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Curlew sandpiper: pp 149-150.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferrugineus* (Pontoppidan 1763), Migrant
5/4/1903 Lake Ellesmere, Canterbury
Spring 1970 Norfolk Island

“THE Curlew-Sandpiper is one of those birds which breed in the Arctic regions and pass the winter in Africa, India, and Australia. We do not know it as a regular Migrant to New Zealand, but two specimens were shot at Lake Ellesmere by Mr. Edgar Stead on the 5th of last April, one of which went to the British Museum and the other to the Canterbury Museum. The British Museum specimen is in the winter plumage, but the one in our Museum is just commencing to change into the breeding-plumage, having rufous feathers on its breast and rusty ones on the neck and back.

The bird is easily recognised from any of the other Sandpipers by its long slender bill, which is slightly curved down-wards, and by the white upper tail-coverts” (Hutton 1903).

Stead (1923) later confirmed that it was in 1903 he collected the birds: “The curlew sandpiper may, I consider, be put down as one of our regular migrants. Two specimens which I shot on Lake Ellesmere on the 5th April, 1903, were the first of this species to be recorded for New Zealand, but since then I have seen it on many occasions and have secured a number of specimens. It is usually to be found associating with the banded dotterel. On one occasion I saw between twenty and thirty curlew sandpipers, which were in a large company of dotterel. When disturbed both species rose and flew around together, and when they settled again the curlew sandpipers all settled together, and slightly segregated from the dotterel. Most of the specimens I have obtained have had some signs of summer plumage, though none has had the full breeding-dress”.

Oliver (1930) and Turbott (1990) agreed on this year. However, Mathews & Iredale (1913) and Oliver (1955) said the first record was 3rd February 1902, so some confusion still surrounds these dates, as Sibson (1970) has noted.

An adult female was also collected at Lake Te Anau in March 1903, a most unusual inland record. This would be the first record, but as Oliver appears to be the only source for the Lake Te Anau record, and Stead's April 1903 record is well-documented, the latter is accepted as the first until further information is available. The first North Island bird was found by R.B. Sibson on 27/1/1941 at the Firth of Thames.