

Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*: new to Argentina

Julius A. Kieser

AT ABOUT 9:30 a.m. (local time) on March 12, 1981, I noticed a single medium-sized sandpiper feeding in the company of four Two-banded Plovers, *Charadrius falklandicus*, on the sandy beach north of Mar Del Plata Prov. Buenos Aires, Argentina. (38°0'S; 57°30'W). Although the general structure and bill shape suggested Curlew Sandpiper, *Calidris ferruginea*, this species was soon eliminated when the bird flew up, restlessly, to reveal a stint-type tail pattern (dark central tail, flanked by white). The combination of a decurved bill and scaled upperparts also suggested either Pectoral Sandpiper, *C. melanotos*, which was discounted by the distinct belly spotting of the bird under observation, or Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, *C. acuminata*. The latter species typically shows two or three

rows of ventrally pointing chevrons on the flanks as well as a prominent eye-stripe which is more prominent behind the eye than in front of it (Kieser and Smith, 1982). Not only did the Mar Del Plata sandpiper lack these field marks, but it also lacked a distinct eyering, which is now considered characteristic of this species (Rosenband, 1982). The only other scaled-backed sandpiper that it could still be confused with, Broad-billed Sandpiper, *Limicola falcinellus*, never shows belly spotting and characteristically shows an S-shaped upper border to the maxilla (Kieser and Tree, 1981).

DESCRIPTION

Size and general characters. About the size of a Sanderling, *Calidris alba*, but

generally darker in plumage with a dark, decurved bill. The head was usually carried low, giving a round-shouldered appearance. On the standing bird the folded primaries did not project beyond the tail-tip.

Head. Forehead and crown chestnut-buffy, streaked darker brown. Eye-stripe clear white extending from the base of the bill to behind the eye, where it peters out. Lores dark and well defined. No eyering.

Upperparts. Mottled buffy to dark brown. Scapular feathers broadly fringed pale chestnut. Numerous scapular feathers gray-brown with dark shaft streaks indicating partial molt into first-winter plumage. Greater coverts and primaries dark with very narrow and abraded pale edges.

Underparts. Chest white, longitudinally streaked dark brown. Belly and venter white with numerous bold dark roundish spots on the belly. A few less well defined spots were noticed along the flanks.

Legs. Blackish.

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DISCUSSION

THE ABOVE PLUMAGE features are consistent with a diagnosis of Dunlin in juvenile plumage, partially molted into first-winter plumage. The only previous record of this bird on the South American continent was in Peru (Petersen *et al.*, 1981) and this record therefore not only documents the first observation of this species so far south, but also its first occurrence in Argentina. Dunlin have been recorded irregularly south of the equator in Africa (Ash, 1981; Britton, 1980; McLachlan and Liversidge, 1978), in Australia and Tasmania (Pizzey, 1980) and in New Zealand (Falla *et al.*, 1979).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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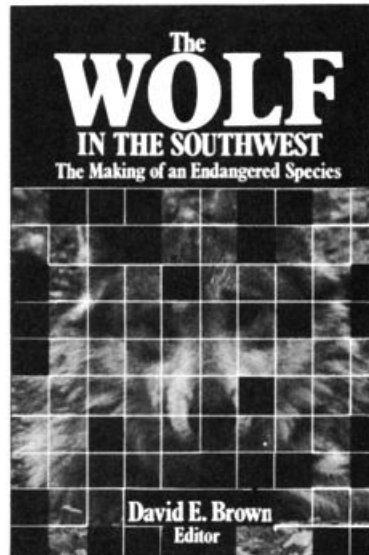
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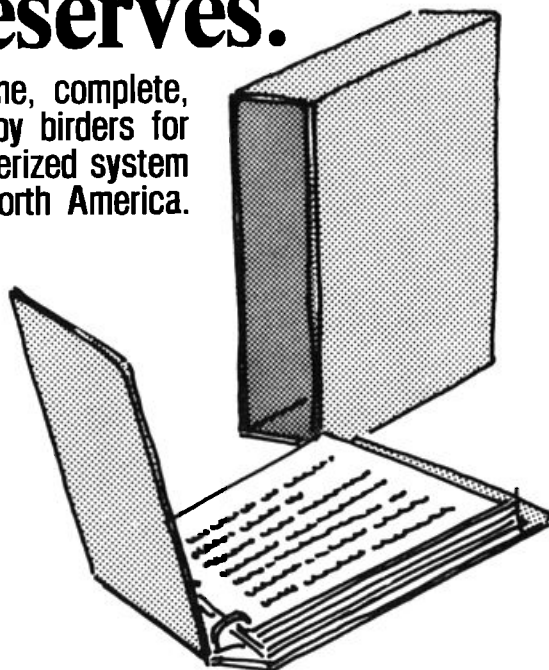
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