

Sight Record of a Purple Sandpiper
in Coastal Mississippi

Paul Sunby

4021 Hessmer Avenue #105
Metairie, LA 70002

About noon on Saturday, 19 January 1985, I observed a Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*) at Pass Christian, Harrison County, Mississippi. The sandpiper was feeding among the rocks, near the waterline, just west of the pier behind the Pass Christian Yacht Club. I watched it through 7x35 binoculars from a distance of 8-10 m, in full sunlight, for about 15 min. The bird's plumage was distinctive. It was dark gray above and on the chest. I saw the white eye-ring and the yellow legs. It also had a black bill with orange-yellow base. The belly was white. The dark gray color, eye-ring, orange-based bill, and yellow legs are a combination of features no other eastern shorebird possesses.

I observed the Purple Sandpiper in flight as it chased a Western Sandpiper (*C. mauri*), and noted that it had a white wing stripe. I also noted it was unconcerned with my presence and allowed close approach.

Plumage and soft-part colors of the bird, habitat, and general behavior are all consistent with Purple Sandpiper. Although I had no previous with this species, there is no doubt in my mind that the identification is correct. At that time, I had no Mississippi birding contacts (I am from Wisconsin, studying at UNO), so I was unable to give news of this sighting to local birders, or to get confirmation by photograph. I later learned that this observation of a Purple Sandpiper is the first for Mississippi.