

## NOTES

### FIRST RECORD OF THE COMMON SANDPIPER FOR THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

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With a breeding range spanning Eurasia and a winter range extending from Africa to Australasia, the Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) is indeed the common and familiar sandpiper of the Old World. It is the Old World counterpart of the Spotted Sandpiper (*A. macularius*) of the Americas and its only congener. The Spotted Sandpiper is a vagrant to the Hawaiian Islands (David 1991, Pyle and Pyle 2009), but no Common Sandpiper had been reported until one spent the winter of 2010–2011 at Honuapo lagoon, Whittington Beach County Park, Hawaii Island. Previously, Pyle and Pyle (2009) summarized all records of *Actitis* for the islands and concluded that 21 of the 32 could be identified with certainty as Spotted Sandpipers. Among the remaining 11 records, the Common Sandpiper could not be ruled out. The Common Sandpiper is a possibility because it reaches Micronesia as a regular winter visitor (Baker 1951) and western Polynesia and Alaska as a vagrant (Kessel and Gibson 1978, Pratt et al. 1987, Gibson and Byrd 2007). There are no records elsewhere in North America (Howell et al. 2014).

The bird at Honuapo lagoon was discovered on 30 October 2010 by Pratt. The lagoon is a small brackish inlet 100–200 m across that once served as a fishpond but is now open to the sea. As the only sizable wetland with mudflats in Ka'u District, it rarely offers much besides a few Wandering Tattlers (*Tringa incana*) and Pacific Golden-Plovers (*Pluvialis fulva*). Following the bird's discovery, we revisited Honuapo on 10 dates from November through April to study it. We observed the sandpiper for the last time on 24 April, but Darren Dowell reported it via [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org) on 8 May. The bird was photographed by Jack Jeffrey on 1 December and by David on 24 April. Detailed field notes and photographs have been filed with the Hawaii Bird Records Committee, which has accepted the record.

Our initial identification as *Actitis* was based on the bird's appearance and behavior—including diagnostic pulsed, fluttering flight low over the water, which readily distinguishes this genus from other sandpipers (Hayman et al. 1986, O'Brien et al. 2006, Chandler 2009). On this first visit, Pratt noted that the bird was not a perfect match for a Spotted Sandpiper owing to its legs being dull greenish gray and the bill being evenly grayish without pink or orange at the base.

Field marks indicating the Common versus the Spotted Sandpiper, seen on all or nearly all subsequent visits, included the all-dark bill without pale base, the white wing-bar that extended proximally to the body, lack of ventral spotting, and gray legs without a yellow tint. In addition, the prominent tail extension was seen on four visits. The patterning of the tertials and the streaking and other fine markings on the neck and upperparts could be seen only on the few occasions when the bird was very near, as described below.

It was evident that the sandpiper went through two molts during its winter residency. When it first arrived, the bird was in juvenal plumage. We observed the following features on 8 November when the bird could be viewed well: the longest tertial showed seven dark notches distally along about two-thirds of the protruding feather, which

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Figure 1. Common Sandpiper at Honuapo lagoon, Hawaii Island, 24 April 2011. By that date the bird had molted into breeding plumage. Note the absence of spots on the breast, dark brown patch on the side of neck and breast, absence of pale base to the mandible, gray vs. yellow legs, prominent tail projection, and size in comparison with the Pacific Golden-Plover.

*Photos by Reginald E. David*

was otherwise clear brownish gray without vermiculation—a feature distinguishing the juvenile Common from the Spotted Sandpiper—and four distal bands (dark, light, dark, light tip) on the wing coverts, indicating juvenal plumage in both species.

On 1 December the bird appeared to be molting. By late winter (as observed on 14 and 27 March), it clearly looked different, with noticeably fresh nonbreeding plumage with a dark brown patch down the side of the neck and breast vs. the finely streaked breast of the juvenal plumage. The species undergoes a complete molt to attain nonbreeding plumage (Higgins and Davies 1996, Chandler 2009).

More visible was the partial molt from nonbreeding to breeding plumage that took place in spring (February–May for the species; Higgins and Davies 1996). From our field notes for 13 April: “Shaft streaking appears to be coming in along sides of neck.

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Neck feathers somewhat thinned out, molting?” And on 24 April: “The bird appeared to be mostly through an incomplete molt with contour feathers replaced on head, neck, and patchily across the saddle.” On this date, markings of breeding plumage were first noticed: shaft streaking on the sides of the neck and across the upper throat (more so than 2 weeks earlier); streaking on the side of face, ear coverts, and forehead; and cross-bars on many dorsal feathers, including the scapulars. It seemed as though the eye-line and superciliary were more prominent than before (Figure 1). These field marks, plus the immaculate white breast and dark brown sides to the neck and breast, describe the distinctive breeding plumage of a Common Sandpiper.

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