



*Dark morph juvenile Reddish Egret, Montrose Harbor, Cook Co. 6 September 1997. Photo by Robert Hughes.*

## Reddish Egret at Montrose

On 6 September 1997, I found an immature Reddish Egret near Montrose Harbor along the Chicago lakefront. The bird flew in off of Lake Michigan from the north and landed briefly on one of the large stone blocks that form the revetment retaining wall. Although the bird was present for only a few minutes before continuing south, it remained long enough for me to photograph it. The outstanding feature was the uniformly gray plumage. I noted no areas of strong contrast while the bird was in flight or standing. The bill was long, straight, and completely dark. The rather spindly legs were almost completely dark.

The Montrose Harbor area has a reputation for producing vagrants. The total number of species recorded there is about 300. However, no heron and egret habitat exists there, so Reddish Egret was one of the last birds I expected to see there.

This sighting represents the second verified record for Illinois, the first being a widely seen individual from Lake Calumet in August and September of 1993 (Meadowlark).

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## Purple Sandpiper at Rock Cut State Park

Before 1:30 p.m., 22 November 1997 had not been a good birding day. Jack Armstrong and I spent the morning in fruitless search for Barrow's Goldeneye in Mequon, WI. On our way home, we decided to take a look at Pierce Lake, in Rock Cut State Park, northeast of Rockford, Winnebago Co. As we entered the parking lot next to the dam, we saw Lee Johnson standing near the lake and looking through his telescope. Lee recognized us as we approached, and immediately began to flap his arms and point excitedly out into the lake, particularly toward a small pile of rocks that barely protruded above the lake's surface, less than 100 m out from the dam. As we rolled down our windows, we heard the words: "Purple Sandpiper." We were out of the car like bullets.

The next few seconds were a blur as we divided our attention between Lee's description of how he had just found the bird and setting up our telescopes to get a look at the bird, which was barely visible to the naked eye as a silhouette above several of the rocks. Despite gray overcast, we obtained excellent looks through our scopes at 30-40x. We saw a basic plumage sandpiper, predomi-

nately gray, about the size of a Dunlin, but "chubby," and short-tailed. Head, back, and wings were slate gray. Upper breast was dark gray with dark streaking that extended along the flanks. Primaries, secondaries, tertials, and coverts were dark gray with slight pale edges. There was no contrast between wings, covers, and back. Lower breast and belly were dull white. The bird had a long bill drooping at the tip, darkly colored, with a pale, dull orange base. Legs were yellow-orange. Eye was dark, with a small pale spot behind it. We agreed with Lee's identification that the bird was a Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*).

The bird spent all of its time walking around on several rocks, pecking at algae, apparently trying to find something to eat. We observed it for over an hour, during which time at least four other birders were able to get to the park and see the bird, including my wife Barbara. She and I left the bird around 2:45 p.m. Ron Flemal saw the bird later in the afternoon, but other birders were unable to locate the bird just before sunset. It was not found the next morning.