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First records of Greater Sand Plover *Anarhynchus leschenaultii* in South America

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SUMMARY.—Greater Sand Plover *Anarhynchus leschenaultii* migrates from its breeding areas in western and Central Asia to the coasts of Australasia and the Indian Ocean. It is a vagrant in various parts of the world, including two records in North America. The species was photographed in December 2015 and September 2023 in south and south-east Brazil (Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo), providing the first records for South America.

Greater Sand Plover *Anarhynchus leschenaultii* breeds in western and Central Asia (Wiersma *et al.* 2023). Three subspecies are recognised: *A. l. leschenaultii*, *A. l. columbinus* and *A. l. scythicus*. The first nests in western China, Mongolia, southern Siberia and the Altai Mountains, migrating in winter to South Asia, Australasia and probably East Africa. The second breeds in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Armenia and Azerbaijan, migrating to the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and south-east Mediterranean. Finally, the third occurs in Transcaspia and possibly from north-west Afghanistan to south-east Kazakhstan, migrating to north-east and East Africa and western India. Vagrants have been recorded in many countries in Europe, as well as in Siberia and Korea, North, southern and West Africa (Wiersma *et al.* 2023). In the Americas, the species has been seen only in the USA, in the states of California (January–April 2001) and Florida (May 2009) (Howell *et al.* 2014).

Between 5 and 29 December 2015, a Greater Sand Plover was photographed by FRRS & ALFB in Parque Nacional da Lagoa do Peixe, municipality of Tavares, on the coast of central Rio Grande do Sul, in southernmost Brazil (31°19'49.04"S, 51°03'24.06"W; Fig. 1). The bird was observed on the west side of Lagoa do Peixe (Trilha da Figueira), on a small sediment island, always in the company of Semipalmated Plovers *Charadrius semipalmatus* and White-rumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis* (Fig. 2).

On 17 September 2023, another Greater Sand Plover was photographed by MHM on the north-central coast of São Paulo, south-east Brazil (23°45'26.00"S, 45°50'39.60"W; Fig. 1). It was observed on Boracéia beach, at the mouth of the Parateus River, on the border of Bertioiga and São Sebastião municipalities, a site where various species of shorebirds occur but the individual was feeding alone (Fig. 3).

Both birds photographed in Brazil were in non-breeding plumage and differed from Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia* in lacking a white nuchal collar and having longer tarsi and tibiae. Based on the criteria elucidated by Hirschfeld *et al.* (2000), they also differed from Siberian Sand Plover *Anarhynchus mongolus* and Tibetan Sand Plover *A. atrifrons* by their larger body proportions, e.g., head, bill and legs (especially the tibiae), which in the case of the individual in Rio Grande do Sul can be compared with the two other species (*Charadrius semipalmatus* and *Calidris fuscicollis*) in the same images (Figs. 2 and 4).

Siberian Sand Plover breeds in the Russian Far East and migrates to southern Japan, China and Malaysia to Australia and New Zealand (Mlodinow *et al.* 2023). It has been recorded as a vagrant in two South American countries—Peru (an individual in breeding



Figure 1. Location of records of Greater Sand Plover *Anarhynchus leschenaultii* in Brazil. (A) Map of the Americas (NA = North America, SA = South America); (B) South America showing the location of Brazil; (Larger map) Brazil showing the capital Brasília and the states of São Paulo (SP) and Rio Grande do Sul (RS). Numbers 1 and 2 (green squares) correspond to the records in Parque Nacional da Lagoa do Peixe (RS) and Bertioga/São Sebastião (SP), respectively. The question mark and white square correspond to the undocumented record of Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia* in São Paulo (SP) mentioned in the literature. The salmon-coloured strip along the coast of north and north-east Brazil (Pará to Bahia) marks the range of Wilson's Plover in the country (WikiAves 2024). The two asterisks outside Brazil correspond to records of Siberian Sand Plover in South America, in Argentina near the capital Buenos Aires (a) and in Peru close to the capital Lima (b). Image A (Wikipedia 2024); B and large map (Google Earth Pro / © 2023 Maxar Technologies).

plumage, in April 2021; <https://ebird.org/checklist/S86564477>) and Argentina (March 2011)—where photographic documentation also helped with analysis of body proportions and identification (Le Nevé & Manzione 2011). The Argentine record (in the province of Buenos Aires) was c.415 km from the border with the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul (Fig. 1).

The records reported here are the first of Greater Sand Plover for Brazil and South America; the first of the two, in Rio Grande do Sul, was already mentioned as a sand plover sp. by Franz *et al.* (2018) and Pacheco *et al.* (2021). Other Old World birds have been detected on the mainland Brazilian coast in recent years, e.g., Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*, Ruff *Calidris pugnax*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*,



Figure 2. Greater Sand Plover *Anarhynchus leschenaultii*, Parque Nacional da Lagoa do Peixe, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, December 2015, with a White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* in B and two Semipalmated Plovers *Charadrius semipalmatus* in C (A–B: André Luiz Fraga Briso, C–D: Flávio Ronaldo Rodrigues da Silva)



Figure 3. Greater Sand Plover *Anarhynchus leschenaultii*, municipality of Bertioga, São Paulo, Brazil, 17 September 2023 (Marcelo Henrique Marques)



Figure 4. Greater Sand Plover *Anarhynchus leschenaultii*, Parque Nacional da Lagoa do Peixe, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, December 2015, with White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* on right; same individual as in Fig. 2 (André Luíz Fraga Briso)

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* (Pacheco *et al.* 2021).

There is a record attributed to Wilson's Plover from the coast of southern São Paulo (at Ilha Comprida) on 16 December 1993 (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S6616609>) that was mentioned by Sick (1997) and by Willis & Oniki (2003). The occurrence of Wilson's Plover in Brazil is restricted to a coastal strip extending from the state of Pará to southern Bahia (Zdravkovic *et al.* 2023, WikiAves 2024) (Fig. 1). Two subspecies have been reported in the country, the North American migratory *C. w. wilsonia* and resident *C. w. cinnamominus* (otherwise found in the southern Caribbean and from Colombia to French Guiana), but the presence of the nominate subspecies was contested after the species was found breeding on the Brazilian coast, although this question remains open (Pacheco *et al.* 2021). With hindsight, we consider the possibility that this bird was one of the sand plover spp. is potentially just as likely as a vagrant from the resident Brazilian population of *C. w. cinnamominus* (which appears remarkably sedentary) or even an even further out-of-range *C. w. wilsonia*; however, the lack of documentation inhibits formal re-evaluation of the record.

The Brazilian records of Greater Sand Plover presumably involved birds that arrived in the 'wrong' hemisphere as a result of having become disoriented while on migration. Given two records in the last decade, and two records elsewhere in South America of Siberian Sand Plover within a similar time period, it is clear that observers throughout the continent should be alert to the possibility of further records of both species.

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