

Unusual Feeding Method by Stilts and Avocets. On Sunday, October 11, 1970, I spent half a day observing around the salt-pans and swamps on the leases of Ocean Salt Pty. Limited at Price, South Australia. It was a warm day with light scattered cloud and a light to moderate south-west wind. Large numbers of Red-necked Avocet, *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*, and Banded Stilt, *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*, were present together with lesser numbers of White-headed Stilt, *Himantopus himantopus*, and large numbers of several migratory waders. No Avocets or Stilts were then breeding although the White-headed Stilts had nested several months previously.

Soon after midday many Avocets and Banded Stilts were noted in several huge flocks on one swamp, while several hundred others, in an open mixed flock, were noted feeding on an adjacent swamp. The feeding method attracted my attention and I spent some time watching.

The water in the feeding area was sea-water, several feet deep, pumped in recently from the adjoining Gulf of St. Vincent. Both the Avocets and the Banded Stilts were swimming, bobbing around on the choppy surface. They were feeding on insects which they snapped off the surface of the water. They appeared at first to be rotating their bodies from side to side through an angle of approximately 90°, which made me think that they may have been stirring

the water and taking their food as it came to the surface. However, closer observation revealed that they were, in fact, taking insects off the water, and simply swivelling the head from side to side as the insects settled within range. Few of them moved any distance for there was an abundance of insect life on the surface of the water. The upcurved bill of the Avocet made the method of feeding look quite comical.

Gordon R. Beruldsen, Glenalta, South Australia 18/11/1970

Breeding Colour of the Long-toed Stint. At Lake Tutchewop, between Kerang and Swan Hill, three Long-toed Stints, *Calidris subminuta*, were located on open mud-shore, at the water's edge, on August 9, 1970. The only vegetation were clumps of samphire. These birds were tame and no more than 30 yards away. After some minutes a scatter of birds took place and the Long-toed Stints took to the wing and circled briefly out over the water, before resettling even nearer to us, at a distance of 15 yards.

These birds were obviously Long-toed Stints, but of quite a different colour from those seen previously on four other sightings at Lake Tutchewop. Instead of the summer-time grey breasts these birds had the upper breast, head, and neck of a dull cinnamon brown. Of the same brown colour was a broad stripe from base of bill, through the eye and joining the brown head. Both above and below this stripe was a dull whitish stripe of similar width, but somewhat pale, and not at all outstanding, giving a triple stripe when seen from a side view.

The back and wings were the colour of a well marked Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. *C. acuminata*, but not noticeable blackish. All bills appeared black, with, I thought, a fractional white line round the base of the bill.

The legs of two of the birds were greenish-yellow, as in the summer birds in eclipse grey plumage. The third bird was a trifle smaller, with legs which appeared a little thicker and coloured slate-grey; they may have been muddy but I could not decide on this point.

Their general shape and actions were identical with earlier birds studied. The head small and round by comparison with the Red-necked Stint, *C. ruficollis*, and the habit of stretching the neck with an upright stance as if trying to peer over some obstruction, suggesting the Buff-breasted Sandpiper, *Tryngites subruficollis*. I was in full view and they had no need to rear up unless, of course, they wished to see the colour of my legs, but maybe they were rearing to view something quite unconnected with me. In size they appeared to match near-by Red-necked Stints; but Red-capped Dotterels, *Charadrius alexandrinus*, looked smaller.

I missed seeing them well in flight, as they took off whilst I was studying the near-by species.

Their feeding pattern was similar to that of the Red-necked Stints; quick, alert and often making short quick little runs.