

First Photographic Record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*) for North Carolina

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On 15 October 2010 around 14:30, Mark Jones, Harry Sell, Amy Williamson, and the senior author observed a rather brightly colored juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*) at the Fort Fisher State Recreation Area in New Hanover County, North Carolina. It was resting on the beach with numerous other shorebirds.

Prior to seeing the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, they had found an adult Pectoral Sandpiper (*C. melanotos*) in nonbreeding plumage approximately 50 yards from where, moments later, they saw the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. The irony of this first sighting was that a discussion took place regarding the Pectoral Sandpiper and how it was different from the Asian stray, the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. A few minutes after that discussion, Williamson pointed out a brownish-backed sandpiper sitting on the beach with a small group of shorebirds that had grayer back color, including Dunlins (*C. alpina*), Black-bellied Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*), and Short-billed Dowitchers (*Limnodromus griseus*). The observers immediately identified the brownish-backed bird as a juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, a rather easy identification in that age and plumage.

The flock flushed several times because of vehicle traffic but settled down each time, allowing additional observations and photographs. The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was observed and photographed by all four observers as close as 10 m, for a total observation time of about 30 minutes. Distinguishing field marks included size similar to Pectoral Sandpiper, uniformly brownish back, and a very prominent rufous cap above a clearly defined and bold supercilium. It had all-yellow legs and a buffy breast with only slight streaking. The bird also had a distinct eye ring.

Several other local birders were contacted. Dr. James Parnell joined the group about an hour later, and they relocated the bird with a large mixed flock of other shorebirds on the edge of a marsh and mudflats almost directly across from the original sighting. Parnell was also able to get close-up photographs of the bird. Unfortunately, the bird was not seen on the following day despite some birders' spending most of the day in the area.

This is the second record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in North Carolina, with the first occurring only in the previous year. A juvenile was seen by Bob Holmes at a sod farm in Craven County on 31 August 2009 (Holmes 2011). However, that individual was not photographed. The NC Bird Records Committee accepted both of these records (LeGrand et al. 2011). As the Fort Fisher bird was photographed at close range (Figs. 1–2), acceptance of photos places the species onto the Official List.



Figure 1. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, NC, 15 October 2010. Photo by Greg Massey.



Figure 2. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper standing next to a Short-billed Dowitcher (right). Photo by Greg Massey at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, NC, 15 October 2010.

Literature Cited

- Holmes, B. 2011. First North Carolina record of a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*). *Chat* 75: 57–58.
- LeGrand, H. E., Jr., K. E. Camburn, S. Cooper, R. J. Davis, E. V. Dean, W. K. Forsythe, J. S. Pippen, M. H. Tove, and R. L. Tyndall. 2010. 2010 report of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee. *Chat* 75:1–5.