

## *Calidris fuscicollis* (White-rumped Sandpiper)

Order: Charadriiformes (Shorebirds and Waders)

Family: Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Snipe)

Class: Aves (Birds)



**Fig. 1.** White-rumped sandpiper, *Calidris fuscicollis*.

[[http://www.discoverlife.org/mp/20p?see=I\\_LHT5510&res=640&flags=glean](http://www.discoverlife.org/mp/20p?see=I_LHT5510&res=640&flags=glean), downloaded 6 March 2017]

**TRAITS:** *Calidris fuscicollis*, more commonly known as the white-rumped sandpiper, is a small shorebird typically ranging from 14-19cm in length. The back bears a chestnut brown colour that extends onto its long wings, with underlying dull grey feathers. The head features a distinct white eyebrow, and a dark, thin, medium length bill. The underbelly and tail are predominantly white, with streaks of brown-grey on its flanks and breast (Fig. 1) (Parmalee, 1992). The appearance of males and females of this species are similar except during the breeding season. Due to its many shared physical features, this bird is often mistaken for similar sandpipers occupying the same range of habitats; however, its long wings that extends past its tail and its noticeable white rump are the two main features used to identify *Calidris fuscicollis* (McLaughlin and Wormington, 2000).

**DISTRIBUTION.** The white-rumped sandpiper's distribution is based on its breeding and migration periods (Fig. 2). When breeding, *Calidris fuscicollis* is primarily found in northern Alaska and regions of Arctic Canada. They then embark on a month-long migration, travelling southeast over the Caribbean to South America (Korczak-Abshire et al., 2011). These migrants are seen in Trinidad and Tobago.

**HABITAT AND ACTIVITY.** The habitat of the white-rumped sandpiper changes with migration. During breeding season, they typically inhabit wet, well vegetated tundra with grass and moss. For short periods, when migrating, they may be found in a variety of wetlands. In winter, they inhabit various saltwater and freshwater habitats including marshes, lagoons, large lakes and rivers and estuaries, and avoid sandy beaches and areas of fast-moving water (IUCN, 2016).

**FOOD AND FEEDING.** The white-rumped sandpipers are viewed as opportunistic feeders, varying their diet according to habitat and season. Its diet consists mainly of small invertebrates such as worms, crustaceans, insects, and molluscs along with occasional plant material. Feeding involves repeatedly probing its bill into shallow water, vegetation, or mudflats. These birds can often be seen foraging in small groups defending their feeding territories (Hernández and Bala, 2007). Food resources encountered at stopovers is crucial for survival and reproduction as these birds spends more than half the year on wintering and migration lands. Due to the lengthy distance travelled each year, seasonal food sources available at stopovers must be taken advantage of in an effort to build enough fat reserve required for their next long distance flight (Hernández and Bala, 2007).

**POPULATION ECOLOGY.** In non-breeding season, they are typically seen singly or in small groups often interacting with other shorebirds. They have been reported to live up to seven years but due to lack of supporting research, their longevity may be underestimated (Encyclopedia of life, 2013).

**REPRODUCTION.** The white-rumped sandpiper performs a courtship ritual where both male and female take flight in an upward direction. They hover around 10-30m off the ground maintaining rapid wing beats while repeatedly making a series of "poing-zee" songs. This is followed by a downward glide to the ground, positioning their wings in a "V" formation to the back. A second paired flight is initiated similar to the first, ultimately ending with the male performing a raised wing display (McCaffery, 2007). During the breeding season, the plumage of the male differs from the female, bearing a well-defined white supercilium (eyebrow) and throat (Figs 3 and 4). The construction of the nest is done by the females only and is just large enough to nest four eggs. The oval eggs, usually 25-30mm in length, are green in colour and sometimes blotched with reddish-brown or grey spots (Fig. 5). Once laid the eggs are incubated for 22 days. The males of this species are polygynous, and leave the nesting site once the females have laid the eggs (McCaffery, 2007). A day after being hatched, the chicks (covered in down feathers) leave the nest and must forage for their own food. The females still tend to them by keeping them warm and brooding them. The chicks normally fledge within 17 days (McCaffery, 2007).

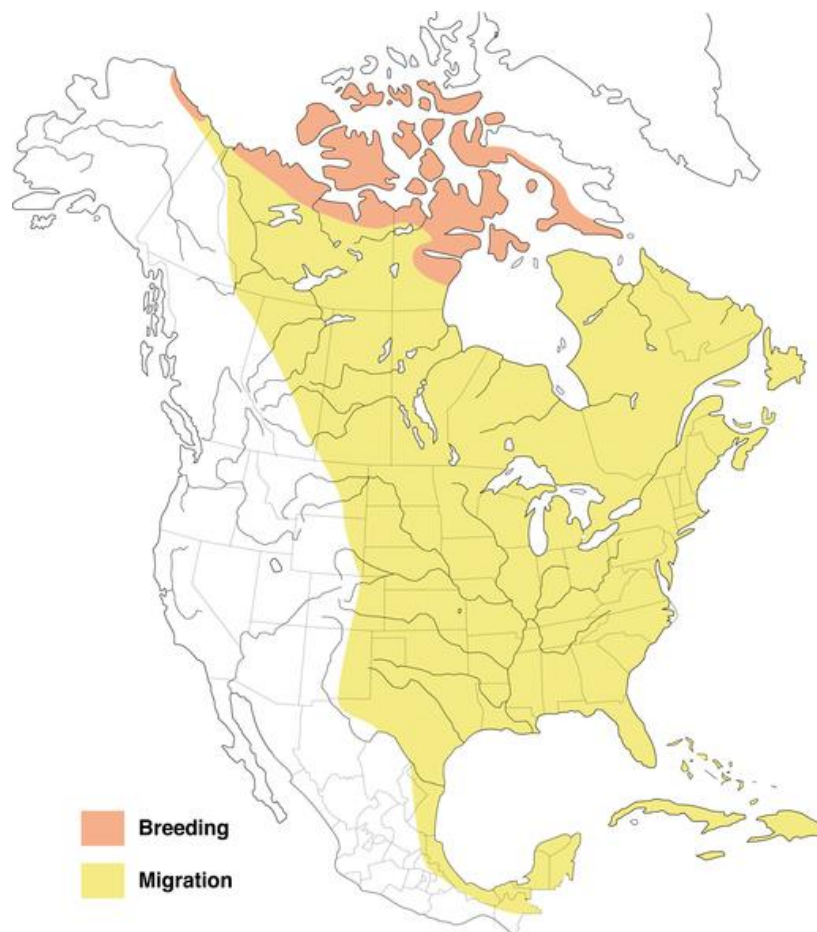
**APPLIED ECOLOGY.** According to IUCN (2016) this species has been evaluated as Least Concern. Though there has been observable decline in the population, it is not significant enough to consider them vulnerable.

**REFERENCES**

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**Fig. 2.** Distribution of *Calidris fuscicollis* during breeding and migration periods.

[<https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/species/029/articles/introduction>, downloaded 10 March 2017]



**Fig. 3.** Well defined eyebrow and throat of male during the breeding season.

[<https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/species/029/articles/introduction>, downloaded 10 March 2017]



**Fig. 4.** Plumage of male during the non-breeding season.

[<https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/species/029/articles/introduction>, downloaded 10 March 2017]



**Fig. 5.** Eggs of *Calidris fuscicollis* displaying reddish-brown blotches.

[[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White-rumped\\_sandpiper#/media/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White-rumped_sandpiper#/media/), downloaded 10 March 2017]

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