

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper  
30 Sep 1988  
Credit Island, Scott Co., IA  
\*P. Petersen, \*B. Blevins  
IBL 59:13, 76, Petersen 1989

Record Number: 88-20  
Classification: A-D

## DOCUMENTATIONS

Peter C. Petersen  
Brian Blevins

## REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:13  
Records Committee: IBL 59:76  
Petersen, P. C. 1989. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Davenport. IBL  
59:90-91.

VOTE: 5-A-D, 1-NA, 1-abstain

A-D. As far as I can tell, these brief descriptions mention every field mark correctly. Too bad it didn't stay around.

A-D. Direct comparison to adjacent Pectoral Sandpipers. The broadened eyebrow line behind eye, the tan breast with streaks across the upper breast and down the sides, describe a juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, which is what is most expected in the U.S.

A-D. The combination of the smaller bill, buffy breast with minimal streaking on upper breast and sides, light eyebrow broadening behind eye, buffy feather edgings on upperparts, and rufous cap adequately eliminate the similar Pectoral Sandpiper. Date also right for a vagrant of this species. I assume the bird was a juvenile, although neither observer specifically mentioned the bird's age.

A-D. Although a difficult bird to identify, the findings are those that I would expect to distinguish it from juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper.

NA. Both documentations strongly suggest Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. I myself need additional information on vagrancy throughout midwest and some discussion on this species and the previous Iowa record.

A-D. Key field marks are noted. Time of sighting also as expected.

REVOTE: 6-A-D, 1-abstain

A-D. Information on vagrancy is available. Identification references can be compared to article on previous Iowa record which was published in Iowa Bird Life.

A-D. Same.

A-D. Good description of juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Date is as expected for vagrant of this species in Iowa and midwest.

A-D. The vagrancy pattern is adequately outlined in Iowa Birds.

A-D. After further research and reading the comments from the rest of the committee I will change my vote to accept this record on the basis of the documentations and the comments from the voting the first time around. I still think we need to see the pattern of vagrancy on this species and how this bird relates to others that have gotten out of their normal migration pattern.

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union  
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

Printed: 08/04/93  
30 Sep 1988 RC No. 88-20 (cont)

A-D. The documentation was adequate I believe. The NA admits ID is correct, but votes NA, needing "additional information". For Christ's sake, look it up--it will confirm the identification!

SENT TO: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA 52803; Brian Blevins, 2003 E. 12th St., Davenport, IA 52803.

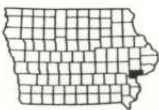
The female bird seen in the photographs appears to be a female Barrow's Goldeneye based on the steep slope of the forehead from the base of the short bill, giving this bird the same peak-headed appearance of the male. This is best shown in the photograph in which a male Mallard separates the goldeneye pair.

This is Iowa's second record of Barrow's Goldeneye—both from extreme western Iowa. The previous sighting was at Forney Lake in Fremont County from 17 March to 6 April 1984 (*Iowa Bird Life* 54:75-77).

## SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER AT DAVENPORT

PETER C. PETERSEN

On the afternoon of 30 September 1988, Brian Blevins and I were returning to Davenport from Saylorville Reservoir where we had observed and photographed a Pomarine Jaeger. We decided to check the mud flat at the Credit Island Harbor, which, due to low water, extended to South Concord Street near its junction with West River Drive. We were, therefore, on South Concord across the harbor from Credit Island rather than on the island when we saw a small flock of eight medium sized shorebirds that we passed off as Pectoral Sandpipers. While we searched for other shorebirds with the sun behind us, this flock flew closer to our position, landing about 50 meters away. I rechecked the group with a tripod mounted scope at a 25X setting. I noticed one of the birds seemed a bit smaller than the rest and had an especially rusty cap. Brian agreed it was not a pectoral, and I mentioned the only Sharp-tailed Sandpiper record for Iowa was about this time of the year. It was, in fact, 3 October 1974, at Coralville Reservoir (Halmi 1974). Brian also called my attention to the white eyebrow as we increased power to 40X. We checked our field guide (National Geographic Society 1983) and confirmed all these points as indicating a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.



I described the bird in my documentation as "Medium-sized shorebird closely resembling Pectoral Sandpiper" but "slightly smaller", "top of head rich brown to rufous", "breast with a tan wash, almost buff, a few streaks of brown at top of breast and along sides", "cheek buff, noticeably white eyebrow which broadened behind eye". In comparing the bird with the Pectoral Sandpipers I noted, "Pectorals had streaking across buff breast wash uniformly to lower edge of buff" and "back of Sharp-tailed seemed more uniform rich brown than those of the Pectorals." We made our notes independently, mine being done as soon as I reached home, within 30 minutes of observation. I consulted the Master Guide (Farrand 1983), Cramp (1983), and Hayman, Marchant, and Prater (1986) prior to completing my documentation.

The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper has been observed twice in Illinois, the first record coming from Chautauqua N.W.R. near Havana, about 100 miles from Davenport, on 28 and 29 September 1974 (*Illinois Audubon Bulletin* 172:4-5) and 6 October 1985 at Chicago (*American Birds* 40:120). Another lingered from 6 to 23 October 1984 near Cleveland, Ohio (*American Birds* 39:60). The first record for Indiana occurred on 23 September to 6 October in Gibson

County where it was photographed (*American Birds* 43:111, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly* 67:62, 65). It has been seen in these eastern states: Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York as well as twice in Ontario. An excellent article paper on the identification of the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper appeared in *British Birds* (Britton 1980).

## LITERATURE CITED

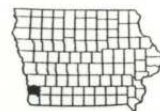
- Britton, D. 1980. Identification of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. *British Birds* 73:333-345.  
 Cramp, S. ed. 1983. Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, Vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
 Farrand, J. ed. 1983. The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding, Vol. 1. New York: Alfred Knopf.  
 National Geographic Society. 1983. Field Guide to the Birds of North America. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society.  
 Halmi, N. S. 1974. Sight record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper near Iowa City. *Iowa Bird Life* 44:106  
 Hayman, R., J. Marchant, and T. Prater. 1986. Shorebirds. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co.

235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, Iowa 52803

## BARN SWALLOWS ACCEPT NEST SUBSTITUTE

BARBARA L. WILSON

When I entered our barn on 2 July 1988 to check Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) nests, I noticed a couple of adults flying about and calling more persistently than usual. Assuming they had simply learned to recognize me or my mirror as an apparent threat to their nest, I began checking nests on the floor joists beneath the hayloft and did not notice anything really unusual until the dog and I entered the central alleyway. Then the dog pounced on a bit of grayness. One nestling swallow, with feathers barely emerging from their sheaths, broke for the manger while its three siblings huddled in a depression on the dirt floor. I grabbed the dog (who fortunately had inherited an inhibited attack from generations of sheep-herding ancestors), caught the fleeing nestling, and returned it to its siblings. After I held my hands around the group a moment, they settled down to watch us alertly. Fragments of a broken nest lay nearby, probably dislodged the previous day when my husband loaded green locust boards into the hayloft to dry.



While the dog stared at the nestlings alertly indeed, I worried. The barn cats would eat them even if the dog did not, and with their nest fallen, they could not be returned where they came from. Hand raising baby swallows would be difficult, time-consuming, and probably unsuccessful. Feeding the swallows to the cats was a tempting alternative, but I decided to try to replace the nest instead. Although birds often abandon a nest that is disturbed during incubation, I knew that they sometimes form such strong bonds with their young that they can tolerate amazing changes. The Barn Swallows, apparently still trying to protect their grounded young, seemed like good candidates for nest substitution.

Putting the four young and some nest fragments in a bucket, I took them into the house. There I cut an 11 x 8.5 cm piece of wood and nailed a wooden

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

88-20

What species? Sharp-tailed Sandpiper How many? 1  
Location? Credit Island Harbour, seen from S. Concord St., Davenport, Scott Co  
Type of Habitat? mud flat on Miss.  
When? date(s): Sep. 30, 1988 time: 3:50 to 3:55 P.M.  
Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 23 McClellan Blvd Davenport, IA  
Others with you: Brian Blevis  
Others before or after you: none

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Medium sized shorebird closely resembling Pectoral Sandpiper in same flock. It was slightly smaller than the Pectorals, same shape. Back & wings brown with tan edges. Top of head rich brown <sup>to rufous</sup>. Belly white, breast with tan wash, almost buff, a few streaks of brown at top of breast & along sides. Legs yellow. Dark streaks along sides over white. Cheek buff, noticeable white eyebrow which broadened behind eye. Bill fairly dark grey, brownish at base, eye dark. Tail brown on sides, black in center. Rump black in center, white on sides.

Similar species; how eliminated: Pectoral Sandpipers, available side-by-side, were slightly larger, legs & bill a bit longer than Sharp-tailed. White eyebrow on Pectorals did not broaden behind eye. Cap not as richly colored in Pectorals. Pectorals had streaking across buff breast wash uniformly to lower edge. ~~Buff~~. Back of Sharp-tailed seemed more uniformly rich brown than those of the Pectorals. Birds all departed downstream on Miss. Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no before photos could be attempted.

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Sander directly behind observers, flock about 100+ m. away, then flew closer - 40-50 m. (est.) Viewed with 10x40 Zeiss Binocs + zoom scope at 30-40x60.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in Australia, have seen thousands of Pectoral Sandpipers & banded 60.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Nat. Geo. Guide during observation. Master Guide; Cramp; Marchant & Prater later.

How long before field notes made? 30 min. this form completed? 2 days.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

88-20

What species? Sharp-tailed Sandpiper How many? 1

Location? Rickside of Credit Island, Des Moines

Type of Habitat? Mudflat caused by low riverced. Missouri River ced

When? date(s): Sept. 20 time: 3:50 to 4:30

Who? your name and address: Brian Blavins (2002 E 12th Street, Des Moines, Ia)

Others with you: Pete Petersen

Others before or after you: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.  
Bird was smaller than Pectorals of which there were seven birds in company with. Most noticeable was the extremely bright eyebrow that did broaden behind the eye. The cap was also immediately cited as being much darker and rustier in coloration than those of the pectorals. With further study of the birds, differences in relation with the pectoral sandpipers were: not quite a clean like margin between white belly and breast streaking, secondly was the rufous splay of color in scapulars.

Similar species; how eliminated: The immediate close species would be Pectoral sandpipers. This species was present for extreme and congruent comparison. Eliminated by rufous cap; extremely large eyebrow; an extremely clean breast line, and the rufous scapulars. Size was also definitely noticed, the sharp-tailed being considerably smaller and fainter than the Pect.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No  
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.  
Scope - 15 to 60 power and 7X35 Binosculars Distance - start 100 Yards but moved closer minimum 50y  
Light - partly cloudy and sun to our backs.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Extreme experience with Pectoral.

References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic guide, Audubon's Master Guide, Golden Guide, ABA - Shore birds  
Persons - (Pete Petersen)

How long before field notes made? 2 hrs. this form completed? 1 hr. later

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).