

## A Hybrid Wader?

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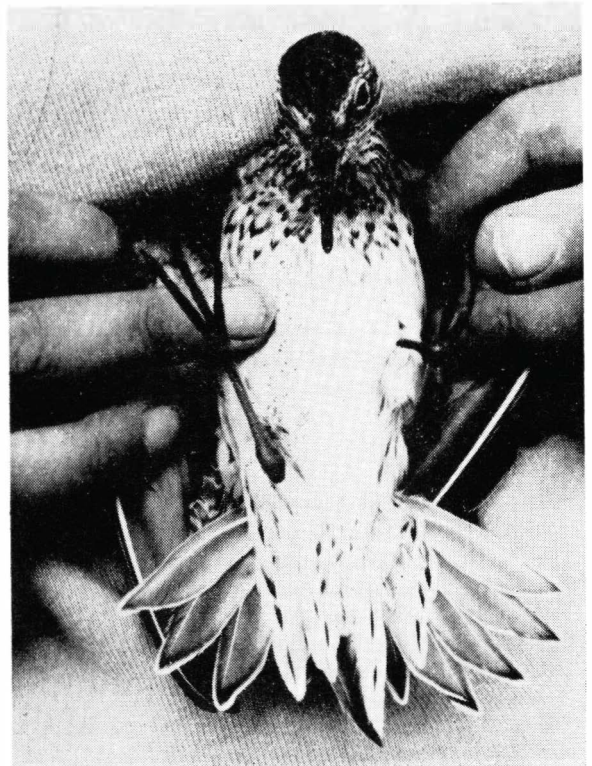
In March 1981, members of the Victorian Wader Study Group visited Sydney and Newcastle to participate with N.S.W. and other enthusiasts in wader banding, first at Botany Bay (Sydney) and then at Stockton (Newcastle).

During the first outing at Stockton on 21 March 1981, an unusual wader was captured. It was among a catch comprising 328 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata*, 9 Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea* and 24 Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*.

In general appearance and size the bird resembled a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. However, its bill was identical with that of a Curlew Sandpiper; it was black, down-curved, had the characteristic high forehead extension and was noticeably longer than that of a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. The legs were identical with those of the "Sharp-tail" being olive-yellow and thicker than those of the Curlew Sandpiper. The tail was somewhat of a combination; generally it was similar to that of a Curlew Sandpiper with very rounded tips to the feathers except the extended central ones which had pointed tips. The head, neck and upper breast were also intermediate with some Curlew Sandpiper colouring in the generally Sharp-tailed Sandpiper appearance.



● Figure 1. Bill and head details of "hybrid".



● Figure 2. Undersurface of "hybrid" showing details of tail feathers.

Photos: W. G. Rohan-Jones

About one third of the mantle and back were similar to the Curlew Sandpiper (summer) breeding plumage with the remainder (of these parts) still in non-breeding plumage. The tertials were typical of a "Sharpie", being long with buff edges.

The rump was intermediate between the two species; the sides were white with some slight barring as in the Curlew Sandpiper. The centre and upper tail coverts were darker but not the uniform dark brown, almost black colour of a

"Sharpie". It was much more like the summer plumage barring on the rump of the Curlew Sandpiper, only rather more heavily barred.

After considerable discussion, those present agreed that the bird was most probably a hybrid of the two species — Sharp-tailed Sandpiper X Curlew Sandpiper.

The following additional details were recorded:

Bill	34.5 mm
Wing	137 mm
Wing span	431 mm
Length (not stretched)	190 mm
Tail	54 mm
Weight	67 g

For comparison, details of the wing and bill length of samples of 100 of each of the species in millimetres follow:

	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Curlew Sandpiper	Hybrid
<b>WING</b>			
Range	122 – 145	127 – 141	
Mean	135.7	131.0	137
<b>BILL</b>			
Range	22.0 – 27.5	34 – 44	
Mean	25.1	37.4	34.5

Others present included P. M. Davidson, J. Martindale, D. Purchase, I. Savage and J. Strudwick.

A specimen of a similar bird, from The South Australian Museum collection, was shown to us by Mr S. Parker. Although alike in a number of aspects it was not identical with the one described here.

Photographs of the hybrid will be deposited with The Australian Museum and the Australian Bird-banding Scheme.

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