

# First record of Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* for Namibia

Josh Engel

**Première mention du Bécasseau de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris* pour la Namibie.** Un Bécasseau de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris* a été observé et photographié sur la lagune de Walvis Bay, en Namibie, le 24 novembre 2008. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays. L'aire d'hivernage de cette espèce, qui niche au nord-est de la Sibérie, s'étend de l'Australasie jusqu'au Pakistan. En Afrique, des occasionnels ont été notés au Maroc (un individu en août 1980), au Mozambique (un en décembre 2004 ; trois en septembre 2008) et sur la côte ouest de l'Afrique du Sud (un, supposé être le même individu, en quatre saisons consécutives en 2000–03).

On the afternoon of 24 November 2008, I was birding with my tour group at the Walvis Bay Lagoon on the central Namibian coast. The lagoon's shoreline was full of waders on the outgoing tide, with large numbers of Little Stints *Calidris minuta*, Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea* and Sanderlings *C. alba* on the exposed mudflats. Larger waders were slightly further out, at the tide-line, including many Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* and Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus*.

As I was scanning the flocks, I picked out a different-looking wader amongst the Bar-tailed Godwits. It was far smaller than the godwits, but larger than the *Calidris* sandpipers, with a fairly long, hefty, slightly decurved bill (Figs. 1–2). I immediately recognised it as a Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, a species I am familiar with from having observed thousands and ringed hundreds in

Australia. Whilst superficially similar to Red Knot *C. canutus*, Great Knot is a larger bird, with a longer bill, a less contrasting facial pattern and a white rump, seen while the bird bathed.

We watched and photographed the bird for the next 30 minutes at a distance of c.40 m. At one point it took off with a group of other waders, but we quickly relocated it. While it was originally feeding with the larger waders, after it flew it joined the smaller species. It also bathed, preened and rested during our brief period of observation. Unfortunately I was unable to age the bird in the field and the photographs are inconclusive.

Great Knot is largely restricted to the East Asian-Australasian flyway, breeding in northern Siberia and spending the non-breeding season as far west as coastal Pakistan (Hayman *et al.* 1986). It is now known to winter as far west as the east and south-east coasts of the Arabian Peninsula (Aspinall 1994, Green *et al.* 1994).

Whilst Great Knot was first recorded on the African continent in Morocco in August 1980 (Lister 1981), it has only been recorded in sub-Saharan Africa in the last decade (Cohen & Winter 2003). The Walvis Bay bird represents the first record for Namibia. Hockey *et al.* (2005) list only one record for southern Africa, of an adult, presumably the same individual, that returned to West Coast National Park, Western Cape, South Africa, for four consecutive summers in 2000–2003. There are two subsequent records from the southern Africa sub-region, both from the Barra Peninsula, near Inhambane, Mozambique: a single in December 2004 and three individuals in September 2008 (M. Booysen *in Bull. ABC* 16: 107).



Figures 1–2. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* with Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*, Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea* and Sanderlings *C. alba*, Walvis Bay, Namibia, 24 November 2008 (Josh Engel)

Bécasseau de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris* avec Barges rousses *Limosa lapponica*, Bécasseaux cocorlis *C. ferruginea* et Bécasseaux sanderlings *C. alba*, Walvis Bay, Namibie, 24 novembre 2008 (Josh Engel)

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# Sightings of Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* in the Tsiribihina Delta, west-central Madagascar

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**Observations du Goéland dominicain *Larus dominicanus* dans le delta du Tsiribihina, au centre-ouest de Madagascar.** Lors des dénombrements d'oiseaux d'eau dans le delta du fleuve Tsiribihina, cinq Goélans dominicains *Larus dominicanus* ont été observés en mars 2006, quatre en juillet 2006 et cinq en mars 2007. Auparavant, cette espèce n'avait été observée à Madagascar que dans les zones humides côtières entre Toliara, 430 km au sud du delta du Tsiribihina, et Fort Dauphin (Tolagnaro).

**D**uring waterbird population surveys in the Tsiribihina Delta, west-central Madagascar, in 2006–07, several Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* were observed by the Madagascar Teal Project team of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust Madagascar Programme. Two were at Soarano (19°38'S 44°23'E) on 19 March 2006, three at Ambozaka (19°37'S 44°23'E) on 21 March 2006 and two in the same place on 20 and 27 July 2006—when there were another two at Namangoa Bay (19°52'S 44°27'E)—and five on 16 March 2007. All of the birds were on sandy islets, c.200–400 m offshore, and are apparently the first observations for this area.

Kelp Gull is characterised by its white head, neck, throat and tail, and black back and wings, with the exception of the white primary tips. The bill and legs are olive, and the orbital ring is red. These features were clearly observed on all of the

individuals and I am familiar with Kelp Gull at Fort Dauphin. The species is easy to distinguish from Grey-headed Gull *L. cirrocephalus*, the only other gull regularly found at Madagascar's wetlands, because of its larger size, black back, white head and throat, and yellow bill. Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* has not been recorded in Madagascar but, with sightings in East Africa and Seychelles (Skerrett *et al.* 2001, Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002), could possibly occur. None of the birds reported had the yellow legs characteristic of Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Kelp Gull seems more likely in this area.

Kelp Gull is widespread in the Southern Hemisphere, in Africa, South America, Australasia and on many islands in the Southern Ocean (Higgins & Davies 1996). In Madagascar it is represented by the recently described endemic subspecies *melisandae*, which is restricted to south-west



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