

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Curlew sandpiper: pp 168-169.



CURLEW SANDPIPER.

Family Scolopacidae

Species *Calidris ferruginea*

Common name Curlew Sandpiper

Status Migrant

Abundance Rare

Size 190 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Wrybill 200 mm)

Habitat Found in muddy estuaries and harbours.

Worldwide range Breeds in Arctic Siberia and winters in Mediterranean areas, Africa, Asia, South-east Asia and in Australia. Some straggle on to New Zealand arriving from October onwards. They leave by early April.

New Zealand range Biggest flocks are found at the Manukau Harbour, Miranda, and at Lake Ellesmere, although birds can be expected from most shore-bird

haunts.

Description – non-breeding plumage

Face Greyish-brown with white eyebrow. **Upperparts** Grey-brown. **Wings** Brown with a thin white line across middle of wings. **Rump** White. **Breast** Greyish wash. **Underparts and underwing** White. **Tail** White with brown tip. **Bill** Black, noticeably down-curved at the tip. **Legs** Black.

Description – breeding plumage (note that female birds are paler)

Face White around base of bill and above eye. Otherwise brick red. **Head and neck** Brick red. **Back and wings** Red, with flecks of black and silver. **Breast and underparts** Brick red with black barring. **Rump, undertail and underwing** White.

Conspicuous features

- Smaller than Sharp-tailed and Pectoral Sandpipers.
- Has a down-curved tip to the bill.
- Non-breeding plumage birds have very white underparts.
- The white rump of the bird in flight is noticeable.
- Birds undergo a colour transformation into breeding plumage in January into brick red colouring.
- In-flight birds show the white wing line on upperwings.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Usually feeds among Sharp-tailed Sandpipers or Wrybill.
- Tends to start feeding immediately the tide has turned.
- Very fast and manoeuvrable fliers when in flocks.

Where to find – North Island

Auckland – Puketutu Island causeway Mangere Sewage Plant. P. 298.

South Auckland – Miranda at the “Stilt Ponds”. P. 302.

Where to find – South Island

Canterbury – Lake Ellesmere at various places. P. 351.

Southland – Waituna Lagoon, Awarua Bay and Oreti. P. 364.