

## Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*



**Folk Name:** Tip-up, Dog-tail, Sand snipe

**Status:** Migrant, Winter Visitor, sporadic Breeder

**Abundance:** Fairly Common

**Habitat:** Mudflats, lakes, ponds, creeks

The Spotted Sandpiper is one of the most common shorebirds found in the Piedmont. Good numbers move through each spring and fall. Most sightings are of between one and five birds, although occasionally there have been counts of 10 or more. This sandpiper has been recorded on almost all Spring Bird Counts in the region and with a maximum single day tally of close to 50 birds.

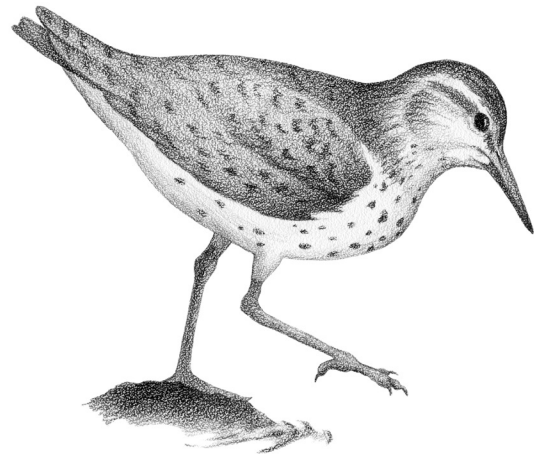
To date, Spotted Sandpipers have been reported in the region every month of the year, except for February. A February report is probably not far off. Sightings in November, December, and January were once very rare, but have become increasingly common. This bird has been found on several recent Christmas Bird Counts in the region. The Spotted Sandpiper is an accidental breeder in the North Carolina Piedmont. Birds seen in June may be late migrants, and birds seen in early July may be early migrants.

The underparts of the Spotted Sandpiper are spotted in its breeding plumage, but after the breeding season it loses its spots and the breast is white. This bird is known for its constant teetering behavior while it forages for food.

“Now the slick fellow that came last was as nervous as anyone could be. It just seemed that he couldn’t sit still. He just bobbed and teetered all the time. ... That’s Bobber the Spotted Sandpiper. The reason he got his name is because he bobs all the time. ... This fellow was fit and trim and ran very close to the edge of the water. His legs were long and so was his bill. His white waistcoat was marked with black spots.”

—Tinker Bob stories by Carlsyle H. Holcomb, *The Charlotte News*, 1921

Here are a few of the earliest accounts of Spotted Sandpiper in the region. In the late 1800s, Leverett Loomis described this bird as “not very common” in the summer season in Chester County. A Spotted Sandpiper was one of three birds that were noted as the highlight of a special Salisbury YMCA nature club outing on August 11, 1920: “Hiking west out of town, camp was established on a high bank where observations of bird life could be made.” Elmer Brown reported one migrating through Salisbury on April 21, 1923. Elizabeth Clarkson provided one “early summer record July 9, 1933,” for Charlotte. Ernest Mitchell watched a Spotted Sandpiper foraging with a pair of Solitary Sandpipers on May 8, 1948, along a



stream in south Charlotte.

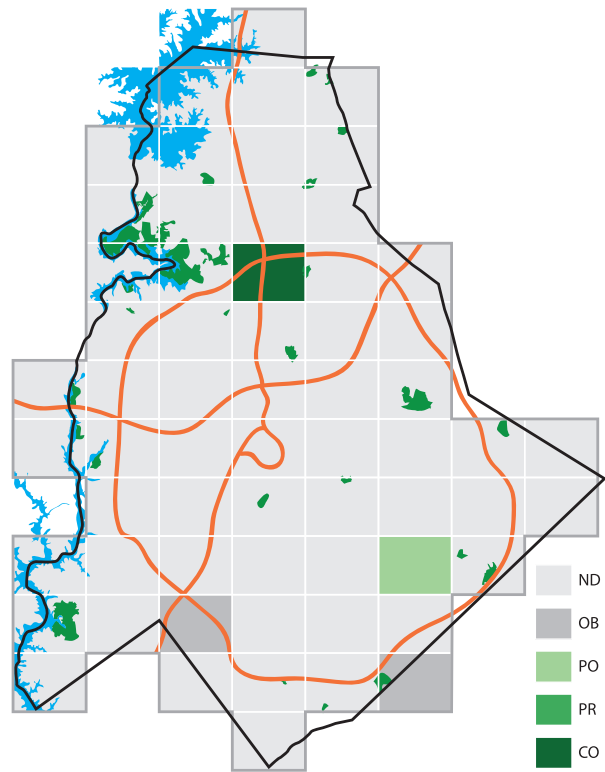
The Spotted Sandpiper is a sporadic breeder in North Carolina and does not breed in South Carolina.

“The spotted sandpiper and killdeer plover, and I presume most of the other snipe and plover, lay four eggs at a clutch. The eggs are arranged in the nest or on the bare ground with their small ends together, and as they are pyriform in shape they join in to perfection. The eggs of the snipe and plover are proportionately exceeding large for the size of the bird, and the saving of space by this arrangement undoubtedly answers a purpose.” —Dr. Morris Gibbs as quoted in *The Charlotte Observer*, April 23, 1893



*Spotted Sandpiper flying in Mecklenburg County.*  
(Chris Talkington)

There is a single nesting record of Spotted Sandpiper in the Central Carolina region. Cheryl Talkington found one adult Spotted Sandpiper with four tiny, fuzzy, blackish-brown young hiding along the edge of a large pond at Shepherd's Landscape Supply in the Town of Huntersville on July 21, 2010.



**Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas:**

*Very Local (PR/0, CO/1)*