WILLET

Tringa semipalmata

non-breeding visitor, vagrant

T.s. semipalmata

Willets are a conspicuous component of the coastal North American avifauna. Two populations exist: the western subspecies (T.s. inornata) breeds in the Great Basin and winters along the Pacific Coast and the nominate eastern subspecies breeds along the Atlantic coast and winters as far south as S America (AOU 1998). It was placed in the genus Catoptrophorus (semipalmatus) until the AOU (2006) merged it with Tringa. In the Pacific, Willets have reached the Galapagos Is and Christmas I in the Kiribati group (E 41:40); we consider a sight report from Johnston Atoll (Amerson and Shelton 1976) as unsubstantiated. There are 9 substantiated records of 10 birds from the Southeastern Hawaiian Islands.

The first record was of a Willet seen just outside of the Honolulu Christmas Bird Count circle, near the Honolulu Airport, Oahu, 21-31 Dec 1967 (E 28:70-71) and the second record was also observed during a Honolulu Christmas Count: 22 Dec 1974 at Mokapu Ponds, KMCAS (E 35:84, 86, 88). Two well-described birds on a beach near Wailua, O;ahu, 21 Oct 2013, represent the high count for the Hawaiian Islands. The other records are from Kaua’i (Hanalei Beach, 2-3 May 1993), Maui (first-year bird at Kanaha Pond 4-5 Nov 1976 moving to Kealia Pond 5 Dec-8 Feb 1977, E 38:6, HRBP 0099-0103; Hana 26 Dec 1984; and Puunene 16 Jan 1988), and Hawai’i (Honokohau, 5 Oct 1998 and 7-11 Nov 2002, and Liliuokalani Park, Hilo, 23 Nov 2005). Thus, there are four birds seen only in fall, 5 presumably wintering individuals, and 1 apparent spring transient.

Either of two subspecies could occur in the mid-Pacific, T.s. inornata occurring closer geographically but semipalmata being a longer-distance migrant and perhaps more likely. Photographs of the Maui bird show structure and plumage consistent with semipalmata whereas descriptions of the other individuals in Hawaii were insufficient to suggest subspecies.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Literature cited