

COX'S SANDPIPER: COMMENT

"The really extraordinary thing is that one of the least known, rarest birds in the world should be on the opposite side of the world from where it has ever been seen." (Claudia Wild, quoted in *The Boston Globe*, September 25, 1987).

UPI report in San Francisco newspaper: "Duxbury, Mass.--Bird watchers could hardly believe their eyes. The strange bird on Duxbury Beach was an extremely rare Cox's Plover [*sic*]... 'This sighting has national or international significance,' said Eleanor Perkins Robinson of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, which identified the bird Wednesday [*sic*, again]." [*In reality, Mark Kasprzyk of Manomet Bird Observatory, who carefully examined the photographs on Wednesday, September 16, 1987 and was the first to realize that the bird had been incorrectly identified as a Pectoral Sandpiper, alerted other shorebird experts and relocated the bird on Thursday evening, studied it carefully, and made extensive notes. Mark, Richard Forster, Trevor Lloyd-Evans, and others met Friday morning at Duxbury Beach, but the bird was not correctly identified until late Friday night (see R. A. Forster's article).]*

Mark Kasprzyk to Dorothy Arvidson at Massachusetts Audubon by telephone on Friday afternoon at 4:30 P.M.: "We have a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on Duxbury Beach. But there is something strange about the bird; it has a very long bill, and it must be an adult." Chris Leahy, sitting in the same office, hearing the conversation repeated, asked: "Is it confirmed?" Mark: "Well, Richard Forster and Trevor Lloyd-Evans have seen the bird." Chris Leahy: "It's confirmed." Mark: "Please, please caution people [on the Voice] about trampling the dune grass. This is a fragile area, and it's all private property."

[*And so the sighting was announced on the Friday Voice as a "confirmed adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper."*]

Davis Finch (who first saw the bird on Monday and called *Bob-O-Link* that same day to report the bird as a Cox's Sandpiper) in a telephone conversation on Tuesday, 7:00 A.M., with Nancy Clayton who anticipated another trip to Duxbury to view the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, recommended that she observe carefully the bill -- more slender than a Pectoral's and longer than a Sharp-tailed's, listen for the voice, and observe the action of the bird when startled. He also noted that this was not an adult but a young bird. Davis told Nancy, "I've never seen this bird before."

Nancy Clayton, disappointed not to see the bird on Tuesday (along with a number of disgruntled out-of-staters brought in by the *Bob-O-Link* announcements of a Sharp-tailed on Saturday and a Cox's on Monday) and hearing rumors (unfounded) that Manomet had known all along that the bird was a Cox's: "This whole affair sounds like a 'Coxgate' to me."

Bird Observer plans to publish more on the Cox's, and we request our readers to send us their observations.

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