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## Nebraska's First Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)

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**NEBRASKA'S FIRST CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*)**

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During a birding trip on 19 July 1997, we stopped at Funk WPA, Phelps County. While viewing from the north-south road that runs through the marsh at the east end of the marsh, we caught glimpses of a large group of shorebirds behind cattails in an area on the south side of the main marsh and about a third of a mile west of the road. We eventually decided to walk out and get a closer look at the shorebirds. Once we were close enough we were able to see that there were approximately 250 shorebirds. We began sifting through the flock looking for rarities and were first pleased to find a Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) and then more so when we found a Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), which is rare in fall. Then, toward the edge of the flock, Jorgensen spotted a rufous-colored shorebird loosely associated with a group of Stilt Sandpipers (*Calidris himantopus*) which we recognized as a Curlew Sandpiper.

The bird was a medium to small-sized shorebird, obviously larger than Western Sandpipers (*Calidris mauri*) and smaller than the Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) present. It was similar to but slightly smaller in body size than the Stilt Sandpipers and possessed shorter legs. Legs and bill were black. The bill was thin, medium-sized and decurved; the bill, however, was not as decurved as the bills of birds pictured in field guides. The color of the underparts was reminiscent of the breast ground color of a typical Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus hendersoni*) and therefore was not as dark rufous as that often found on Curlew Sandpipers pictured in field guides. The ground color of the underparts was interspersed with small patches of white. The head's color resembled that of the breast, only duller; and the throat and supercilium were duller yet. The undertail coverts were white with a few black streaks. Upperpart feathers were mostly dark or gray, but some feathers possessed some rufous or white. Wing coverts were gray. While the bird preened, we observed a white rump and underwing. For approximately 1.5 h, we observed and photographed the bird.

This bird may have just been commencing its molt into basic plumage, as a few fresh gray feathers could be found in the upperparts. Paulson (1993) discussed the importance of sexing birds of this species. The overall color of the bird, as well as a bill that was slightly longer and less decurved than expected, suggests that it was a female.

This sighting represents the first Curlew Sandpiper for Nebraska. The species is unrecorded in Colorado (Andrew and Righter 1992), Wyoming (Scott 1993), and South Dakota (SDOU 1991). Iowa claims two spring records (Kent and Dinsmore 1996), and Kansas has as many as 4 records, including one specimen, all of which were found at Cheyenne Bottoms (Thompson and Ely 1989). Minnesota had its first record in 1994 (Litkey 1994).