

First Record of Curlew Sandpiper for North Carolina

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While conducting a shorebird census at Bird Shoal, just south of Beaufort, N. C., on 29 June 1971, Peter Graham and John Fussell discovered a Curlew Sandpiper (*Erolia ferruginea*). It was seen at 12:30 PM, feeding with Short-billed Dowitchers (*Limnodromus griseus*). The sandpiper was molting, but it had some rufous color on the breast. It was this rufous color that made the bird very conspicuous, as all dowitchers present at this time were in non-breeding plumage. The Curlew Sandpiper was also obviously smaller than the dowitchers. Although it probed deeply, both observers had brief glimpses of its decurved bill. After several minutes, the observers flushed the bird and saw the white rump. The sandpiper then flew about 50 yards, landed, and began feeding again—this time with dowitchers and Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Ereunetes pusillus*). It soon became aggressive toward a Semipalmated Sandpiper, which flew away with the Curlew Sandpiper in pursuit. Both birds were quickly lost from view.

The next day, 30 June, Fussell and Graham returned and found the Curlew Sandpiper on the Beaufort Inlet side of Bird Shoal resting with Semipalmated Sandpipers and Semipalmated Plovers (*Charadrius semipalmatus*). Later in the afternoon, Fussell returned to Bird Shoal with Eugene Pond of Beaufort. Pond collected the bird which has been placed in the scientific collection of study skins at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History in Raleigh (NCSM No. 4100). Examination of the specimen by Micou Browne revealed it to be an adult female with an ovary 5.5 mm by 2.5 mm. The bird was moderately fat.

In the specific area where the Curlew Sandpiper was found, a shorebird census was conducted weekly from 18 May to 14 June, almost daily from 14 June to 30 June, and approximately three times a week from 30 June to late August. In addition to these censuses, some part of the general area surrounding Bird Shoal (lower Newport River-lower North River-Beaufort Inlet area) was being studied almost daily from late May until early August, and notes were made on the occurrence of shorebirds. From these censuses and other observations, it was apparent that the Curlew Sandpiper was found during the first wave of the "fall" migration. During the last week in June, certain species were returning to the Beaufort area after a brief absence in early and/or mid-June. It is interesting that John Bull lists 27 June as the fall arrival date for the Curlew Sandpiper in the New York City region (*Birds of the New York City Area*, p. 207).

This is the first record of the Curlew Sandpiper for the Carolinas. A survey of *Audubon Field Notes*, volumes 14-25 (1960-1971), revealed one record for Georgia and one for Florida. However, during this same period 40 sightings of one or two individuals were reported from New Jersey, Delaware, New York, Virginia, and Connecticut—27 from New Jersey alone; so the Curlew Sandpiper can be considered regular, if infrequent, in the Middle Atlantic States. Most of these published records are for May and July, with a few scattered from August until November, by which time the birds are in winter plumage. Although no experienced birder would overlook a Curlew Sandpiper in breeding plumage, Carolina birders might do well to look carefully for "suspicious-looking" Dunlins in fall.

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[DEPT. ED. -- With the placement of this specimen in the collection of the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History the Curlew Sandpiper can be added to the official North Carolina bird list.]