

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*



Folk Name: Flying Colt, Grass Plover, Upland Plover, Bartramian Sandpiper

Status: Migrant

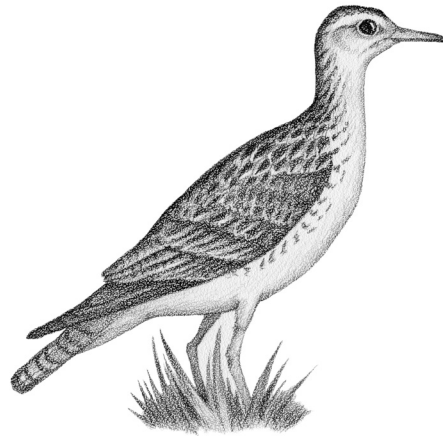
Abundance: Rare

Habitat: Grasslands, large patches of turf, farm pastures

The Upland Sandpiper is quite distinctive. It is a tall (12 inches), slim, but pot-bellied bird with a long neck and tiny head. It has often been called a plover because of its overall appearance and its short, thin, slightly droopy bill, but it is a true member of the sandpiper family. Upland Sandpipers are birds of the dry Midwestern prairies. They are only found in our region during spring and fall migration. They are usually encountered here on grassy flatlands like those found at airports, golf courses, athletic fields, and wastewater treatment plants.

In the late 1800s, Leverett Loomis characterized what he called the “Bartramian” Sandpiper as “common” during migration in Chester County. However, another one wasn’t reported in the region until about 80 years later, when H. Lee Jones, Julian Meadows, and Dennis Shepler found one in Mecklenburg County on April 15, 1963. The trio were able to observe the bird for about 10 minutes before it flushed and disappeared. One was reported feeding in a cornfield near Statesville on 4 September and 9 September in 1965. A pair was reported on the Stanly Spring Bird Count held on April 27, 1968.

There were seven reports of Upland Sandpipers in or adjacent to the region in the 1980s. David Wright and Flo Cobey found one that stayed from mid-April through May 5, 1984, at Creech’s Pond on the York–Mecklenburg county line. Heathy Walker found one at the McAlpine WWTP near Pineville on April 21, 1984. Clare Walker sighted one there on July 28, 1984, and another was seen there on the second of September that year. Robin Carter reported three at the Spartanburg Airport on April 2, 1988, and a group of seven in northern Kershaw County on April 16, 1989. Taylor Piephoff found one at the C.T. Myers Golf Course in Charlotte on April 25, 1989, in an



“open, hilly grassland” section.

We have five reports from the 1990s. On May 2, 1990, David Wright sighted an Upland Sandpiper in the grassy field at the base of the Cowan’s Ford Dam. Taylor Piephoff reported an Upland Sandpiper on May 5, 1995, in Mint Hill in an unusual setting. The bird was standing on the edge of Lebanon Road in front of an active business park. The bird “scampered off into the business park after a brief, unbelieving chase.” Piephoff later remarked that the bird must have been a “very late, very confused individual.” Steve Patterson found one in Kershaw County on April 3, 1998. JoAnn Martin found “an extremely late” individual at Lattimore in Cleveland County on October 29, 1998. This date is quite surprising as Upland Sandpipers usually have moved through the Carolinas by late September. Ken and Alan Kneidel sighted two Upland Sandpipers on the baseball fields of Randolph Middle School on August 30, 1999. They described the habitat as “nothing special,” simply “short, dry grass with occasional bare patches.” The birds showed up the day after a heavy rainstorm had moved through the area.

No Upland Sandpipers have been reported in this region in the past 17 years.