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# First record of Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus* in Singapore

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On the morning of 24 February 1990, I visited the coast south of Changi airport, Singapore, and walked north-east along the beach at the far end of the East Coast Parkway and the beginning of the Changi Coast Road. The weather conditions were good. Just before 12h00, I found a solitary *Charadrius* sp. plover on the sandy beach close to the water's edge. I observed it for 10 minutes at a distance of 25 m as it stood resting. When I approached closer it ran a few metres in a typical *Charadrius* manner, to keep a minimum distance of several metres away from me. I observed the bird for a total of c.25 minutes, taking notes and photographs from a distance of c.12 m.

My first impression had been that of a fairly large, relatively strong, almost massive *Charadrius* sp. plover. I assumed it was either Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus* or Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*, but soon came to the conclusion that it was something different. In size, it was obviously stronger and heavier than Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius*, probably larger than Common Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula*, close in size to Lesser Sand Plover, but probably too small for a Greater Sand Plover. It was rather large-headed and long-tailed, with the tail very clearly projecting beyond the wing-tip. The legs were thin and long, providing a high stance. They were pale greenish, perhaps even yellowish, but



**Plate 1.** Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus*, Singapore, 24 February 1990.

appeared dark due to the extreme light conditions at noon. The bill appeared to be black; it was fairly long, stronger at the base, but generally thin with a pointed tip. On the 'face' there was an extensive area of white on the forehead, with a short white supercilium extending to at least above the middle of the eye. The white almost surrounded the bill-base and merged into the white throat. There was only a faint and thin brown loreal stripe from the eye to the bill, often hardly discernible. A very dark, blackish patch around the eye extended to the ear-coverts, and merged into the brown crown and nape. There was no white eye-ring. A complete white collar—very thin on hind-neck—joined the white throat. There was a complete but thin breast-band, very thin and brown on the upper breast, a little wider and rather blackish-brown on the sides of the neck, there merging into dark brown on the 'shoulders', mantle, upperwing. The dark brown on the crown, nape, mantle and upperwing appeared cold and colourless with no warm tinge in the hard noon light, but the fore-crown appeared a little warmer. The wing-tip was very dark blackish-brown. The breast, flanks, belly and undertail-coverts were snow-white. The white protruded onto the neck-sides in front of the bend of the wing and extended conspicuously onto the uppertail-coverts, so that only the centre of the tail-tip appeared black. The outer rectrices and the tail-base appeared to be all white, the latter probably because of the fluffed-up undertail-coverts. The bird did not call and was not seen in flight.

Later I consulted the literature available to me (Ali and Ripley 1969, Lekagul and Cronin 1974, King *et al.* 1975, Wild Bird Society of Japan 1982, and Hayman *et al.* 1986), and identified the bird as Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus*, probably an adult female approaching breeding plumage. Greater Sand Plover

was excluded mainly on structure, being bigger, longer-legged, with a higher stance. Lesser Sand Plover is shorter-tailed, with no attenuated appearance. Both these species also have different-shaped bills and lack the white collar and thin blackish-brown breast-band. The smaller *Charadrius* spp. were eliminated by size and structure (lacking the bulky body, big head, bill shape, leg proportions, and long tail) and plumage (colour and pattern of face, crown, collar and breast-band). In particular, Common Ringed Plover was excluded on basis of general structure, bill and leg colour. Little Ringed Plover is smaller, more delicate, and has a whitish eye-ring and very thin bill. Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus* and its South-East Asian relatives are much smaller and lack complete breast-bands.

From Hails and Jarvis (1987) I realised that this species was new to Singapore. I submitted the record to the Singapore Records Committee, who accepted it in November 1998. It remains the only accepted record for Singapore to date (Lim Kim Seng *in litt.* 2005). Long-billed Plover breeds in western, northern, central and north-east China, North Korea and Japan, and winters in Nepal, north-east India, southern China, Taiwan and North and South Korea (Hayman *et al.* 1986). It is a rare winter visitor to South-East Asia, where it has been recorded from north and central Myanmar, north-west and central Thailand, north and central Laos, east Tonkin and central Annam. It is a vagrant to Peninsular Malaysia (Robson 2000).

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