

THE MONTCLAIR BIRD CLUB

YOUR WEEKLY BIRD 65

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by Michael Sheldon

A trifecta of curvy-billed shorebirds

The Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge protects the marshlands where the river empties into the Great Salt Lake. It is a fabulously birdy spot, easily accessible on a 12-mile auto route. We visited on a bright October morning, and about a third of the way around the loop, we noticed a group of shorebirds in the water. A closer look showed that most were American avocets. But there were also a couple of birds with darker plumage. One was a marbled godwit, but the other had its back to us and remained a mystery. I was guessing white-faced ibis, as we'd seen several of those earlier. Finally, it turned its head and the ID was no longer in doubt: They don't call it the long-billed curlew for nothing.



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I don't know about you, but seeing any of those species would have made my day.

But all three together? *You gotta be kiddin' me....*

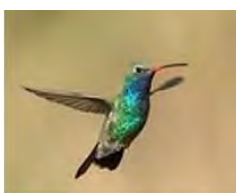
What is it about these waders with implausibly shaped bills? Are they funny-looking? Or do they fascinate because they show that there's no logic or plan—nature just selects what works.

Here's the ibis, just for fun. Too bad they didn't join the avocets, godwit, and curlew. Then it would have been a *superfecta*.



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Southwest Wings

