

## A Wintering Pectoral Sandpiper in Northwestern South Carolina

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The Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*) is a regularly occurring spring and fall migrant in the Carolinas, but it normally winters in South America. Winter records for the United States are rare. Thus, of great interest is a Pectoral Sandpiper that spent the winter of 1976-77 in northwestern South Carolina. The record is even more unusual because the fall and winter in northwestern South Carolina may have been the coldest in recorded history.

I first saw the bird on 13 December 1976 on a large mudflat at the mouth of Little Beaverdam Creek at Lake Hartwell, 2 miles SE of Townville in Anderson County. The rough *purrrt* call attracted my attention to it, and I clearly saw the heavily streaked breast ending abruptly at the white belly. The legs were pale yellowish-flesh in color, and the size was slightly smaller than nearby Killdeers (*Charadrius vociferus*). I found the bird again on 5 January 1977 and 8 January 1977. A Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) was present in January to afford size comparison with the Pectoral. Sidney Gauthreaux and Carl Helms also observed the Pectoral on 8 January. Very cold weather moved into the region until mid-February; however, the Pectoral was still present with the Least on 13 February. By March migrant Pectorals had arrived at the flats, as 6 were present on 5 March. Whether the wintering individual was one of the 6 is not known.

This may well be only the second winter record for South Carolina. On 27 December 1944 R.C. Murphy and H.S. Peters saw four birds on Bull's Island, Charleston County (*South Carolina Bird Life*, 1970, p. 241). The major significance of the record, however, is that a Pectoral Sandpiper spent the entire winter in the United States, probably one of the few documented instances of such a happening.

## Probable Rufous Hummingbird at Raleigh, N.C.

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On 2 November 1976 we found a late hummingbird feeding on a cluster of pineapple sage (*Salvia rutilans*) in the yard of Mrs. Jack Duffield in suburban Raleigh. At first glance it appeared to be a female Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*); however, upon prolonged and close observation we noted a pale rufous wash along the flanks and eventually got a momentary glimpse of stronger rufous at the base of the tail.

Two days later we again studied the bird carefully with 10 x 50 binoculars and 20-power scope at close range and in excellent light as it fed on the sage flowers, and as it rested in small trees nearby. On three or four occasions we were able to see the full tail pattern as it spread its tail while preening. This was exactly as shown for the female Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) in Robbins, Brunn, and Zim *Birds of North America*; that is, rufous at the base of the tail separated from white-tipped outer tail feathers by a narrow dark green area. Otherwise the bird had white underparts with dark throat spots, a dull rufous wash along the flanks and a small white spot immediately behind in the eye. The head, back, and folded tail were a metallic green. At rest its wings were noticeably darker than the back.

Later in the day an unsuccessful attempt was made to collect the bird, after which it disappeared. It was last seen on the following day, 5 November, when several additional observers got good clear views of the tail pattern.

Inasmuch as the field guides show the female Rufous Hummingbird plumage as almost identical with that of the female Broad-tailed (*Selasphorus platycercus*) and Allen's (*Selasphorus sasin*) hummingbirds, there is a remote possibility that our bird was one of the latter two species. However, while we were able to find a number of records of the Rufous along the Gulf coast and one specimen record each for South Carolina and Maryland, we found only one Broad-tailed record (Louisiana) and no Allen's record in the east or southeast. We have little or no doubt that our bird was a Rufous and, as such, the first documented sight record for North Carolina. We do feel that there is a good possibility that one or more of the previous winter records of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in North and South Carolina could well have been Rufous Hummingbirds. Incidentally, the South Carolina specimen remained incorrectly labeled as a Ruby-throated for almost 20 years (*South Carolina Bird Life*, Sprunt and Chamberlain, 1949, p. 324).

[Dept. Ed.—With the publication of this record the Rufous Hummingbird can be placed on the hypothetical list for North Carolina.]

## Brown-headed Cowbird Behavior

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12 August 1975

Every summer, for several years, Rufous-sided Towhees (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) have raised Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ator*) here. I have watched them with interest and often wondered where they go when they are on their own. Last winter, I had the opportunity to read what is known about cowbirds in Bent's *Life Histories of N. A. Birds* (U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 211, 1958, p. 421-450). That young cowbirds find their way back to flocks of their own kind is well known. The question remains how is this done?

Last summer we had four young cowbirds raised by towhees. Each time a young bird was on its own, it remained here a few days and then disappeared. Each time, a day or so before the immature bird departed, I heard and/or saw an adult cowbird in the area (sometimes a male; sometimes a female; once, both). The idea came to me that perhaps the young birds followed the adults away. However, it was merely conjecture on my part for I never saw any contact between adult and immature cowbirds.

I finally discovered the break-through for which I had been looking right in my own back yard. My observation as I wrote it down is as follows:

August 12, 1975, 10:45 a.m.

Heard adult female cowbird giving loud calls, a sort of "chuck" and located same on low branch of pine tree. She was soon joined by an immature cowbird which gave with a familiar "chip" and other notes often heard when the young were begging for food. I had noted a fully fledged immature cowbird being fed by a male towhee on August 7. It appeared to be able to pick up its own food, but as young birds often do, it begged for food from the "parent" towhee.

I watched the two cowbirds, adult and immature, for some few minutes. The female kept calling and moving higher in the trees. The juvenile followed and they flew away together over the tree tops and out of sight.

At 12:05 p.m. on the same date, the female cowbird (recognized both times by a loose feather sticking up from her shoulder) showed up again briefly, without the young bird. She did not linger, just seemed to be looking for food.

This observation indicates that young cowbirds may respond to adults of their species by sight or sounds or both and may thus join flocks of their own species as they become independent of foster parents.