

Victorian Sight Record of the Large Sand-Dotterel

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While on a day's beach-combing along Discovery Bay, Portland, during the 1957 R.A.O.U. Camp-out, Mr. Cliff Beaglehole, of Portland, and the writer observed a wader subsequently identified as the Large Sand-Dotterel, *Charadrius leschenaultii* Lesson. This appears to be the first Victorian record of the species.

Since this determination cannot be substantiated with a specimen the following data are published in support of it. The bird, in company with Hooded and Red-capped Dotterels, was observed for some minutes, through 8 x 30 binoculars from about 40 yards, approximately midway between the Glenelg River mouth and Sutton's Rocks, south of Lake Bung Bung. A sketch of the head and relative bill size was made with the following notes—

Oct. 25th, '57. 1 Dotterel-like wader with Hooded and Red-capped but keeping separate. Size of Hooded, grey-brown back, white under, head with distinct blackish mark through and behind eye and touch of darkish grey on chest forward of wing. Forehead indistinctly lighter, legs darkish. Heavy bill, distinctly larger and heavier than Hooded Dotterel's. Legs noticeably long, stands high off ground, gives impression of being bandy-legged when running.

I believed this bird to be either the Mongolian or Large Sand-Dotterel, and, on return to the National Museum, placed skins of the Hooded, Mongolian and Large Sand-Dotterels side by side to find the last immediately recognizable as the species seen.

In a paper by Hindwood (*Emu*, vol. 49, p. 8) the heads of *leschenaultii* and of the Mongolian Dotterel are well illustrated. Hindwood and Hoskin, in 'The Waders of Sydney', *Emu*, vol. 54, p. 230, remark—"In eclipse plumage the Large Sand-Dotterel is very similar to the Mongolian Dotterel but is larger and has a more robust bill. Care is necessary when identifying it in the field and, if possible, comparison should be made with some better-known bird for size, which is intermediate between that of the Mongolian Dotterel and the Golden Plover."

Amiet in 'A Wader Survey of Some Queensland Coastal Localities', *Emu*, vol. 57, p. 245, remarks on "the possibility that *C. leschenaultii* has on occasions been included with the more common *C. mongolus*", and refers to collected specimens of both species which show only 9 mm. difference in length.

Condon and McGill in their *Field Guide to the Waders* show, in the illustrations, a darker side-face patch for the Mongolian than for the Large Sand-Dotterel.

In view of the ideas expressed in these references my field notes already quoted are amplified as follow. 'Size of Hooded Dotterel'—this referred to body size and was approximate only. The bird appeared very little, if at all, larger than the Hooded Dotterel. The side-face patch appeared quite dark, but examination of skins shows this to vary considerably in both the Mongolian and the Large Sand-Dotterel; in the latter it can be dark enough to appear blackish under certain conditions of light. The note on leg length particularly incorporated length of leg visible above the 'knee-joint', and the 'bandy-legged' impression which might be better described as a 'looseness' referred to this region.

Measurements of culmen, tarsus and tibia (from 'knee-joint' to beginning of feathered region) of all available specimens of the Mongolian and Sand-Dotterels in the National Museum Collections give the following figures—

Charadrius mongolus (Six specimens including two possible subspecies)

	Culmen	Tarsus	Tibia
Min. ..	17 mm.	80 mm.	11 mm. (estimated)
Max. ..	19	85	18
Av. ..	17.9	82.5	14.6

Charadrius leschenaultii (Thirteen specimens)

Min. ..	20	36.5	18 (11 only measurable)
Max. ..	24.5	38	24
Av. ..	23.2	37	20.9

A comparison of the averages shows that the Large Sand-Dotterel is much longer in the bill, tarsus and tibia than the Mongolian, regardless of body length, and that these features, coupled with the relatively-small body size, provide a distinctive field key. Measurements of the culmen in six Hooded Dotterels for comparison give—Min. 18, max. 18.5, av. 18.25. Whilst it is readily agreed that bill length and shape in waders can be extremely deceiving in the field, it is considered worth noting that, so far as these limited figures indicate, a wader can hardly be a Mongolian Dotterel if its bill is noticeably longer than a Hooded Dotterel's bill. In the recent observation the bill was 'distinctly larger'—i.e. longer and heavier. The side-face patch is actually more below than through the eye.

The observation is submitted as a first Victorian record.

Stray Feathers

Notes on Silver Gulls.—The population of Silver Gulls (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*) around Portland Bay at its peak—which is from December to June—can be roughly estimated at 5,000. By the end of July it is difficult to count 100, the birds having left for their various nesting rookeries. This year (1957) the routine has changed and as I write, on