

Louisiana Ornithological Society

Bird Records Committee

Report Form

Species: Purple Sandpiper, *Calidris maritima*

Number: 1

Locality: Lakefront Airport, Lake Pontchartrain, New Orleans

Date: December 23, 2001

Time: 8:30 a.m. (approx.)

Reporter: David P. Muth,
1617 Charlton Drive, New Orleans, Louisiana 70122

With Reporter: Kenneth V. Rosenberg

Other Observers: none

Light: overcast; obscured sun was to our southeast, bird was to our northwest/west

Optics: Swarovski EL 10x40, Swarovski Scope 60x

Distance: about 2000' when first observed; eventually about 500'

Duration: perhaps 5 minutes over a 20 minute period

Habitat: on a concrete runway and in adjacent grass, including wet grassy swale

Behavior: Standing on concrete, resting (head tucked), or alert; foraging(?) in grass; flying when flushed by Peregrine. The bird was loosely associated with Black-bellied Plovers and Dunlin; these birds coalesced briefly into tight flocks that wheeled around in response to falcon.

Description: A large (Dunlin-sized) calidrid; it flew in and joined a loose flock of Dunlin and Black-bellied Plovers arrayed along a concrete runway and its grassy margins. Stood out by its very dark tone in comparison. The darkness, squat stance and dumpy shape

immediately suggested Purple Sandpiper. Through the scope we could see the fairly long bill, uni-colored, nearly black upper-parts and breast, and streaking down the white flanks.

We walked parallel to the runway and got considerably closer. In flight the white wing stripe above, black and white wing pattern below, and white in bases of outer tail feathers stood out prominently. It was very hard to be certain in the poor light and great distance, but legs appeared pale, not black. Despite repeatedly flushing and our having to relocate it, the bird was very easy to pick out in flight or in a new location on the ground. Even when feeding in tall grass, we could track its dark head or back as we waited for it to walk into the open.

Voice: Not heard.

Similar Species: Not safely separated from Rock Sandpiper under these circumstances; there was no possibility of discerning fine details. Probability alone points to Purple.

Both turnstones and Surf-bird eliminated by streaked flanks and tail/rump pattern in flight, as well as shape and bill length.

Given the overall size, shape, posture, and pattern (and streaked flanks), there was no reason to suspect an aberrant (arrested) Dunlin or otherwise soiled or melanistic individual of another species.

Photos/Videos/Recordings: KVR obtained two digital images through the Kowa scope at 60x. Disc attached.

Previous Experience: Three in Louisiana, a very few in New Jersey.

Aids: None.

Circumstances of Description: Written from memory, and from notes on 3x5 card written shortly after count.

Confidence Level: I am certain with the obvious caveat about Rock Sandpiper.

Signature:



David P. Muth

Date:

February 7, 2002