

First Record of Little Stint in North Carolina

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On the afternoon of 22 July 1989, at the tidal pond at Cape Hatteras, Buxton, North Carolina, we observed an adult Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) in alternate plumage. The Little Stint was foraging with approximately forty other shorebirds on a small mud flat at the margin of the tidal pond.

Our attention was first drawn to the small sandpiper by the warm rufous coloration of its upper parts. Several Least (*C. minutilla*), Western (*C. mauri*), and Semipalmated (*C. pusilla*) Sandpipers nearby allowed direct comparison. The Little Stint was intermediate in size between the Least and Western Sandpipers, and approximately the same size as nearby Semipalmated Sandpipers. It was noticeably elongated at the rear, due to its longish wings, and the "jizz" of a Baird's (*C. bairdii*) or White-rumped (*C. fuscicollis*) Sandpiper.

The following field marks were carefully noted at close range with binoculars and spotting scopes. The bill was black and about the same length, but definitely thinner than, bills of all Semipalmated Sandpipers seen in comparison. Legs were black with no webbing between toes. The warm, orange-rufous coloration of the upper parts was striking. The back was streaked rufous with two distinct whitish lines that converged, but did not meet, from the upper back to between the folded wings. The head was rufous on the crown with fine blackish streaks, rufous on the nape and cheeks, with a distinct whitish supercilium. Feathers of the coverts on the folded wing were dark-centered with rich rufous-orange margins on the scapulars and a paler ocher margin on the other coverts.

The under parts were white with a warm rufous wash across the breast with fine streaks and spots prominent on the collar and sides of the breast. The throat was white in contrast to the wash of rufous across the upper breast.

We observed the stint for several hours on the afternoon of 22 July. The bird was located at the same site on 23 July, when it was seen by several other observers. It was last reported at the site on 25 July.

The Little Stint is a Eurasian species and is a rare vagrant in North America. It is similar in appearance to the Rufous-necked Stint (*C. ruficollis*), another Eurasian species which is a rare vagrant on the Atlantic coast. The observers feel certain that the bird observed at Cape Hatteras is a Little Stint and not a Rufous-necked Stint. Carter had just returned from a trip to Japan where he observed hundreds of Rufous-necked Stints. The distinct whitish "V" on the back, slender bill, wing coverts all rusty or buffy (Rufous-necked has grayish wing coverts and lower scapulars), white throat and the warm wash across the breast with fine spots and streaking were distinguishing field marks.

Migrant shorebirds on the North Carolina coast in late July are largely adults in alternate (i.e., breeding) plumage. This is thus the best time to search for vagrant *Calidris* sandpipers (Rufous-necked and Little Stints) which are almost impossible to identify except in alternate adult plumage.

This is the first report of Little Stint for North Carolina and is believed to be the southernmost report for the Atlantic Coast of the United States. Photographs taken of the Little Stint were submitted to the N.C. Bird Records Committee for review. "Photos have been reviewed by the Committee and considered to document the sighting." (Chat 54:55).

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BOOK REVIEW

BIRDS OF THE SMOKIES

Fred Alsop. 1991. Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association. Gatlinburg, TN 37738. Softback. 167 pp. \$9.95.

Perhaps the first thing that should be said about this charming little book is that it is *not* intended to be a field guide. As the author carefully points out, there are many books on the market that are designed to help you identify birds. This is not one of them. This is a book designed to help you to enjoy the birds that you have identified within the area of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Not only do I think that the book succeeds in this goal, but the National Park Service awarded it first prize in its biannual competition for best park guide in the category of birds.

Its small size (4.5 x 6 in.) allows it to fit easily into a jacket pocket and the waterproof, tearproof cover is ideal for the damp, abusive environment of the mountains. It also has a good Smythe sewn binding that the publisher claims will holdup for years. In spite of its compact size, it includes 168 pages with color photographs and good descriptions of the 100 most common birds of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. There is a map of the Park, a checklist of birds that have been seen in the park (don't spend a lot of time looking for some of them, such as the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel or the White Pelican), and a lot of good advice on how to function in the Park. The species descriptions have an innovative little chart for describing the time of year and the elevation at which you are likely to find each of the species.

What many birders will find particularly interesting are directions for how to find the most sought-after specialties of the Great Smokies; things like Northern Saw-whet Owl, Swainson's Warbler, and Red Crossbills. These instructions alone are probably worth the \$9.95 purchase price.

The book is available at visitors centers in Great Smoky Mountains National Park or by contacting the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, 115 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 or you can telephone (615) 436-7318. Add an extra \$3.25 for postage and handling. North Carolina residents are requested to include an additional 60¢ to cover sales tax; Tennessee residents add 80¢. South Carolina residents are not subject to sales tax by mail order.—H. T. Hendrickson