

## A LITTLE-KNOWN FIELD MARK FOR WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER

by Leif J. Robinson, Wellesley,  
and Ted Raymond, Dedham

During our stay at Churchill, Manitoba, in June, 1986, we observed a multitude of White-rumped Sandpipers. All of these birds showed, to a greater or lesser degree, a conspicuous orange area on the lower mandible. It extended from the head to about a third of the way toward the tip of the bill.

This mark is unique among our common peep. Nevertheless, it is specifically mentioned and depicted in only two popular field guides, *The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding* (John Farrand, Jr., editor) and *Shorebirds* (Peter Hayman et al.). In the first it is shown in photographs of birds in juvenile, breeding, and (though tough to see) winter plumage. In the second it is shown in all plumages.

Among other guides and sourcebooks readily available, only P. A. Johnsgard (*The Plovers, Sandpipers, and Snipes of the World*) and E. Forbush (*Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States*) mention this orange mark. The *Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* shows the bill mark well, as does W. Godfrey's *The Birds of Canada*; the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* is less helpful.

Curiously, the bills of White-rumped Sandpipers are rendered totally black in the Peterson guides (east and west) as well as in Robbins' guide. More surprisingly, they are also depicted that way (and with no mention in the text of this coloration) in *The Shorebirds of North America*, edited by G. Stout.

To us, this mark proved useful for quickly separating White-rumps from Baird's Sandpiper, which was also common. Both birds are about the same size and have similar long-bodied profiles. (Of course, the standard field marks served equally well.) We write this note merely to point out that the orange lower mandible of the White-rump might be especially useful in the fall (though the mark might be less bright) when this species' flank spots become subdued and when a bird might be mistaken for a Baird's. This field mark could also help to identify a lone sitting bird at any season.

LEIF ROBINSON is the editor of *Sky and Telescope*, a former editor of *Bird Observer*, and a world traveler, circling the globe four times in the last fourteen months, on the track of birds, comets, eclipses, and other natural phenomena.

TED RAYMOND, professionally affiliated with the Kidder, Peabody company, is a member of the Board of Directors of Massachusetts Audubon Society, and a member of the Nuttall Ornithological Club. He has been reporting birds for the records since the early days of the *Records of New England Birds*.