

Watola, G. 2011. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (3rd Edition in prep.)
Based on: Watola, G. 2009. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (2nd Edition)
Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.
Updated and amended text supplied by George Watola, October, 2011.
Page numbers follow Watola, G. 2009 (2nd Edition)
Oriental pratincole: pp 152-153.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* J. R. Forster 1795, Vagrant (14)
1898 Westport, Westland
12/5/1988 Norfolk Island

The first record, a bird shot by William Townson at Westport, was mis-identified by Buller as an Australian Pratincole *Stiltia isabella*. Buller (1898) actually describes the “black line bordering buff-coloured throat” characteristic of the species. It was not until Falla (1959) re-examined Townson's letter describing the pratincole, that the error was rectified.

“The bird was first seen by Mr. J. B. McKenzie, an agent for the National Mutual Life, and he came back from the beach for a gun, and on his return shot the bird and brought it to me. I remembered seeing either the bird or a plate of it, and on turning up the ‘Royal Natural History’ I found an illustration of it, and a pretty full description. The hind-toe, forked tail, and the black line bordering the buff-coloured throat are sufficiently distinctive, the only point omitted in the description being the scarlet margin to the gape. The bird was seen hawking after flies on the beach. It proved to be a male, and the stomach contained the remains of insects and beetles.

It seemed quite at home with its surroundings, and I found it in perfect plumage, without any stains of travel or any marks of having been in confinement—so different from an Australian Curlew in my possession, which was shot on the same beach, and which was ragged and frayed out as though it had been beating up against head weather for a week” (Buller 1898).

Falla had been prompted by a record (the now 2nd) of Oriental Pratincole, again shot, near Appleby, Nelson. The mention of five pratincoles at Appleby by Heather & Robertson (1996) probably refers to Townson's statement that he later heard of a party of five being seen on Westport Beach a few days after the first record.