

First record of the little stint, *Calidris minuta*, in Singapore

David Li

david_li@nparks.gov.sg

Subjects: Little stint, *Calidris minuta* (Aves: Charadriiformes: Scolopacidae).

Subjects identified by: David Bakewell, Phil Round, Chung Yu Chiang, Taej Mundkur, Pavel Tomovich, Diana Solovyeva, Christoph Zoeckle, Lim Kim Keang, Katherine Leong & S. Balachandran.

Location, date and time: Pulau Ubin, Chek Jawa Wetlands; 21 September 2017; 1630-1645 hrs.

Habitat: Estuarine intertidal mud and sand flats.

Observer: David Li.

Observation: A survey of shorebirds at Chek Jawa Wetlands was conducted at receding tide when the birds started to fly in for feeding with good light for observation. A pair of Swarovski 8X30 binoculars was used for the observation, and a Nikon D500 camera with 300 mm X1.7 lens was used for photographic documentation.

From a distance of 20–30 metres, the author observed and photographed two little stints (*Calidris minuta*) with one red-necked stint (*Calidris ruficollis*) and one curlew sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) through binoculars (Fig. 1). They were among 300 or so shorebirds at the site, consisting mainly of lesser sand plover (*Charadrius mongolus*) [205], as well as whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) [26], bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [7], grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [30], pacific golden plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) [30], common sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) [1] and terek sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*) [1]. Other waterbirds recorded were little tern (*Sterna albifrons*) [20], greater crested tern (*Thalasseus bergii*) [10] and great-billed heron (*Ardea sumatrana*) [2].



Fig. 1: Little stints (front centre and right), red-necked stint (left) and curlew sandpiper (back centre). Photograph by David Li



Fig. 2. Little stints: juvenile (front) and adult (back).



Fig. 3: Juvenile red-necked stint.

Photographs by David Li

Remarks: All three stints were initially identified as red-necked stints. However, from the photographs, it was noted that two of them appeared taller than the third individual when standing upright.

The photographs were circulated to shorebird experts in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway for confirmation of the stints' identities. More than ten experts (the identifiers listed above) have confirmed that two of them were little stints based on their upright posture, longer and thinner bill and longer legs. These identification characteristics are also highlighted in Sonobe & Usui (1993). Bakewell (2017) provides a detailed account of the identification.



Fig. 4. Frontal view of adult little stint.



Fig. 5. Juvenile little stint (right) next to curlew sandpiper.

Photographs by David Li

In summary, the adult little stint (Fig. 1, front centre; Fig. 2, back and Fig. 4) has retained some breeding plumage on the chest and clear unmarked white on the throat, also showing darker central crown and clear split supercilium; while the juvenile bird (Fig. 1, right; Fig. 2, front and Fig. 5, right) has evenly dark centred scapulars and coverts, and strikingly dark mantle, well-streaked breast side and strongly contracted dark crown with white split supercilium. The other stint (Fig. 1, left and Fig. 3), with comparatively shorter bill and legs, is identified as a juvenile red-necked stint (*Calidris ruficollis*).

The featured observation and photographic evidence constitute the first published record of the little stint *Calidris minuta* in Singapore (see Lim, 2017). This record has been accepted by the Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group Records Committee on 24 November 2017.

References:

Bakewell, D., 2017. Finally, Singapore's first Little Stints.

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Lim K. S., 2017. *Checklist of the birds of Singapore* (2017 edition). Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group Records Committee. <https://singaporebirdgroup.wordpress.com/singapore-bird-checklist/>

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Sonobe, K. & S. Usui (eds.), 1993. *A Field Guide to the Waterbirds of Asia*. Wild Bird Society of Japan, Tokyo.

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