

PROBABLE AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER *PLUVIALIS*
DOMINICA AT MOITAKA SETTLING PONDS

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On 9 November, 1984, in company with John Silcock, we observed a Golden Plover that was so different from the other Pacific Golden Plovers present *Pluvialis fulva*, that we considered it as a possible American Golden Plover *P. dominica*, which breeds mainly in the Nearctic with an overlap in Eastern Siberia with *P. fulva*. Unfortunately we did not have immediate access to the excellent paper on field separation of the two species (Pym 1982) although we were aware of it.

As *P. fulva* and *P. dominica* are now considered as separate species, since they have been found breeding in the same area, this record is well worth reporting.

FIELD DESCRIPTION

Our immediate impression was that the bird looked like a Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* apart from the slighter bill, longer neck, dark ear-coverts, prominent supercilium and overall smaller size. It was the pallid appearance that first drew our attention. The crown was dark with light, grey-white tips; the supercilium was broad, prominent, and whitish and contrasted with the dark crown, small dark area in front of the eye, and dark patch on the ear-coverts; the breast and underparts were wholly grey-white with grey mottlings on the sides of the breast; the back and wings were grey with small whitish tips, very faded in overall appearance; and the back of the neck was dull grey. This bird was with several *P. fulva*, and was fractionally larger and possibly bulkier. One observer believed that the bird appeared to have a higher forehead, which was shown in the photos of Pym's article, but not mentioned in the text.

The whole bird showed no trace of buffy or golden spangling in the plumage whatsoever, whereas all of the *P. fulva* showed rich buff and golden spangling and mottled necks and breasts.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER PLOVERS PRESENT

	<i>P. fulva</i>	probable <i>P. dominica</i>
Crown	Dark with buffy tips	Dark with greyish white tips
Forehead	Pale, greyish white but noticeable	Extensive, whitish and obvious when view from front on
Supercilium	Conspicuous, buffy-white	Conspicuous, broader and whitish
Contrast of Supercilium with crown	Distinct but not contrasting	Very distinct and heavy contrast
Ear Coverts	Small dark patch not conspicuous against yellowish buff face	More extensive ear patch, conspicuous against whitish face
Back of Neck	Golden spangling	Grey, completely lacking gold
Underparts	Breast with buffy-gold mottling	Whole underparts quite unmarked greyish white with grey mottling at sides of breast
Back and Upperparts	Dark grey to blackish with rich golden and buff tips and edges. Overall impression buffy-yellow	Dull grey with greyish-white tips and edges, less extensive and smaller. Overall impression greyish-white
Size and shape	All present appeared identical in shape and size	Slightly larger, plumper. Forehead higher, not sloped as much as <i>P. fulva</i>
Call	Typically variable	Not in any way different from <i>P. fulva</i> present.

CONCLUSION

We found that the differences noted between our bird and the *P. fulva* with which it was loosely associated, was virtually the same as the difference between *P. dominica* and *P. fulva* published elsewhere (Pym 1982).

There is little doubt that this bird, which was not seen again was referable to *P. dominica*, a bird that has not been identified in the New Guinea region before. To the best of our knowledge, it has not been recorded in Australia, but has turned up in New Zealand. Unfortunately, a collector's gun remains between this probable sight record and the certainty of a museum specimen.

Now that the Lesser Golden Plover has been split into Pacific (or Eastern) Golden Plover *P. fulva* and American Golden Plover *P. dominica*, observers should be more aware of the identification criteria for separating the two species. More records will certainly come to light.

Pym, A. 1982. Identification of Lesser Golden Plover and status in Britain and Ireland.
Br. Birds 75: 112-24.

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THREE LESSER GOLDEN PLOVERS SPEND WINTER NEAR PORT MORESBY

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Twice each year many waders pass through the Port Moresby region on their annual migrations north and south, between Australia and Siberia or North Eastern Asia. Among the species seen here in large numbers is the Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*.

On 3 April 1989, about the time birds normally begin their northward migration, three Lesser Golden Plovers were first noticed on the campus of the Pacific Adventist College. These birds were seen almost daily through to early September, when conspecifics were returning to Australia for the southern summer. Among those who saw these birds were staff members of Pacific Adventist College, and several members of the PNGBS. The birds were photographed.

At the time the birds were noticed, it was evident that one was coming into breeding plumage. This bird seemed to have a slight wing injury. The first and, possibly, the second primaries on the left wing drooped noticeably, but this did not prevent the bird from flying when an observer approached too closely. The bird might have known instinctively that the wing was not strong enough to make the trip to the northern breeding grounds. By September, there was no evidence of any drooping of that wing, and the bird appeared to be perfectly normal. As the weeks passed this bird came into full breeding plumage, but by early September was losing its breeding plumage and by early October could not be identified among the many others that were passing through.

The other two birds did not change into breeding plumage, and I therefore concluded that they were juveniles. It may be that the adult bird was a parent of the other two which might explain why they stayed in PNG together instead of going north with the other Lesser Golden Plovers in April.

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STRAW-NECKED IBIS *THRESKIORNIS SPINICOLLIS* AT KANOSIA LAGOON, CENTRAL PROVINCE.

NIKLAS WAHLBERG

On 11 February 1989, Will Glynn, Richard Gregory-Smith, Keith Harris, and I were visiting Kanosia Lagoon. Upon arriving we found to our delight that after a 2-year dry spell the lagoon was once again full. An abundance of bird life meant there had been water in the basin for a while, and indeed a Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* had a brood of six young ducklings. While watching some Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* through a telescope, I noticed a large black and white bird feeding in the background. When it raised its head I recognised it as a Straw-necked Ibis. RGS, having had previous experience with the species, confirmed my identification. This bird was an adult, and the straw-like plumes were clearly discernible. It remained in the area while we were there (about 1-hour) and was also seen a week later. This is only the third record of this species in the Port Moresby area. The first was at Kairuku (Slater 1958) and the second at Jackson's airport in 1964 (Mackay 1970). Hence this record is also the first for 25 years.

Mackay, R.D. 1970. *The Birds of Port Moresby and District*. Nelson.
Slater, K.R. 1958. Ibis and Little Whimbrel in New Guinea. *Emu* 58: 256.

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