

## A BAR-TAILED GODWIT RECORD FOR WASHINGTON

At approximately 16:00 on 4 September 1973 Cheryl and Norman Lavers and I were observing seabirds at the north jetty of Grays Harbor at Point Brown, Grays Harbor County, Washington. My attention was drawn to a shorebird crossing the periphery of my vision, flying behind and away from us, one or two meters above the beach. In flight it appeared brownish with a whitish area on the upper tail or rump. On alighting it immediately began foraging on the open upper beach, probing into deep, loose, dry sand which contained partially buried seaweed and beach litter.

Noting it was a godwit we followed it about 75 meters north up the beach. From 10 - 12 meters distance we could see it was a small godwit, standing perhaps 35 - 40 cm high, with a somewhat short, slightly upturned bill. When it moved it appeared to have a whitish tail barred with dusky brown. I observed the bird with 7X35 binoculars and 15-60X 60 mm spotting scope.

The bird was solitary and tame. With the aid of Tim Wahl we flushed it and determined it indeed had a whitish barred tail and rump. It had a prominent superciliary stripe, mottled brownish-gray upperparts, and pale buff neck and breast becoming whitish on the belly. While there appeared to be some indistinct streaking, the sides were essentially clear buffy and lacked noticeable barring. Underwing coloration appeared a speckled grayish pattern, definitely lacking any suggestion of the cinnamon, pinkish or dusky coloration present in Marbled Godwits (*Limosa*



Figure 1. A Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) foraging on the open beach at Grays Harbor, Washington, on 4 September 1973.

Photo by Norman Lavers.



Figure 2. Bar-tailed Godwit in flight. Note the shape of the rump patch and extent of barring on the white of the rump.

Photo by Terence R. Wabl.

*fedoa*) and Hudsonian Godwits (*Limosa baemastica*). Distinct bold wingbars were lacking, but there were light areas at the base of the primaries which were darker than the secondaries. Basal half of the bill was flesh-colored, the tip was blackish. Legs were bluish.

When the bird flew we were confident it was a Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*). It circled us, landing within a few meters the first time, but flew north up the beach out of sight the second time it flushed. It was photographed (Figure 1) in full sunlight from approximately 11 - 12 meters with SLR cameras and 400 mm lenses. Flight photos (Figure 2) clearly show the tail and rump pattern, the latter with no clear unbarred white area, and legs barely extending beyond the tail. No sound was noted from the bird during the approximately twenty minutes it was under observation.

The absence of white extending upward onto the back from the rump area excludes the possibility of the dominant race *lapponica*, and the presence of barring on the white rump suggests the race *baueri* from eastern Siberia and western Alaska rather than *menzibieri* from central Siberia. Only two previous records are reported from south of the Alaskan breeding grounds on the Pacific coast: one collected at Colebrook, British Columbia, 30 October 1931 (Munro, Condor 37: 178, 1935 and Brooks, Condor 44:33, 1942), the other collected at Arcata, California, 17 July 1968 (Gerstenberg and Harris, Condor, 72:112, 1970). Both specimens are identified as *baueri*.

The weather pattern changed overnight and a blowing fog and light rain occurred the next day. The immediate area and other near-by shorebird habitats were searched this following day by us and others; although two Marbled Godwits were seen the Bar-tailed Godwit was not found. This is the first Washington record for the species. Terence R. Wabl, 3041 Eldridge, Bellingham, Washington 98225.



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