Short Communications

North American longevity records for American Golden-Plover *Pluvialis dominica* and Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* from Churchill, Manitoba, Canada

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Knowledge of basic population parameters such as species' longevity are of fundamental biological interest and are necessary for population viability studies and effective conservation measures. However, research conducted in the arctic and sub-arctic rarely lasts long enough to document longevity in shorebirds, and resightings/recoveries outside the breeding grounds are rare (Dunn *et al.* 2010). Here we present data on new North American longevity records for two species of shorebirds, female American Golden-Plover *Pluvialis dominica* and Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* breeding at Churchill, Manitoba (58°46'N, 94°10'W) in sub-arctic Canada.

On 19 June 2012, a female American Golden-Plover (USFWS metal band # 1313-64807) was recaptured, banded with a unique colour band combination and geolocator, and released at its nest (NAD83: UTM 451550, 6503834). The bird was originally banded as at least a second year old (based on heavy barring of rectrices (Pyle 2008)) in 2001 by JK as part of a project on the demography and behaviour of American Golden-Plovers. Colour bands applied at original capture had been lost. In 2012 this bird was at least 12 years of age; its nest was located 398 m away from the 2001 nest.

To our knowledge, 12 years is a longevity record for females of this species. The longest lived American Golden-Plover was a male that nested for 13 consecutive years on the same breeding grounds in western Alaska (Johnson *et al.* 2007). The longevity record of the closest congener, the Pacific Golden-Plover *P. fulva,* is 21 years 3 months (Johnson *et al.* 2004), while the longest documented lifespan of a Black-Bellied Plover *P. squatarola* from Europe is 25 years and 7 months (Fransson *et al*. 2010). With more intense research on American Golden-Plovers at Churchill in the coming years we should expect further longevity records for this species.

The fact that the American Golden-Plover female was found breeding in the same locality in which she bred 11 years earlier is also record-setting. In arctic nesting *Pluvialis* plovers, female affiliation with the nesting grounds is usually weak in comparison to males (Klima & Johnson 2005), which tend to return specifically to the same nesting territories (Johnson *et al.* 2004, 2007, Moitoret *et al.* 1996, J. Jehl unpubl. data, this study).

On 25 June 2012, a Whimbrel (USFWS metal band # 1714-00041) was recaptured, banded with an engraved white flag (MX) and geolocator, and released at its nest (NAD83 UTM: 446523, 6512920). This female was originally banded as an adult by J.R. Jehl and W. Lin on 13 June 1999, thirteen years earlier. The 1999 nesting site was located "south of Bird Cove, in trees" (J.R. Jehl, pers. comm.) – at least 2 km away from its 2012 nest. If we assume that Whimbrels first breed at age 3 (Skeel & Mallory 1996), this bird may have been at least 16 years of age. This age surpasses the previously confirmed record of 11 years, also from Churchill (Skeel 1976), establishing a new North American longevity record for this species (see Klimkiewicz 2008).

The North American longevity record for Whimbrel, however, is also not surprising based on longevity records for the European Whimbrel subspecies *N. p. phaeopus* and other curlews. The European Whimbrel longevity record from the Shetland Islands, Great Britain is recorded as 24 years and one month (Robinson & Clark 2012) but this bird may have been as old as 26 years given that it was first captured as a breeding adult (A. Perkins, pers. comm.).

Long-term studies of sub-arctic and arctic North American breeding shorebirds are important in garnering basic ecological knowledge on these species. Longevity records for both of these species from the Churchill region were only possible because of concentrated ornithological research spanning several decades (Jehl 2004, Lin 1997, Skeel 1976).

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