** Clear, sunny; sun was behind the observers

**Optics.** 8 x 23 Nikon and Bushnell 20X - 45X spotting scope

We first observed the bird foraging for insects on the west side of the island south of Broad Creek. The bird was feeding on a large, flat sandy area at least fifty meters from the water. Throughout the observation period, the bird actively foraged for insects on higher ground and did not feed on the flats exposed by the receding tide. After noting a description and the bird's behavior (it teetered much like a Spotted Sandpiper), Steve Dinsmore photographed it.

The following description was written from field notes taken during the observation period. The general overall appearance, i.e., stocky body shape, upright posture, bill shape, and behavior, was that of a *Charadrius* plover. The bill was heavier and darker than that of the Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) we had just seen. The crown was a medium brown, darkening at the forehead. The forehead below the crown was white, and this extended in an unbroken line to a point just behind the eye (i.e., a white supercilium). The posterior of the crown faded into a rusty band that extended around the back of the head from just behind the eye and above the nape. The auriculars, mantle, wings, rump, and upper tail were also medium brown. The scapulars showed some light feather edgings, giving the back a scaly appearance. The primaries appeared only slightly darker than the back. The bird had a complete breast band, very faint in the middle and thickest below and just behind the eye where it abruptly faded to medium brown. The undertail coverts, underparts, and throat were white. A white collar extended from the throat around the back of the head. The legs were dull pink and appeared long for a plover.

The combination of a single breastband, a large, dark bill, and dull pink legs eliminates other dark-banded plovers of the genus *Charadrius* -- Snowy, Piping, and Semipalmated plovers, and Killdeer.

Based on the scaly appearance of the scapulars and the faint breast band, we believe the bird to be a male in first spring alternate plumage. Females show a brown breastband in all plumages. We last saw the bird flying over the flats on the west side of the island about fifteen minutes after the bird was first sighted.

Wilson's Plovers are considered accidental in the state and are usually overshoots during spring migration. This represents the eighth record for this species on Cape Cod in recent history and only the third record from Monomoy: 6/26/29 - Truro (Austin); 5/26/42 - Monomoy (Kraus); 5/29/54 - Nauset (Verry); 5/20/62 - North Beach (Bailey); 5/28/70 - Monomoy (Petersen); 5/24/75 - Nauset (Blodget); 6/3/78 - Nauset (Nikula); 5/31/87 - Monomoy (Dinsmore and Humphrey).

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### CONFUSION ABOUT SPACEMASTER II

In July 1987, I learned that Bushnell/Bausch & Lomb had replaced the popular 60 mm Spacemaster II spotting scope (the stubby gray job you see most often in the field) with a 70 mm model. When I tested this "improved" version -- it has a rocker-arm focusing mechanism rather than a wheel -- I found it woefully lacking. And, due to a marketing faux pax, this new model was also called Spacemaster II. Confusing? Yes!

Together with several other members of Bushnell's Birding Council, I complained about the new model, and we asked that the old one be reinstated. In a letter to me dated October 1, Robert T. Palmisano, president of Bausch & Lomb's Sports Optics and Scientific Products Group, wrote, "As a result of your comments, and that of fellow birdwatching enthusiasts, we have decided to reintroduce the original Spacemaster in 1988."

This is good news! But, if you buy by mail order, be sure to check on what model of Spacemaster you are purchasing.

Leif J. Robinson



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