

(Higgins and Davies 1996, and references therein).

As far as we have been able to ascertain, Laughing Gull was unknown in Asia before our observation (see also Robson 2000b). Shortly afterwards, however, there were a number of sightings in Japan. The first Laughing Gull for the country was observed and photographed on Hasaki, Ibaraki on 17 June 2000 (H. Ikenaga *in litt.* 2002; we have been unable to locate any published reference to the sighting). The second record came a mere nine days later on 26 June 2000, when one in second-year plumage was photographed on Iuo tou Island, near the Bonin islands (Watanabe 2001). On 9 September 2000 a Laughing Gull (possibly the same individual) was found and photographed at Toyohashi in Aichi prefecture (Yamagata 2001; see also Onishi 2000). This bird remained in the area until at least November. We are unaware of any records from the year 2001 but an adult Laughing Gull in breeding plumage was observed several times at Namasaki, Ibaraki prefecture and at nearby Choshi, Chiba prefecture from 26 May until 4 June 2002 (H. Ikenaga *in litt.* 2002).

The fact that the species represents a comparatively recent addition to the bird lists of such 'well-watched' countries as Australia and Japan suggests that the lack of records in Asia before our sighting may not have resulted solely from a comparative lack of interest in gulls in the region. Nevertheless, we hope that the present report will encourage others to devote more attention to this group and we are confident that further discoveries will result.

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## Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria*: a new species for Pakistan

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In August 1987, following the failure of the monsoon, Rawal Lake, Islamabad, Pakistan (33°42'N 73°10'E) had large areas of exposed mud which attracted wader

species seldom seen in inland Pakistan (Roberts 1991). These included a Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, several Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus* and

an unidentified sandplover *Charadrius mongolus/leschenaultii* (Mallalieu 1988). On the afternoon of 18 August, whilst looking for waders along the east side of the lake, I noticed an unusual species which, on closer examination, proved to be an adult Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria* moulting out of breeding plumage. The bird remained until 21 August and during this period I observed it on several occasions at ranges down to 15 m, using a 30 x 75 telescope and 8 x 30 binoculars.

The bird usually fed by picking items from the surface of the mud, but it was once seen swimming in a typical phalarope fashion. It was about the size of a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* when directly compared, but it had a rather squat appearance due to its relatively short legs. It was identified as a Red Phalarope on the basis of both structural and plumage features, notably the red underparts. The following notes were taken at the time. The bill was black, thick and shortish (shorter, but just as stout as Common Sandpiper), and unlike the needle-like bill of Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. The head was mainly white with a small blackish spot just behind the eye, with dark streaking from the centre of the crown to the nape, separated by a white collar from the mantle. The rest of the upperparts were very dark brown, streaked pale brown, but with two pure grey scapulars and a pure grey tertial on each wing. The wings extended just beyond the tail, and a broad white wing-bar was visible in flight. The underparts were dusty dull brick-red, mixed with white. The legs appeared black, but may have been obscured by mud. The call was a sharp 'wit', unlike the call of any of the other waders present. All these features support the identification as Red Phalarope and the underpart colour and bill structure rule out Red-necked Phalarope (Hayman *et al.* 1986).

The Red Phalarope breeds in the Arctic and winters mainly off the west coasts of Chile, western and southern Africa. It has also been argued that the species reaches the Arabian Sea irregularly or in very small numbers. On migration they normally follow sea routes but vagrants occasionally occur inland (Cramp 1983). This was the first record of Red Phalarope from Pakistan. Blyth found a specimen in a Calcutta market in India on 11 May 1846 (Ali and Ripley 1987). This was incorrectly reported in the first edition of Ali and Ripley's *Handbook* as being three birds, and this error was repeated in Cramp (1983). Later editions of the *Handbook*, and Ripley (1961), corrected the error.

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## Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*: a new species for Thailand

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On 24th February 2002, whilst birding in northern Thailand, we stopped to scan some large flocks of ducks in a medium-sized bay on the northern side of Chiang Saen lake, in Nong Bong Khai non-hunting area, Chiang Saen district, Chiang Rai province (c.20°16'N 100°05'E). Towards the far side of the bay we noted two males and one female Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* associating with a male and female Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*, both species of which we are familiar with in the U.K. and the U.S.A. It was only after continuing to another site that we realized that Greater Scaup might be rare in Thailand. After consulting Robson (2000), we found that it was only listed for the South-East Asian region as a vagrant to north Myanmar and east Tonkin, and it had not been previously recorded in Thailand. At about 10h00 on our return journey past the same bay

we relocated the birds in roughly the same spot and took more detailed notes. They were still associating with the three Tufted Duck and diving repeatedly. We observed the birds through a 20-60x spotting scope at a range of about 100 m for about 30 minutes in near-perfect light conditions with a flat calm on the lake. We were able to observe the birds continuously from the bankside. They did not fly at any time. Also present in the bay were Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, Lesser Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna javanica* and Garganey *Anas querquedula*, but the group of *Aythya* ducks did not associate with them during our observations.

The following description was taken. Male: larger than Tufted Duck but, unlike that species, the grey on the flanks extended onto the mantle and back, where there were vermiculations. The rear flanks and tail were