

284-01-1989

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

769 East Forge Road
Media, Pennsylvania 19063-4332

11 July 1989

The following was received from Barbara Dean, 321 E. Meyer Avenue, New Castle, PA 16105 (412)658-3393

104 Upland Sandpipers

Date: 25 April 1989

Location: Wilmington Twp., Mercer Co.

(For ease of reading I have put in some paragraphs; none in attached original). B. Haas

My husband, George, and I took the Old Mercer Road out of New Castle and just north of Fayette in Lawrence Co. the landscape is wide open Amish farm land. This area of hayfields, clover, wheat, corn, etc. seems perfect for the Upland Sandpiper up to Route 80. This year we specifically planned to search for Uplands here. We had hopes of finding a breeding pair in Mercer Co. 1989. We had just entered Mercer Co. and George was driving slowly so that I could scan the fields. About 1/4 mile inside Mercer Co. we found one adult Upland in a clover field at 6:30 p.m. The bird was 50 yards away at most. I got out of the car and took one picture (slide #8). The bird is visible only if you project it 8x the size of the slide. It is in the clover about 1/2 way between the red chimney and the tree. Only the legs, feet and belly are hidden by the clover. We scanned the field with Leitz 10x40 binoculars from the road area and didn't see any more birds. This field is directly across the road from Shetler's Harness and Farm Supply.

We watched the bird walk in a northerly direction for about 50'. I used 400mm lens and 200 Kodachrome film. We viewed the bird from the side. At 6:45 p.m. we decided to keep going north on the Old Mercer Road. We traveled about 1½ to 2 miles to the White Chapel Church and turned left onto the White Chapel Road. We stopped at the bend on this dirt road because we saw 2 adult Uplands out in the field. The field was partly plowed, part grassy. The two birds were in the grassy area about 40 or 50' apart. I took 2 pictures of the closest bird (slides #9 and #10) which was about 40 yards from us. I left the camera in the car and George and I scanned the field with binoculars. We found a third sandpiper in the grasses. Two are just about 10' apart and the one I took the pictures of is about 40' away from the others. They are feeding. I was intent on trying to find a fourth bird. I was kidding George and asked him to whistle their whistle call which he did and were were laughing and trying to find a 4th Upland by scanning with the binoculars.

I heard George yell, "Barb, look over there!" I looked over (NO NEED FOR BINOCULARS) my right shoulder (east) and about 50 Uplands were perhaps 20' up from the ground and about 40' away. They were coming down very fast and moving behind us (south). All I can remember is that their legs looked very yellow and they were dangling down and their necks didn't look long (pulled in), their color was warm beige almost rosy beige (not white under), wings were long dark and pointed and I recognized the stiff, bowed wing flight. I'm sure the low light situation distorted their color. I've seen this beige color many times before in a low light situation. I'm sure the flock was in view for only 4 to 5 seconds maximum and the only other thing I remember is the dark beady eye. I clearly recall hearing only a very loud, very harsh chuckle call which only came from 1 bird or 1 at most. I was surprised because I thought they used the whistle call during migration. I turned and watched them. I remember boney (sp. or word?) head and beak sort of horizontal and straight out. They came to within 30' of us and I had to turn completely around facing south. I watched them kind of swirl around and all the birds lifted their wings up (like they do when they are about to land on a fence post).

The birds were very low, perhaps only a few feet from the ground. I'm guessing the flock was 50 or 60 yards out from me when their wings seemed to stop moving. At that moment, I recall very bright white triangular shapes with a short dark edge to the point (tips of primaries) and a darkish line, which began where the wing joined the body, and running part of the way up through the center of the wing. All the birds held their wings up high at the same moment and there was nothing but chartreuse wheat field between the birds and me. These birds' wings looked like a bunch of "white sails" on a "sea" of green. The wheat field was approximately .8" high and on a slight upgrade away from us. Just as I realized that the rim of the field was going to prevent me from seeing these birds actually land, George hollered, "Barb, look out there!"

I turned to the north again and saw 2 flocks of birds (Uplands). One very large flock of 50 or 60 birds and the other flock of 25 to 30 birds. These birds were way out and closing in on each other as they moved in a northerly direction in two clumps. When I looked through my binoculars the birds were simply darkish grey shapes. The pointed wings reached well below the bodies of the birds. At that same moment it "hit me" that this was an awful lot of Uplands and I ran a few steps to the car and took one picture as fast as I could. But that is not all.

A third flock came flying in to join the other two flocks. As the 3 flocks joined up they began to "string out" in a very long irregular line flying north and just slightly west. Conservative estimate of at least 100 birds. The one picture I took had very little contrast but you can see the shapes. George and I wondered if the flock that appeared to land behind us earlier had really come down. Did that flock actually make a huge sweep in a westerly then northerly direction to join the other 2 flocks.

We drove farther down White Chapel Road and unfortunately saw nothing. The three Uplands remained in the field, walking with their determined deliberate steps, feeding on bugs and whatever for food. Just as before, two of the adult birds stayed within 10' or so of each other while the 3rd Upland remained 30' or so away from the other two. When one of these birds turned its back to us we saw very dark brown, almost black color. The top of the head (from the back) was the same very dark brown and a thin dark line running down the center of the back of the neck. The birds (these 3) made no sounds. George and I spent about 1 hour scanning the roads in this area and did not find more Uplands. We have been back at least a dozen times. The area is so vast with no road access in many areas. It is perfect for the Upland Sandpiper.

Experience - George and I have found the only two areas in Lawrence Co. where Uplands breed and monitored them for PBBAP. This bird is our conservation symbol for Bartramian Audubon Society out of Slippery Rock, PA. We finally did locate a probable territorial pair of Upland Sandpiper after much searching E. of Greenville. If this pair can be documented as breeding it could be the 1st record for Mercer Co. in decades (40" years). I'm trying to let you know that the warm beige description I gave earlier was not mistaken for Mourning Doves.

Other birds in the area where the 3 Uplands were feeding were - Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Savannah Sparrow, E. Meadowlark, E. Kingbird, Song Sparrow, etc.

1014 Upland Sandpiper
migrating through Mercer Co.
on April 25, 1989

Page 1

MRS. BARBARA H DEAN
321 E. MEYER AVE.
NEW CASTLE PA. 16105
PHONE 1 412-656-3393

April 25, 1989 Sunny - upper 50's to low 60's
Location - Mercer Co. Wilmington Township

my husband George, and I took the old Mercer Road out of New Castle, and just north of Fayette in Lawrence Co. the landscape is wide open Amish farmland. This area of hayfields, clover, wheat, corn, ect. seems perfect for the upland sand piper up to Route 80. This year we specifically planned to search for uplands here. We had hopes of finding a breeding pair in Mercer Co. 1989. We had just entered Mercer Co. and George was driving slowly so that I could scan the fields. About 1/4 mile inside Mercer Co. we found one adult upland in a clover field at 6:30 PM. The bird was 50 yards away, at most. I got out of the car and took one picture (slide #8) The bird is visible only if you project it 8x the size of the slide. It is in the clover about 1/2 way between the chimney and the tree. Only the legs feet and belly are hidden by the clover. We scanned the field with Leitz 10x40 binoculars from the road area and didn't see any more birds. This field is directly across the road from Shetler's Harness and Farm Supply. We watched the bird walk in a northerly direction for about 50'. (used 400 mm. lens and 200 Kodachrome film). We viewed the bird from the side. At 6:45 PM we decided to keep going north on the Old Mercer Road. We traveled about 1 1/2 to 2 miles to the White Chapel church and turned left onto the White Chapel Road. We stopped at the bend on this dirt road because we saw 2 adult uplands out in the field. The field was partly plowed, part grassy. The two birds were in the grassy area about 40 or 50 feet apart. I took 2 pictures of the closest bird. (slide #9 and #10) which was about 40 yards from us

April 25, 1989

MRS. BARBARA H DEAN
321 E. MEYER AVE.
NEW CASTLE PA. 16105
PHONE 1 412-658-3393

104 Uplands - Mercer Co.

Page 2

I left the camera in the car and George and I scanned the field ^{with binoculars} we found a third sand piper in the grasses. Two are just about 10' apart and the one I took the picture of is about 40' away ^{from the others}. They are feeding. I was intent on trying to find a fourth bird. I was kidding George and asked him to whistle their whistle call which he did and we were laughing and trying to find a 4th upland by scanning with the binoculars. I heard George yell, "Barb, look over there!" I looked over my ^{NO NEED} ~~my~~ ^{FOR BINOCULARS} right shoulder (east) and about 50 uplands were perhaps 20' up from the ground and about 40' away. They were coming down very fast and moving behind us (south). All I can remember is that their legs looked very yellow and they were dangling down and their necks didn't look long (pulled in). Their color was warm beige almost rosy beige (not white under). Wings were long dark and pointed and I recognized the stiff bowed wing flight. I'm sure the low light situation distorted their color. I've seen this beige color many times before in a low light situation. I'm sure the flock was in view for only 4^{to 5} seconds maximum and the only other thing I remember is the dark beady eye. I clearly recall hearing only a very loud very harsh chuckle call which only came from 1 bird or 2 at most. I was surprised because I thought they used the whistle call during migration. I turned and watched them. I remember honey head and beak sort of horizontal and straight out. They came to within 30' of us and ~~we~~ had to turn completely around facing south. I watched them kind of swirl around and all the birds lifted their wings up. (like they do when they are about to land on a fence post)

The birds were very low, perhaps only a few feet from the ground. I'm guessing the flock was 50 or 60 yards out from me when their wings seemed to stop moving. At that moment I recall very bright white triangular shapes with a short dark edge to the point (tips of primaries) and a darkish line, which began where the wing joined the body, and running part of the way up through the center of the wing. All the birds held their wings up high at the same moment and there was nothing but chartreuse wheat field between the birds and me. These bird wings looked like a bunch of "white sails" on a "sea" of green. The wheat field was approx 8" high and on a slight upgrade away from us. Just as I realized that the rim of the field was going to prevent me from seeing these birds actually land, George hollowed, "Bub took out then!" I turned ^{to the} north again and saw 2 flocks of birds (uplands). One very large flock of 50 or 60 birds and the other flock of 25 to 30 birds. These birds were way out and closing in on each other as they moved in a northerly direction in two clumps. When I looked through my binoculars the birds were simply darkish grey shapes. The pointed wings reached well below the bodies of the birds. At that same moment it "hit me" that this was an awful lot of uplands and I ran a few steps to the car and took one picture as fast as I could. But that is not all. A third flock came flying in to join the other two flocks. As the 3 flocks joined up they began to "string out" in a very long irregular line flying north and just slightly west. Conservative estimate of at least 100 birds. The one picture I took had very little contrast but you can see the shapes. George and I wondered if the flock that appeared to land behind us earlier had really come down. Did that flock actually make a huge sweep in a westerly then northerly direction to join the other 2 flocks. We drove farther down White Chapel Road and unfortunately saw nothing. The three uplands remain in the field, walking with their

Determined deliberate steps, feeding on bugs and whatever for food. Just as before, two of the adult birds stayed within 10' or so of each other while the 3rd upland remained 30' or so away from the other two. When one of these birds turned its back to us we saw very dark brown, almost black color. The top of the head (from the back) was the same very dark brown and a thin dark line running down the center of the back of the neck. The birds (there 3) made no sounds. George and I spent about 1 hour scanning the roads in this area and did not find more uplands. We have been back at least a dozen times. The area is so vast with no road access in many areas. It is perfect for the upland sand piper.

Experience — George and I have found the only two areas in Lawrence Co. where uplands breed and monitored them for PBBAP. This bird is our conservation symbol for Bartramian Audubon Society out of Shippens Rock Pa. We finally did locate a probable territorial pair of upland sandpipers after much searching E. of Greenville. If this pair can be documented as breeding it could be the 1st record for Meigs Co. in decades (40+ years). I'm trying to let you know that the warm beige description I gave earlier was not mistaken for mourning dove.

Other birds in the area where the 3 uplands were feeding were — Bobolinks Red winged black birds Savannah Sparrow Meadow lark King birds Song sp. et.

Barb Dean

Upland Sandpiper
Mercer Co.
Lumber Road

MRS. BARBARA H DEAN
321 E. MEYER AVE.
NEW CASTLE PA. 16105
PHONE 1 412-858-3393

May 3 1989

8:00 PM - 8:30 PM

My husband George, and I were out specifically checking for upland sandpipers in another area of Lawrence Co. and on up into Mercer Co. but we had no luck!

At about 8:00 PM we ended up on Lumber Rd. Mercer Co. Just as we were ready to leave I saw an upland sandpiper in the grass by the side of the road. It was in the open, and 1 more adult upland at the edge of the road but in the grass. (See short cased Owl report for description of this area). Strip mine and the grass 6 or so inches high. They were maybe 10' away from me and I literally stumbled onto these birds because I wasn't looking for them here. No need for binoculars but did grab the camera took 1 picture at 8:30 PM which came out black. George saw the uplands too.

We drove to Shirley McCarlo's house nearby and told her of the find. These birds are rare so Shirley rounded up Doraime Wiland and we agreed to meet at 8:00 the next morning to get a confirmation.

May 4

at 8:50 AM Lumber Rd. $\star 50^{\circ}S$

There is only 1 small plowed field on the west side of Lumber Road. I believe it could be winter wheat. 2 adult uplands give us a good show. They are feeding and are walking that determined walk as they feed here. Meadowlarks are nearby and fields are full of meadowlarks, Bobolinks, Seneca sp., Grasshopper sp. Song sp. Savanna sp. Red winged black birds and more. Took 5 slides so I won't go into description. Hermit Bower saw the birds with Doraime later around 5 or 6 PM. The birds were not seen again. Perhaps they were on migration. In any event we could not find used Leitz 10X75 them at a later date.

Record No.: 284-01-1989

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # /of /

Species: Upland Sandpiper

Date of Sighting: 04/25/89

Observer(s): Barbara & George Dean

Date of Submission: 1989 *MERCER*

Submitted by: Barbara Dean

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater			X				
B. Haas			X				
F. Haas			X				
R. Leberman			X				
G. McWilliams			X				
S. Santner			X				
P. Schwalbe			X				
TOTALS	<i>#</i>		<i>7</i>				
DECISION			X				

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date:

12-26-89