

## Sharp-tailed Sandpiper Observed in Orangeburg County, South Carolina. The First Sight Record for South Carolina.

Robin M. Carter  
4165 E. Buchanan Dr.  
Columbia, SC 29206

Caroline M. Eastman  
Department of Computer  
Science  
University of South Carolina  
Columbia, SC 29208

On the afternoon of 24 July 1994, we were birding on the main sod farms of the Supersod Corporation, near Orangeburg, Orangeburg County, South Carolina. Birding was very good, since rain showers during the preceding 24 hours had produced a fallout of shorebirds, including approximately 300 Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), 6 Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*), 4 Lesser Yellowlegs (*T. flavipes*), 6 Solitary Sandpipers (*T. solitaria*), 2 Spotted Sandpipers (*Actitis macularia*), 9 Upland Sandpipers (*Bartamia longicauda*), 5 Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Calidris pusilla*), 15 Least Sandpipers (*C. minutilla*), approximately 100 Pectoral Sandpipers (*C. melanotos*), and one Stilt Sandpiper (*C. himantopus*).

At about 1420 hrs., we returned to a rain pool along Supersod Boulevard where, an hour or so earlier, there had been an adult Stilt Sandpiper. This rain pool lay about 15m from the roadside. We noticed three medium-sized sandpipers in or near this muddy rain pool. Two were obviously Pectoral Sandpipers. The third bird was about the same size and shape as the pectorals, but it immediately struck us as something different. This bird was slowly walking in grass along the near side of the rain pool, so that we could see its head and back well; but its front, breast, and undersides were hidden, for the most part.

The most striking thing about the bird's appearance was the coloration of its head. It had a bright chestnut or rufous crown, with indistinct brown-black fine streaks. It had a very bold, white eyeline which was noticeably more pronounced behind the eye, though it was quite bold in front of the eye as well. The bird's back was quite striking as well. Its mantle and covert feathers were brown, but with marked chestnut and white feather edging. The white edging combined to give the effect of several white lines running down the back.

With the bird present, we started looking through the books we had with us, including *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (Nat. Geographic.

Soc. 1983) and *Shorebirds: an Identification Guide to the Waders of the World* (Hayman *et al.* 1986). We became convinced the bird was a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*C. acuminata*), but we had not yet seen the breast.

After several minutes, the bird emerged from the tall grass. We could see that its legs were dull yellow-brown (or brownish-yellow). The bird turned towards us briefly; and we could see its breast was white, except for a slightly darker smudgy area on the throat. This smudgy area had some fine streaking, but it was confined to the throat. There was no sharp demarcation of streaking between the upper and lower breast, as on Pectoral Sandpipers. The bird had a few indistinct dark marks down the sides of its breast, but the middle of the breast was white. After about 30 seconds in the open, all three birds spooked and flew away without giving a call. In flight, we could not tell the Sharp-tailed from the two Pectorals. During our observations, we heard no calls. We did not notice the pattern of the tail feathers, nor did we see clearly the undertail pattern. We could not relocate the bird.

Everything we saw was consistent with a non-breeding adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. We saw no bold chevrons on the side of the breast, which would indicate a breeding adult, and the upper breast was too dull to be that of a juvenile. Our bird closely resembled the picture of a non-breeding adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper as seen on Plate 34 of *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* (Pizzey 1980). While we are very familiar with the Pectoral Sandpiper, our experience with the Sharp-tailed is limited to the sighting of one juvenile seen by many on 22 September 1984 at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Virginia.

During the next few days, dozens of birders sought the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper with mixed success. Peter Worthington relocated the bird on 28 July, and David Wright found it on 30 July. We are not aware of any definite sightings after 30 July. These sightings constitute the first sight record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper for South Carolina.

*[Ed. Note: The South Carolina Bird Records Committee accepted these sightings as valid and has placed the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on the South Carolina Provisional List.]*

### Literature Cited

Hayman P, J Marchant, and T Prater. 1986. *Shorebirds: an Identification Guide to the Waders of the World*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

- National Geographic Society 1983. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society.
- Pizzey, G. 1980. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. P.

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