

<b>English and Scientific names:</b>	Ruff [= Reeve] <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
<b>Number of individuals:</b>	1, female in alternate
<b>Locality: LOUISIANA:</b>	Acadia Parish
<b>Specific Locality:</b>	Toups Road, about 1 mile West of Hwy 35
<b>Date(s) when observed:</b>	May 8, 2005.
<b>Time(s) of day when observed:</b>	Seen about 10:30 or 11:00 AM
<b>Reporting observer and address:</b>	Paul Conover Lafayette, LA
<b>Other observers who also identified the bird(s):</b>	John Conover
<b>Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light):</b>	Light conditions were hazy and hot while looking at the bird on the field [we were facing east into the sun and it was climbing towards midday], but while watching the bird's flight we had beautiful light from behind as the bird headed more or less west.
<b>Optical equipment:</b>	Kowa 20-60 scope, Zeiss 10x40 binoculars
<b>Distance to bird(s):</b>	40-50 yards while perched, 30-40 while flying past us. We were able to watch the bird to about 1 mile away in distance in flight.
<b>Duration of observation:</b>	I could see the back of the bird before I got an unobstructed look at the face/head. I probably saw the rear half of the bird 5-10 seconds, the head for perhaps 2 seconds, and the bird in flight for 2 minutes or so.
<b>Habitat:</b>	Rice fields with emergent rice, patches of shallow open water.
<b>Behavior of bird/circumstances of sighting:</b>	The bird was crouched in the water with about 50 Stilt Sandpipers, a few Dunlin, and one White-rumped Sandpiper. A Cooper's Hawk had spooked the flocks on these fields repeatedly and this group formed a tight bunch in shallow water. Some birds were crouched, and others upright and moving.

We were in a hurry to leave, but I was scanning the flock from the passenger seat a final time, checking to see if the Curlew Sandpiper had returned to it, automatically clicking one by one through Stilt Sandpiper and Dunlin heads. I was primarily looking for a darker, reddish head. However, I hit on a head that looked amazingly like a Ruff. I needed to adjust my body to get a good look at it, and when I looked again, I wasn't able to find anything remotely like a Ruff. I apologized to John for telling him there was a suspicious head out there, thought about it, and figured I'd better check one more time. This time, I saw the back end of a bird that seemed mottled with some unfamiliar big dark feather centers and I knew I wasn't looking at a Stilt or Dunlin. When the head of the bird cleared, I told John that I was right, it was a Ruff. I started for the camera, and when it flew, threw the door open, yelled and pointed it out to John, and we both got on the bird before it crossed the road. We expected it to circle and land, but it was a strong flier, and it left the area.

**Description:**

The bird was roughly the size of the Stilt Sandpipers and Dunlins it was crouched in the water with, though its bulk was distributed differently—longish like a Stilt but stocky like a Dunlin. It was appreciably larger than a nearby White-rumped Sandpiper.

Its bill was—as far as I could see—all dark [Contrast was fine in the lighting, but color was washed out]. The bill was slightly decurved, thicker at the base and not tapering to a needle point but remaining somewhat thick to the end.

The forehead was distinctly angled, reminiscent of a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. The eye seemed to have an elliptical shape, giving the bird a gentle look, not the wide-eyed look of many Calidris.

The bird was hunched down in the water with its legs submerged; the neck wasn't outstretched. I could see that the bird was stockier than the Stilt Sandpipers it was immediately near, but it never presented the classic plump posture due to its resting position.

Because of the hot lighting, I couldn't see exact color tones. The bird seemed brownish overall, but the contrasts were more apparent than the color. I could see that the mantle feathers—actually the scapulars--were dark-centered, with paler fringes. The dark

spots contrasted strongly with the ground color of the dorsum. The rest of the dorsal surface of the body had a scattering of the same dark/light contrast of the scapulars, but exact pattern wasn't obvious. There were a few scaly-looking dark areas on the sides of the upper breast, but the breast seemed overall lighter than the dorsum. The overall effect was motley. Because the bird was in a hunched position, the underparts weren't as obvious as the uppers, and I didn't study or note the exact color of the forward underparts. Above, there was a paler area on the neck and nape where the feathers were maybe paler and grayish or perhaps had more prominent white bases. I saw the face for a shorter time than I saw the body—once I got a look at its head, what the rest of the body had suggested became obvious. I told John that it was a Ruff, and I made a move to grab the camera. Unfortunately, as I moved, it too moved [coincidence—it didn't start at my movement] and jumped up into flight. I got out of the car and directed John to it.

We watched it fly across the road, about 20-30 feet up, then start climbing to about 50 feet as it headed west.

In flight, the bird seemed brownish, with a bright white rump/uppertail split down the middle by a distinct dark stripe. The white sides of the rump were conspicuous. The tail looked dark-tipped, with the terminal band paler than the median stripe of the uppertail [I believe this dark 'tip' is actually the part of the tail not covered by the white uppertail coverts] . The flight was somewhat loping and swallow-like--or like the graceful but irregular flight of a Solitary Sandpiper--strong wingbeats but indirect flight with big zig-zags in the minute or two we watched it heading west. It would lean left, for instance, and fly off course for a few seconds, then tilt right for a similar time, and so on. The wingbeats were not regular at all. It drifted higher and lower in altitude as well, going from well above to well below the tree line a few times. It appeared to drop down before the bayou, in the vicinity of Monceaux Road, but we couldn't get close to that area's flock.

<b>Voice:</b>	Not heard
<b>Similar species:</b>	<p>Other shorebirds with dark central stripes on the rump are the peeps, including Baird's [all too small], Purple and Rock Sandpipers [obviously not], Dunlin [red back and black belly patch eliminate it], Phalaropes [clearly not], Sanderling, Pectoral and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. Pectoral compares to some extent in size, but profile, flight style, and the fact that I saw this bird well enough to see it wasn't the 300th Pectoral of the day eliminate it.</p> <p>Other shorebirds with a similar profile [close or superficial, e.g. Buff-breasted, Upland] are ruled out by central stripe on rump, by the bill shape, and general plumage features.</p> <p>The bird was not a Calidris. In appearance and flight it was distinctly different.</p> <p>During the course of the day, I had seen Least, Western, Semipalm, and White-rumped Sandpiper, Dunlin, Stilt, Pectoral and Curlew Sandpiper, Black-bellied, American Golden, and Semipalm Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Wilson's Phalarope, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitcher, Black-necked Stilt and Killdeer. I had already pored over many thousands of birds and was scanning through them at the fast clip that familiarity makes possible. This different bird stood out. I knew it was a Ruff, and the look at the bird's rump confirmed it.</p>
<b>Photographs or tape recordings obtained?</b>	No.
<b>Previous experience with this species:</b>	I have seen 4 males and 1 female before, I believe. I have very good video footage of some of those, including good flight footage, that I have watched dozens of times.
<b>Identification aids:</b>	<p><b>At time of observation:</b> None</p> <p><b>After observation:</b></p>
<b>This description is written from:</b>	Field notes and sketches, and memory.

<b>Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain:</b>	Yes.
<b>Reporter:</b>	<b>Paul Conover</b>
<b>Date and time:</b>	8 May 2005

*possible Ruff*, *Philomachus pugnax*  
Acadia Parish, May 8, 2005. Paul Conover.

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MAIL MCH-M-1  
28731 57955  
FEBRUARY 28, 2005

Moving car

angled forelead

bill not truly in long drawn in paler

bill thicker at base, less decurved than stilts and stouter than Pec.

AUTOMOBILE POLICY PACKET

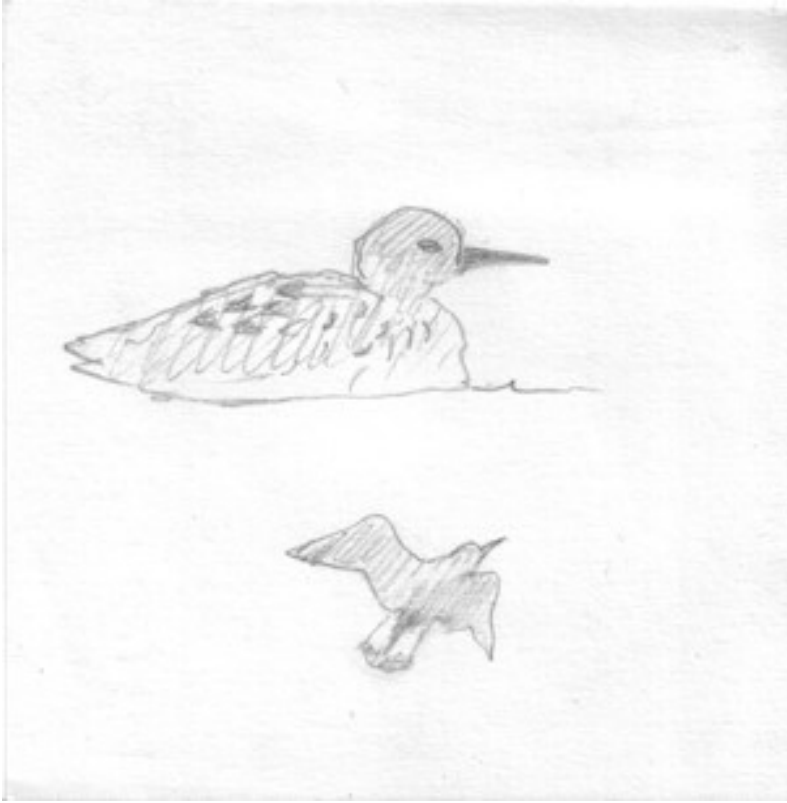
eye had unusual slant quite dark look

overall brownish, paler on neck & nape

JOHN W CONOVER  
HAUVIN LA

POLICY PERIOD: EFFECTIVE FEB 26 2005 TO MAY 23 2005





The notes and sketches at left were done immediately after I sighted the bird and watched it fly off. Those to the right were refined and shaded later on the evening of sighting. It is a diagram at best. Some of the points noted on the original sketches/notes: · The bill was not as long as drawn; I was riding in a car on a gravel road and not striving for perfection. · Forehead was angled. I mentioned to John that the forehead angle reminded somewhat of a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. · Bill was thick at base, less decurved than Stilt Sandpiper, stouter than Pectoral. · Overall brownish, paler on neck and nape. · Eye had unusual slant, gentle look. Noted in sketches: · Dark feather centers, paler fringes on scapulars Dark line down center of white rump, 'terminal band' on tail paler than central stripe.