

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*



Folk Name: Grass Bird

Status: Migrant

Abundance: Rare

Habitat: Mudflats, wet fields

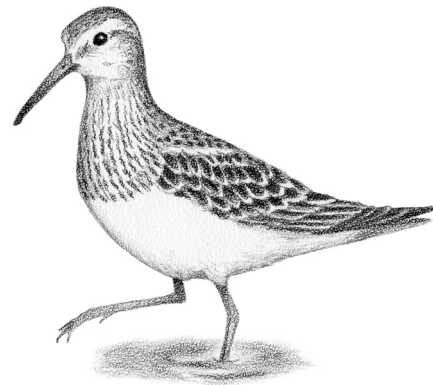
At 8 ¾ inches, the Pectoral Sandpiper is a half-inch larger than the Buff-breasted Sandpiper. It has a fairly short and slightly decurved bill, yellowish legs, and streaking on the breast that stops abruptly at its white belly. These sandpipers frequent the margin of our ponds, lakes, and rivers, and they are also found in wet meadows.

The Pectoral Sandpiper has been found in this region only during migration. Our spring migrants move through between March and May with our earliest spring arrival dates being one bird found in Statesville in Iredell County on 8 March in 2016, and one found at the wetlands across from Concord Mills Mall in Cabarrus County on 9 March in 2011. Our latest spring report is a bird seen at Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge on May 17, 2011. Our earliest fall migrants are a pair of birds found by Tom Ledford at Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge on July 15, 2015. The latest departure date for these birds in the region appears to be a pair seen at Lake Don T. Howell in Cabarrus County on November 11, 2001. Our largest count is a flock of 26 counted at this reservoir on August 19, 2001.

There are only a handful of reports of Pectoral Sandpiper from the region prior to the twenty-first century. Leverett Loomis collected two specimens of Pectoral Sandpiper in Chester County, SC, on October 10, 1878. A decade



Pectoral Sandpiper. (Jarrett Wyant)



later, Loomis excitedly reported that, after heavy rains on September 6, 1888, fields of recently sown oats became swampy flats and that one 5 acre patch:

held more Pectoral Sandpipers than it was ever my good fortune to see before in this locality at one time. Until the ground was dried this spot was a rendezvous for passing Sandpipers, the species varying from day to day. Such birds are seldom seen here away from mill-ponds, as congenial haunts are wanting, though sometimes observed high overhead in the flush of migration.

Larry Crawford found one Pectoral Sandpiper on the shoreline of High Rock Lake on August 2, 1948. Ronnie Underwood found several in a shallow pool on May 15–16, 1964, in Statesville. A Pectoral Sandpiper was spotted by Flo Cobey and others at Creech's Pond in northeastern York County on May 6, 1967, while conducting the Charlotte Spring Bird Count. This bird and a Dunlin were “studied carefully through a 30x Balscope at a distance of 150 feet.” Observers conducting the International Shorebird Survey found four Pectoral Sandpipers at Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge on March 31, 1980.

The Pectoral Sandpiper is listed on the Yellow Watch List of birds of the continental United States. It is a species with both “troubling” population declines and “high threats.” It is in need of conservation action.