

NOTES

A SEMIPALMATED PLOVER NEST IN OREGON

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The known breeding range of the Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) encompasses coastal Canada and Alaska (including the islands of arctic Canada, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and southwestern British Columbia), and the interior of central Canada (American Ornithologists' Union, 1983. Check-list of North American Birds, Am. Ornithol. Union, Lawrence, KS). J. R. Morris (W. Birds 5:22, 1974) reported the first Washington State record after he discovered two pairs of nesting Semipalmated Plovers at Ocean Shores on the central Washington coast in 1973. Semipalmated Plovers have been observed during the breeding season in 1984, 1985, and 1986 at the same Ocean Shores location (E. Cummins pers. comm.). Here, we report the first nesting record of this species from Oregon and from the interior of the Pacific Northwest.

On 23 June 1987, while A. Shono and Ivey were conducting a Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) count on Stinking Lake (Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, ca. 40 km southwest of Burns, Harney County, Oregon), they observed a pair of



Figure 1. Semipalmated Plover chick at Stinking Lake, Harney County, Oregon, 8 July 1987.

Photo by K. Yates-Mills

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Semipalmated Plovers behaving as if defending a territory. Ivey, Fothergill, and Yates-Mills returned to the area on 8 July to search for evidence that the pair might be nesting. We located one of the pair ca. 50 m west of the original sighting and observed it performing distraction behavior. After searching the area for a nest, we walked farther west along the shoreline and were surprised to find the other adult with a young chick. Both adults performed distraction displays while Ivey caught the chick for a photo (Figure 1).

We estimated the chick to be two days old when captured. It was much darker than Snowy Plover nestlings and showed the characteristic partially webbed toes and mask-like eye line shown by C. Harrison (1978. *A Field Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds*. Collins, Cleveland). It also showed an incomplete breast band, which was not indicated by Harrison (1978), and it lacked the white forehead and elongated tail shown for the nestling Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*).

Ivey returned to the area again on 16 July with C. D. Littlefield and found the chick in the same area with one parent, captured it again, and banded it. The chick had begun to grow its juvenile plumage, showing a distinct gray-brown breast band; however, its upper feathers were dark gray with buff tips and its primaries were not quite fully developed.

Stinking Lake is a spring-fed internally drained alkaline lake covering ca. 300 ha and surrounded by sand dunes and volcanic rimrocks. Flat barren shorelines of sand and gravel on the east side of the lake provide excellent habitat for feeding and nesting shorebirds. Although we did not locate the actual nest site, the area where the Semipalmated Plover pair and chick were observed was an extensive alkaline flat covered by mats of dried algae, surrounding a narrow peninsula of sand and fine gravel with a few scattered greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) shrubs. W. N. Copeland and S. E. Greene (1982, Stinking Lake Research Natural Area. Suppl. 12 to J. F. Franklin, F. C. Hall, C. T. Dyrness, and C. Maser (eds). 1972 Federal Research Natural Areas in Oregon and Washington: A guide for scientists and educators. Pac. Northwest Forest and Range Exp. Stn. Portland, OR) provide a detailed description of Stinking Lake and its flora and fauna.

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