

First Green Sandpipers, *Tringa ochropus*, for North America

Ben King, Lawrence Balch, Jon Dunn, Davis W. Finch,
George E. Hall, and Theodore Tobish

THE FIRST Green Sandpiper sighting for North America was made by Terry Savaloja on June 13, 1978 in a marshy pond near the east end of the beach on Attu Island, the westernmost of the Aleutian Island chain, Alaska. The weather was overcast with light rain, wind NNW, temperature 40°F. Unfortunately, the observation could not be verified, since there were no other birders on the island. However, his field notes do suggest that his identification was correct. His notes are as follows: "observed for 30-45 minutes, as close as 25 ft.; flushed three or four times; size medium, as Wood Sandpiper or a little larger; dark bill straight; legs dark; upperparts blackish with a few white

specks on back; no wing bar; rump white (his drawing shows it abutting squarely against dark back); tail white with 3-4 very distinct dark bars near tip; underside of wings dark, contrasting with white belly; breast appeared darker than Wood's, and juncture with white belly had a Pectoral Sandpiper look to it; had a pale eyebrow; call a 3-note whistle."

On May 22, 1979, another Green Sandpiper was seen in Henderson Marsh at Attu Island by 30 observers who saw the bird in flight, heard it call, and watched it, through a battery of scopes, which included two Questars standing at about 80m distant. The bird was under

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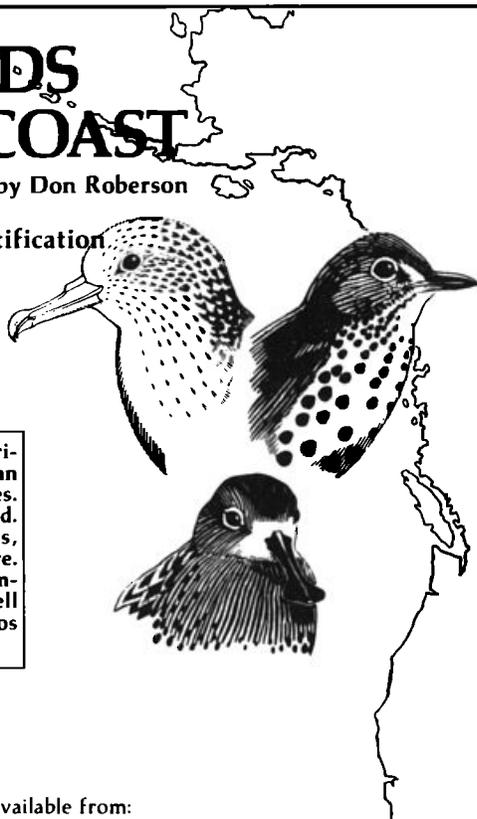
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observation for about one and one-half hours between 1100 and 1500. An early evening search for it was unsuccessful. An attempt at photography was also unsuccessful. Visibility was good under a low overcast, the wind about 15 knots. Eight of the observers had previous experience with Green Sandpipers, and two of them, Ben King and Arnold Small, had seen them commonly in India only a few weeks previously. The following description is derived from detailed field notes taken by the authors.

In flight: the entire underwing appeared blackish (strikingly different from the dusky of the Wood Sandpipers that were also present), contrasting strongly with the white belly. The white tail and upper tail coverts were cut off squarely from the otherwise uniformly dark upperparts. Its flight was similar to that of the Solitary Sandpiper with deep, jerky wing beats. The bird appeared slightly larger and heavier than Wood Sandpiper. The call was a loud, ringing, melodious, *peet-weet-weet* or *pwi-pwi-pwi*, very much like call of Solitary Sandpiper, but quite different from Wood Sandpiper's *fi-fi-fi*.

Standing: mantle and rump very dark, darker than in Wood Sandpiper, the color described as "blackish brown", "dark gray", "dark gray-brown", or "green-gray"; the mantle was speckled with whitish, but not as heavily as in Wood Sandpiper, giving an impression of more uniform, darker coloration; primaries blackish and unmarked; upper tail coverts white; tail white with three or four black bands, only the terminal band extending all the way to the sides, and the innermost band broken in the center; crown and nape slightly paler and grayer than mantle, the crown with narrow whitish streaks; whitish eyebrow not prominent in front of eye, and indistinct behind eye; narrow white eye-ringing not bold as on Solitary Sandpiper; eyes dark; sides of head ashy gray to gray-brown, with a faint streaked appearance, especially on paler cheeks; bill blackish, looking somewhat longer than in Wood Sandpiper; underparts of body entirely white, except for narrow dark streaks on entire upper breast, the sides appearing darker than the center; legs dusky greenish, darker than those of Wood Sandpiper. Like a Spotted Sand-

piper, the bird constantly raised and lowered the rear part of its body.

THE SIZE, SHAPE general plumage pattern, voice and manner of flight of the Green Sandpiper are similar in all but minor details to the Solitary Sandpiper, with the striking exception of the all-white upper tail coverts and the white tail with black bands of the Green Sandpiper. The Solitary Sandpiper has the upper tail coverts and tail broadly blackish down the center, with black and white bars on the sides.

The Green Sandpiper was to be expected in the western Aleutians because of its range in Eastern Asia. It is regarded as a rare migrant or straggler to Sakhalin, the Kuriles and Kamchatka (Ivanov, 1976), and nests in the Amur area and on the Shantar Islands of the eastern Okhotsk Sea (Dement'ev, 1951).

The Green Sandpiper appeared on Attu at the same time as many other East Asian species following a storm May 18 and 19. A heavy three-day "wave" occurred on May 20-22, including up to 12 Bean Geese, several Smews, two or three Spotted Redshanks, two Greenshanks, perhaps 40 Wood Sandpipers, one or two Common Sandpipers, two Rufous-necked Stints, one Temminck's Stint, two Long-toed Stints, 26 Common Black-headed Gulls, ten or more Yellow Wagtails, five or six Olive Tree-Pipits (*Anthus hodgsoni*), one Petchora Pipit, more than 50 Red-throated Pipits, five Bramblings, and five or six Rustic Buntings. The weather cleared on the evening of May 22 and nearly all these species had disappeared by the following day.

Aside from the authors, who were the leaders of the three tour groups on Attu, the other 24 observers were: Benton Basham, Jeffrey Basham, Harold R. Baxter, Jo Blanich, Joe Burgiel, Elizabeth Campbell, Michael D. Green, Katherine Irely, Ken Irely, Ken Johnson, John Keenleyside, Douglas Kraus, Gerald Maisel, Thompson Marsh, Larry Peavler, Cliff Pollard, Gerald Rosenband, Lawrence Ryel, Rose Ryel, Arnold Small, H. Granville Smith, Macklin Smith, G. Shumway Suffel, James M. Vardaman.

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The Last Word

OUR REGIONAL REPORTS are heading into trouble. But it is a welcome kind of trouble, the kind that stems from growing success, rather than failure. The trouble is that there are now too many people birding, seeing noteworthy birds, and sending reports of them in to our Regional Editors. The boom in birding, which would appear to be still in its infancy, is resulting in the swamping of some Contributing Editors and through them the Regional Editors, with such masses of material to read, consider, digest, and analyse, that some editors have thrown up their hands and resigned rather than face the pressures and tensions of the evaluation process. Others are suffering, quietly or otherwise, with more fortitude, but the time and effort consumed still mounts, and with them go the nagging regrets for "the ones left out." They are a heroic breed, these Regional Editors.

This issue of *American Birds* incorporates 57+ pages of Regional reports, less space for maps and photographs. It is, perhaps, somewhat shorter than the reports dealing with the spring and autumn migrations. This editor has rather ruthlessly deleted a number of records that will appear in Christmas Bird Counts, in our next issue (but has left hundreds of others). And yet, the number of cited observers, both within the text and in the observer lists, runs to more than 2500. In addition, individuals whose records were reported by clubs, or were disguised as "m.ob.," or "et al.," probably represent several hundred more. For the observer lists alone, the space occupied in this issue runs to 107 column inches, or 3.75 pages, not counting spaces for initials in the text. It is a sizable, costly, and probably necessary item. We often wonder whether there is any periodical anywhere in the world that is literally put together by the cooperative efforts of so many persons. For it is a fact that everyone who submits a record, or shares in an observation, is a part of our operation.

AT PRESENT, we can cope with the long lists of names, although we approve of the way Kim Eckert, at the end of his long list of names, added "and

171 additional unnamed contributors." Hugh Kingery actually lists 259 unnamed contributors. But the time may well be near at hand, when something rather drastic will be required. Should we list observers for very important records only? Should we use only initials, and once a year publish one consolidated observer list for each region? Should we reduce the type-size from the present 8-point (legible) to 7-point (eye-strain) for observer lists? Should we eliminate observer names completely as does *British Birds*, allowing the original documents to remain the official records? If we stop publishing most or all observer names, will observers stop sending in records? We recognize that there are certain justified elements of pride and prestige involved in having records attributed in these reports. How important are they? We would like to have the view of some of our readers, and will publish the most

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