

An excellent illustration of the species is given in the *Book of Birds* (1937) published by the National Geographic Society. The attitude of the bird seen by us on April 4, generally resembled that picture rather than the more upright pose depicted in the colour plate accompanying Smith's field notes in the *Australian Bird Watcher* (1962).

The Buff-breasted Sandpiper breeds in northern Alaska and normally migrates through the central Americas to Argentine. It is considered a comparatively rare bird in coastal localities within its usual range. Casual occurrences, and stragglers, have been noted in such countries as eastern Siberia, Japan, England, France, Switzerland, Egypt and Australia.

REFERENCES

The Book of Birds: National Geographic Society, vol. 1, p. 280.
Smith, Frederick T. H. An Australian Sight Record of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper. *The Australian Bird Watcher*, vol. 1, No. 7, pp. 185-192, pl. 42.

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Editor's Note: Since the receipt of this paper the Buff-breasted Sandpiper has been again sighted in Victoria by F. T. H. Smith and others at Carrum Swamp, and at Cherry Swamp at Altona, and by V. T. Lowe and others at Mystic Park.—J.H.

Display of the Yellow-tailed Thornbill.—In the open country about Jandowae, Queensland, the Yellow-tailed Thornbill, *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*, seems to be nomadic in the autumn and winter months, when small flocks of from six to a dozen birds are often seen about the property for a few hours and then move on.

On the morning of May 22, 1964 I was watching one such flock of about eight birds feeding on the ground and calling in their characteristic fashion when one bird picked up a small feather. It crouched down and, with head held upward, fluttered its wings, apparently in courtship display. A second bird several feet away flew to the bird with the feather and copulation was attempted. The bird with the feather still in its bill flew to a low fence wire and the second bird followed and again copulation was attempted. At this stage a third bird flew to the wire and endeavoured to chase the second bird away. The bird with the feather flew to the ground where it dropped it and a moment later all three birds flew off.

It would appear that the picking up or the sight of the feather, which is used so much for nest building purposes, triggered off a sexual urge, stimulating a display and the attempted copulation.—LLOYD NIELSEN, Jandowae, Queensland.

The Little Whimbrel in Tasmania.—The occurrence of the Little Whimbrel, *Numenius minutus*, in Tasmania, although having been suggested on more than one occasion, has never been

confirmed by a specimen or positive sight record. The only mention of this bird in Tasmanian literature, is in Robert Hall's paper on "Relationships of Tasmanian Birds" (*Emu* 23: 285-293, 1924). He includes the Little Whimbrel (p. 287) in a list of birds from the Derwent River Area, but gives no other information. As he does not state that he or any other observer, has seen the bird, it is evident that this "mention" does not constitute a positive record.

However, on January 23, 1965, I observed a single bird feeding in $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. of water on mudflats at South Arm. It was in the company of 20 Greenshanks, *Tringa nebularia*, which appeared to resent its presence, by making short runs at it, when it ventured too close to them. By comparison with the Greenshanks, the Little Whimbrel would have been 13 ins. in length, for although its bill was shorter by half an inch, it was slightly longer in the body. The legs were shorter than those of the Greenshanks, and the body appeared slimmer, with a smaller head. The description, as it reads from my field note-book is: "Overall appearance: buff, marked with streaks, barrings and mottlings of dark brown; lighter below, giving a uniform appearance all over, somewhat reminiscent of the body pattern of the Eastern Curlew, *Numenius madagascariensis*. Head with a light eyebrow. Primaries dark brown, rump continuous in colour and pattern with tail and back, although bars on tail wider. Throat whitish, breast buff with darker mottling, abdomen light buff. Bill short, $1\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{3}{4}$ ins., black and only the last $\frac{1}{2}$ in. decurved. Legs short, about 3 ins. long, upper portion brown with a yellowish tinge. Flight: extremely erratic, with side to side "jinking". No call heard.

I watched this bird for a full quarter of an hour, with a pair of 8×30 binoculars, from a range of about 20 yds.

Now according to the "books", there are several points which appear rather puzzling about my account of the Little Whimbrel. Firstly, the bird was feeding not only in a marine area, but in a good $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. of water, yet it is supposed to frequent dry, grassy areas. Secondly, although the tarsi were obscured by water, the upper parts of the legs were definitely brown in colour. However, the legs are supposed to be grey. In correspondence with Fred Smith of Victoria, he queried this fact, saying the only explanation could be that they were stained. He also mentioned that the basal half of the lower mandible was pink, but I did not pick this up. Apart from these few points, he agreed that this bird could only have been the Little Whimbrel.

A few days after my sighting, the bird was seen by David Thomas of Moonah, who confirmed my observation. After this, the bird moved off, as it was not seen again.—D. R. MILLEDGE, 60 Derwentwater Avenue, Sandy Bay, Tasmania.