

The first documented record of Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* for Brazil

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RESUMO. Primeiro registro documentado do *Xenus cinereus* para o Brasil. Em 2 de novembro de 2005, R.W.W. e B.L. identificaram e fotografaram um indivíduo de *Xenus cinereus* (espécie do Velho Mundo) na praia de Parati, Rio de Janeiro. A ave foi reencontrada e fotografada por G.M.K. no mesmo local em 9 de novembro. O novo registro é o primeiro confirmado para o Brasil, seguindo-se a um registro anterior não adequadamente documentado para Porto Seguro, Bahia, em março de 1997, e também somente o sexto para a América do Sul (dois na Argentina, um em Trinidad e Tobago e, mais recentemente, um na Guiana Francesa). Adicionalmente, existem dois outros registros em países ao sul da América do Norte, em Barbados e México. A maioria dos registros neotropicais está documentada por fotografias e todos ocorreram a partir de 1987. Discutimos a possibilidade de que as observações em Parati e na Guiana Francesa, em fevereiro de 2005, refiram-se ao mesmo exemplar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Brasil, registro confirmado, *Xenus cinereus*, Parati, fotografias.

KEY WORDS: Brazil, confirmed record, Terek Sandpiper, *Xenus cinereus*, Parati, photographs.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* is an Old World species, which breeds across northern Russia, west as far as the border with Scandinavia and east to the Kolyma River, and migrates south to winter, principally on the Indian Ocean fringe, from southern Africa to northern Australia (Hayman *et al.* 1986). Like many shorebirds it is capable of remarkable feats of vagrancy and has reached the New World on quite a number of occasions, principally Alaska and the offshore islands of the Aleutians and Pribilofs, from where records are apparently annual in recent years (AOU 1998; see Galindo *et al.* 2004 for a more recent review of Western Hemisphere records). The sole evidence for its occurrence in Brazil is a bird seen and photographed by Mazar Barnett (1997) at Porto Seguro, Bahia, on 16 March 1997. Normally, the availability of a photograph would be sufficient to secure the species a place on the primary list of Brazilian birds, as determined by the Brazilian Ornithological Records Committee (CBRO), but in this instance the image of the Terek Sandpiper is, unfortunately, so small and out of focus that it defies certain identification, even for observers with considerable experience of the species (G.M.K. pers. obs.). Thus, although there is no reason to doubt the Bahian sighting, the record currently “languishes” on the secondary list of Brazilian birds (CBRO 2005).

During a voyage along the coast of Brazil aboard the MS *National Geographic Endeavour*, R.W.W. & B.L. visited Parati, in southernmost Rio de Janeiro state, on 2 November 2005. Whilst observing shorebirds in front of the old town, R.W.W. found a shorebird he immediately recognised, from previous experience, as a Terek Sandpiper. It was viewed for a period of c.10 min, at ranges down to 50 m using 10×42 binoculars. No other shorebird species possesses the unique

combination of long upturned bill, relatively short legs and uniformly grey plumage of the present species, making identification straightforward. The bird was frequenting an area of intertidal mudflats and marshy grassland bordered by a sandy beach. Also present for direct comparison were a small number of Nearctic migrant shorebirds including White-rumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis*, Semipalmated Plovers *Charadrius semipalmatus* and Spotted Sandpipers *Actitis macularia*. R.W.W. & B.L. returned later in the afternoon and spent a further 30 min watching the bird and obtaining a series of photographs (Figure 1).

The following description was taken (supplemented here with information from G.M.K.’s observations one week later). A small, greyish shorebird with a body about the same bulk as that of a Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, but with shorter legs and a longer bill, giving the bird a highly distinctive (horizontal) shape. Bill length was about twice that of the head, and the bill was distinctly upturned, mostly dark but with a paler base. The legs were pale orange and sufficiently bright to be visible at some distance. A slight pale supercilium was especially noticeable in front of the eye. The upperparts were slightly darker grey, with a blackish lower border to the closed wing and a slight dark “shoulder” (lesser coverts) bar. At rest, the wings reached virtually to the tail tip. A white trailing edge to the wing was formed by pale tips to the secondaries and inner primaries, but was only visible in flight. The underparts were off-white on the belly and vent, and pale greyish over the rest. The bird was constantly active, occasionally running briskly forward, and feeding in typical shorebird fashion by probing the mud. It produced constant bobbing movements of the extreme rear end of the body and



Figure 1. Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, Parati, Rio de Janeiro state, 2 November 2005 (photo by Bud Lehnhausen).

head, but these were much less jerky and less pronounced than those of *Actitis macularius*.

R.W.W. was uncertain as to the true significance of the sighting, but was sure that Terek Sandpiper must be a very rare vagrant in Brazil; indeed, the only relevant literature available to him (Sick 1993) did not include the species. Via the internet he made some enquiries, with the result that G.M.K. became aware of the bird early on 7 November and was soon in touch with R.W.W. by e-mail. Due to the presence of a slow-moving cold front, at the time the weather in the state of Rio de Janeiro was generally very overcast with frequent and prolonged rain showers, conditions which seemed conducive to the bird remaining at the same locality, rather than moving on. With a temporary break in the poor weather, on 9 November, G.M.K. elected to travel to Parati. He reached the area the sandpiper had been frequenting in the early afternoon and soon relocated it, still with a number of *Arenaria interpres*, *Calidris fuscicollis* and *Charadrius semipalmatus* in attendance, although the *X. cinereus* seemed to most closely associate with a single *Actitis macularius*. Other shorebirds available for comparison included a single *Pluvialis dominica* (several of which were also present on 2 November 2005, with four also seen in the same place on 6 October 2006: G.M.K. pers. obs.), a generally rather uncommon species in the littoral of Rio de Janeiro state (J. F. Pacheco pers. comm.) with apparently no previous records for Parati (Browne 2005). G.M.K. was able to secure a number of rather distant and poor-quality photographs of the *X. cinereus*, and observed the bird feeding for approximately 20 min before he departed the area.

G.M.K. has extensive experience, involving probably thousands of individuals, of *Xenus cinereus* from the following countries: China, Israel, Kenya, Oman, Pakistan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Vietnam and Yemen. R.W.W. also has ample experience with the species in the Western Palearctic.

This new record of Terek Sandpiper in Brazil permits the species to be upgraded from the secondary to the primary list of Brazilian birds, given the existence of identifiable photographic documentation in its support. It is impossible to know by which route the bird arrived at Parati. It perhaps crossed the Atlantic from Africa or, alternatively, the bird may have crossed from eastern Asia to North America and then moved south with other Nearctic breeding waders. There are now six records of the species in South America: two in Argentina, both from Buenos Aires province, in December 1987–January 1988 and December 1990 (Mazar Barnett & Pearman 2001), the March 1997 observation in Brazil, one in Trinidad & Tobago, in June 1999 (Taylor 2001) and a recent record, in February 2005, in French Guiana, for which photographic evidence also exists (see Mazar Barnett *et al.* 2005 and <http://tereksandpiper-fg.monsite.wanadoo.fr/>). The only other published records from Neotropical countries are from southern Baja California (Mexico), in April–May 2002 and presumably the same individual in August 2002–February 2003 (videotaped), and Barbados, where one was photographed in May 2000 (Galindo *et al.* 2004). Given that they are separated by just seven months, it is tempting to speculate that the most recent Brazilian and French Guianan sightings relate to the same bird, given that vagrant shorebirds in Europe are well known to migrate north to south (and vice versa) and have sometimes been followed between countries (see Gilroy and Lees 2003).

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