

GODWIT AND CURLEW RECORDS FROM WHEELER REFUGE

By THOMAS Z. ATKESON

Of the many shorebird species pausing on the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge during their migrations, the "snooty-billed" godwits and the "droopy-billed" curlews are among the rarest. Refuge records covering the past 20 years include only a single marbled godwit observation and only three sightings of Hudsonian curlews, now called whimbrels.

The godwit record came on April 16, 1950, when David C. Hulse spotted a single marbled godwit along the edge of Crabtree slough, near the refuge headquarters. Henry H. Grammer, Ernest A. Byford, and William Jernigan joined Hulse later in examining this bird. It remained in the vicinity through April 17 and was seen on land and in flight, and was heard calling. It was examined carefully at reasonably close range, through good binoculars and checked against several references. The identification is considered positive.

Whimbrels were first noted on the refuge on August 26, 1940, when John Steenis saw and heard a small flick near the north bank of the Tennessee River a short distance east of the U. S. Highway 31 causeway. Steenis, a research biologist of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, had worked in the Aleutians and in other localities where these birds are fairly common.

On August 18, 1947, Lawrence S. Givens, then Wheeler Refuge manager, saw another whimbrel. From his long stay on the St. Marks Refuge of coastal Florida, Givens is familiar with these birds, but the bird noted was in flight and at some distance, and the identification is considered tentative only.

The most recent whimbrel record came on February 13, 1959, when David Hulse found a lone bird near the White Springs dike. It remained in this vicinity through March 5 and was seen several times by Hulse and by State Conservation Officer J. B. Tanner, who tried to photograph it. This bird was seen both on land and in flight and was frequently heard calling.

No effort was made to collect either the godwit or a whimbrel, for both had been previously taken in the State. The godwit was seen in Morgan County, but all whimbrel sightings were in Limestone County. Comparing the above records with Howell's BIRDS OF

ALABAMA, we find that this book contains only two old marbled godwit records, a bird shot at Dauphin Island and another shot at Greensboro and only a single whimbrel record, a bird shot at Dauphin Island.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge
Decatur, Alabama
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