

## HUDSONIAN GODWIT

On the evening of October 29th, I received a phone call from Keith Evans telling me of a Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) he had, just that day, sighted on the Antelope Island Causeway (Great Salt Lake, Utah). I was unable to get away the next day to look for the bird, but I received a call concerning the Godwit from Jack Rensel on that evening (Oct. 30th). Jack told me he had seen the Godwit in the same general location where Keith had observed it on the day before.

I decided I would make a trip to the causeway on the 31st to see if the bird might still be there. The wife (Linda) and I drove through the gate at about 9:30 AM. It was an overcast day with rain sprinkles falling on and off during the morning hours. However, the refraction of light from the lake surface along the causeway made the visibility good. As we drove toward the north side of the first bridge where the Godwit had been, we sighted one American Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*), five or six Willets (*Catoptrophus semipalmatus*), and some Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) -- but no Hudsonian Godwit.

We thought the Godwit had probably left but decided to look for it along the south side. After driving back about a quarter mile (.40 kilometer) from the bridge towards the entry gate Linda spotted what resembled a Willet but it had some out of character features. It was standing at the waters edge with several American Avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*). After using several different field guides to key out such things as the black tail, white rump and slightly upturned bill, we concluded this was in fact the Hudsonian Godwit.

I tried to get out and approach the bird for a good photograph but it appeared anxious and moved nervously along the shoreline. Not wanting to flush the bird I got back into the car, however, just minutes later the Godwit flew along the shoreline. It landed approximately 100 yards (90 meters) further west towards the bridge.

We tried again to approach it in the car but as we slowly

pulled up it took off. As it crossed about 100 feet (30 meters) in front of the windshield I noted the wing pattern, both top and under, resembled that of a Willet although more subdued. The flight took the Godwit from the south side of the causeway to the north side. It landed on the north side of the first bridge at waters edge. This was where it had been observed by Jack and Keith the previous two days.

I was able to use a mound of dirt for cover and snap a few pictures of the bird but while I was returning to the car, even though the Godwit couldn't see me, it took to the air again. We drove on to the island and ate our lunch. At around 2 PM (14:00 hours) as we were leaving the causeway we watched for the Godwit. To our amazement it was in the same place we had first spotted it that morning. As we watched two Avocets in the close vicinity took to flight and the Godwit followed. The last view I had of the Godwit, as it went out of range of my binoculars, was of it flying straight south across the lake.

I am aware of only one observation of the Godwit after October 31, it was made by Dan and Laura Johnston on November 5, at 4:50 PM. On that day the bird was on the north side of the causeway about a half mile east of the first bridge.

Hudsonian Godwit sightings in Utah are rare this being the fifth one and only the second time it has been recorded in the fall season.

V. Arnold Smith

Observations were made using 10x25 power binoculars and a Bushnell scope with a 12-36 power variable eye piece.

Photographs were taken with a Canon A1 camera with 300mm f4 lens coupled with 1.4 x converter (equals 420mm f5.6).