

Knowing the significance of the find, I returned to the car to get my camera and properly document the bird. Keith and Vicki remained behind so I could approach more closely to get better photos. Sneaking up on shorebirds can be done, but only with a bit of caution. If you move slowly, pausing occasionally as the birds get used to your presence, they will settle down. If not for the incessant and alarming calls of the Killdeer this technique would be much easier. Leaving behind your tripod also seems to help. Eventually I was able to get very close and began to take as many pictures as I could before the birds flew.

Had it not been for our flat tire and lackluster morning, we would have gone north to Carlyle as planned and missed out on this rare find.

By nightfall, Keith and I were tired and decided to stay in Marion for the evening. Away from home and our computers, we were regrettably hampered in our efforts to post information about the plover. We called several birders, but no one was home. For the moment, the best we could do was leave a message with Frank Bennett hoping he could post to IBET, Illinois' birding list serve. Unfortunately, Frank didn't check his phone messages that day so we weren't able to get the word out until Sunday afternoon 29 April 2001. Eventually, Frank got the message, and he and Steve Bailey relocated the plover at Belknap. It's a shame that in this age of cell phones and computers,

such a rare bird could be present for at least four days and be seen by only five birders. The final sighting was on Tuesday, 1 May 2001.

This is the fourth record for Snowy Plover in Illinois. The three previous records of this very rare vagrant in the state are from May. The first record occurred on the cinder flats at Lake Springfield, Sangamon County, 7 May 1986 (Bohlen 1986). This bird was discovered by H. David Bohlen and photographed by Dennis Oehmke. The second record occurred near Dickson Mounds, Fulton County, 10 and 11 May 1987 (Bohlen 1989), and, according to Bohlen (1989), was documented by Kevin Richmond and Michael Baum. The third record occurred north of Gorham in the Fountain Bluff region of Jackson County on 19 May 1993. This bird was discovered by Todd Fink and surprisingly went unpublished until 1996 when it appeared in *Southern Illinois Birds* (Robinson 1996).

### Literature cited

- Bohlen, H. D. 1986. Snowy Plover in Illinois. *Illinois Birds & Birding* 2:39.  
Bohlen, H.D. 1989. *The birds of Illinois*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN. 221 pp.  
Robinson, W.D. 1996. *Southern Illinois birds, an annotated list and site guide*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, IL. 432 pp.

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## Curlew Sandpiper in Lake County

by Robert Erickson

On 10 June, 2001, I went to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Lake County hoping to find some late migrants. The shorebird sanctuary was teeming with sandpipers. Scanning the mud flats, I counted over 100 shorebirds. Then it was time to scrutinize each bird through my Kowa telescope. Halfway through the flock, I saw a bird with a strong, reddish color. It wasn't a Red Knot because the bird had a long, down-curved bill. I had found a Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*). The bird was about the same size as a nearby Dunlin. I was also able to get a good look at its white rump when it flew.

I next alerted the birding community via Richard Biss, had some lunch, and went back to Great Lakes to wait for the birders. Richard Biss, his wife, and children were the first to arrive. Rich confirmed the bird's identity. Soon more birders arrived; among them were Carolyn Fields and Sue Friscia. Many other birders



*Curlew Sandpiper. 10 June 2001. Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Lake County. Photo by Carolyn Fields.*

added the species to their list.

The Curlew Sandpiper was a lifer for me, and certainly was for others. It was Wes Serafin's American Birding Association lifer number 600 and Al Stokie's 300th Lake County, Illinois bird.

The first state record of this very rare vagrant in Illinois occurred at Rend Lake 23 July 1976, according to H. David Bohlen in "The Birds of Illinois" (Indiana University Press 1989). Through 1987, there were six more records from northeastern Illinois for this species, plus a record from Vermilion County in central Illinois 16-19 May 1986, discovered by Steven Bailey (*American Birds* 40:478). All these birds were in breeding plumage.

The Lake County Curlew Sandpiper was last