

## LOUISIANA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

## REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the LBRC Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or this format when submitting records for review (to assure that all information involving an observation is accounted for). Attach additional sheets if necessary. Please print or type. Attach drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos if an obscurely marked species. When completed, mail to: LBRC Secretary, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216.

## 1. ENGLISH AND SCIENTIFIC NAMES:

Ruff (Philomachus pugnax).

## 2. NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS, SEXES, AGES, GENERAL PLUMAGE (e.g., 2 ad. in breeding plumage):

one adult female.

## 3. LOCALITY: LOUISIANA; Vermilion Par.;

(state) (parish)

2 mi. N Kaplan, in fields NE junction Hwy. 35 and Hwy. 700  
(specific locality)

## 4. DATE(S) WHEN SEEN: 30 April 1988.

## 5. TIMES OF DAY WHEN SEEN: ca. 10:00 AM.

6. REPORTING OBSERVER AND ADDRESS: Steven W. Cardiff  
LSU Museum of Natural Science  
Baton Rouge, LA 708037. OTHER OBSERVERS ACCOMPANYING REPORTER WHO ALSO IDENTIFIED THE BIRD:

Dr. Sievert A. Rohwer, Gregor Rohwer, Gary Shugart (all visiting from Burke Museum, University of Washington, Seattle).

8. OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THE BIRD: none.

## 9. WEATHER/LIGHT CONDITIONS (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light):

During passage of cold front. Overcast, intermittent rain sprinkles, strong NE wind. Light dim but adequate.

## 10. OPTICAL EQUIPMENT (type, power, condition):

Bushnell Custom 10 X 50 binoculars in good condition.

## 11. DISTANCE TO BIRD: 200-300 ft.

12. DURATION OF OBSERVATION:

viewed standing for about 4 min., in flight for about 30 sec.

13. HABITAT: muddy field with some shallow standing water.

14. BEHAVIOR OF BIRD/CIRCUMSTANCES OF OBSERVATION (flying, feeding, resting, etc. - include and stress any habits used in identification; relate events surrounding the observation):

We were driving up the eastern side of the fields, sizing up the bird situation and hoping to get permission to collect on the property. I first spotted the Ruff from the car when we briefly stopped to scan a large flock of feeding shorebirds. I immediately recognized the bird as a Ruff and directed everyone else onto the bird. We observed the bird for about 1 min. and then drove over to the owner's house to get permission to shoot. Having accomplished this, we returned to the field and relocated the bird in the same area. We watched the Ruff for another 1-2 minutes and then I carefully got out of the vehicle, grabbed my gun out of the back, and started to stalk the bird. Much to my annoyance, the bird became very alert as soon as I left the cover of the car and I hadn't gone more than 20-30 ft. before it flew 100-200 ft. into the next section of the field. All of the other shorebirds were much tamer and allowed me to approach much closer. The Ruff, however, always stayed well beyond shotgun range. I continued to stalk the bird, but it (and it alone) would only let me cover a short distance before flying into a new section of the field. Thus, the bird more or less doubled the distance between us every time it flushed, eventually leaving the field altogether and disappearing into a maze of crawfish ponds to the north. There were thousands of migrant shorebirds in this particular set of muddy fields, mostly Dunlin, Stilt Sandpiper, and Lesser Yellowlegs. We continued looking for the bird for another hour, and other birders looked for the bird during the next few days, but with negative results. During the few minutes that we watched the bird, it was almost constantly walking around picking at the surface of the mud, very much like nearby Lesser Yellowlegs. In flight, I mostly saw the bird's back as it moved directly away. The flight behavior was not noticeably different from most other shorebirds.

15. DESCRIPTION (include only what was actually seen, not what "should" have been seen. Include if possible: total length or relative size compared to other species present or familiar species; body bulk, shape, and proportions; bill, eye, leg and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species):

Most obvious were the bright orange legs. They were definitely orange, not yellow or orange-yellow as in the nearby Lesser Yellowlegs. Bird slightly larger than nearby Lesser Yellowlegs and Stilt Sandpipers. Bill about 1 1/4 times the length of the head and slightly drooped towards the tip, bill thickness very similar to that of Pectoral Sandpiper, definitely thicker and blunter-tipped than Lesser Yellowlegs; looked all dark. Head seemed relatively small in contrast to the rather plump body. Legs relatively long, but slightly shorter in proportion to body as compared with Stilt Sandpiper and Lesser Yellowlegs. Somewhat shorter and thicker-necked than yellowlegs or Stilt Sandpipers. Overall dull white below, slightly darker and "dirtier-looking" on the breast. No obvious markings on underparts. Upperparts generally gray-brown. "Loral" area next to base of bill paler brownish-white, in subtle contrast to rest of head. Feathers of back with dark centers and prominent paler fringes, creating a "scaly-backed" appearance. I do not recall if the upperwing coverts were scaled or plain. In flight, seen only from rear as it made several flights of 50-300 ft. Large white oval patches on sides of rump very obvious, divided by thin dark stripe down rump. I cannot recall details of primary extension relative to tail length, or tail color (except that the tail did contrast with the white rump patches). I believe that the bird was a female based on size and a lack of any sign of molting-in male breeding

plumage.

16. VOICE: not heard.

17. SIMILAR SPECIES (include how they are eliminated by your observations):

Combination of size, proportions, bill shape, leg color, scaly backed appearance, rump patches, and pale area on face at base of bill eliminate all other possibilities.

18. PHOTOGRAPHS OR TAPE RECORDINGS OBTAINED (By whom? Attached?): none.

19. PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS SPECIES:

I have previously seen at least seven individuals in similar plumage in Alaska and California. I saw (and later collected) a very similar-looking (and also extremely wary) individual in the very same field during fall 1988 (remote possibility of being the same individual). Burke Museum group have previously seen a few in WA in fall.

20. IDENTIFICATION AIDS (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a) at time of observation: none.

b) after observation: none.

21. THIS DESCRIPTION WRITTEN FROM: \_\_\_\_\_ notes made during observation; X notes made after observation (date: within 2 months); \_\_\_\_\_ memory.

22. ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION? YES. If not, explain:

23. SIGNATURE OF REPORTER:

*Steven W. Cardiff*

24. DATE AND TIME OF WRITING THIS ACCOUNT: 14 March 1989, 1:00 PM.

Species: Ruff

89-10

State: Louisiana

Parish or  
County: Vermilion

Locality: 2 mi. N Kaplan

Date: 30 April 19 88 No. seen: 1 ♀ (reuve)

Observers: Steven W. Cardiff, Sievert Rohwer, Gregor Rohwer, Gary Shugart

Documentation: sight record ( X ); photo (    ); specimen (    ); heard only (    )

Significance: 4th state record (if accepted by LOS Bird Records Comm.)

For unusual records, give details on reverse side Full details to be submitted to  
LOSBR

seen well standing and in flight for several minutes at 200-300 ft. Overcast, rain sprinkles, strong NE wind. Bird in muddy field with huge flock of migrant shorebirds (mostly Dunlin, Silt Sandpiper, and Lesser Yellowlegs). Seen through 10x50 Bushell Custom binocs (SWC) at ~10 AM.

- actively walking around picking at surface of mud - yellowlegs fashion. Most obvious were the bright orange legs. Bird was slightly larger than Silt Sandpiper and Lesser Yellowlegs next to it. Bill ~  $1\frac{1}{4}$  times length of head, slightly drooped towards tip. Small head, plump body, relatively long legs. Dull whitish below, somewhat darker and dirtier on breast. No obvious markings on underparts. Upperparts gray-brown, feathers of back with dark centers and paler edges forming "scaled-back" appearance. In flight, bird seen only from rear as it made several flights of 50 to 300 ft. away from me and eventually disappeared. Large white oval patches on sides of rump very apparent. Attempts to collect bird were unsuccessful.

- I have seen this species about 6 times, including two spring ♀♀ in Alaska. The other observers have observed the species in fall in Washington.