

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Sharp-tailed sandpiper: pp 169-170.



### SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER

**Family** Scolopacidae

**Species** *Calidris acuminata*

**Common name** Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

**Status** Migrant

**Abundance** Rare

**Size** 220 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Wrybill 200 mm)

**Habitat** A bird of muddy estuaries and harbours but one which also likes the verges of salty lagoons and small coastal ponds and lakes.

**Worldwide range** Breeds in Siberia and migrates south to Australia where large numbers occur from October onwards. A regular summer species in some parts

of New Zealand.

**New Zealand range** Can be expected to turn up in all the major shore-bird harbours and estuaries in both the main islands.

### **Description – non-breeding plumage**

**Crown** Traces of rufous colouring over brown. **Face** Greyish with a white eyebrow.

**Upperparts** Brown with buff edges to feathers. **Wings** Brown with a faint white line across middle of wing. **Underparts** Throat brownish, abdomen white. **Tail** Black outer, white inner, and brown centre feathers. **Bill** Brown slightly down-curved at tip. **Legs** Yellowish-green.

### **Description – breeding plumage**

**Crown** Rufous. **Head, neck and upperparts** Rufous tonings over greyish-brown.

**Underparts** Rufous throat and upperbreast, abdomen white, flecked with grey streaks.

### **Conspicuous feature**

- Rufous crown.

### **Conspicuous characteristics**

- Seen on the edge of roosting Wrybill flocks.
- Tends to remain feeding while other species rest at high tides.

### **Differences between the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Pectoral Sandpiper**

- The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper has a gradual blending of the brown of the breast into the white of the underparts.
- The Pectoral Sandpiper has a sharp defined line between the two.
- As they attain breeding plumage the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper becomes rusty coloured around throat and breast while the Pectoral Sandpiper goes a darker brown on throat and breast, and browner on the upperparts.

### **Where to find – North Island**

**South Auckland** – Miranda at the “Stilt Ponds” is the best place. P. 302.

**North Island** – Kaituna Estuary, Ahuriri, Manawatu Estuary and Waikanae Estuary all have records.

### **Where to find – South Island**

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

**South Canterbury** – Lake Wainono. P. 356.

**Southland** – Waituna Lagoon, Awarua Bay. P. 364.