

**SPECIES OF THE MONTH****WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER**

APRIL 2025

The White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*) has one of the longest bird migrations in the Western Hemisphere, migrating more than 13,000 km from its breeding grounds in the Arctic tundra of northern Canada and northern Alaska to southern South America. Southbound migrants fly over the Atlantic Ocean from northeastern North America to northern South America and then travel southeast along the coast before turning inland in South America. Northward migration through North America moves farther west cutting across the Caribbean and through interior North America, east of the Rocky Mountains, to its far-north breeding grounds.

Spring migrants occasionally reach Arizona and are often seen feeding with other sandpipers. The Arizona Bird Committee has accepted 23 records from 7 counties since 1977, ranging from 11 May to 3 July. Most records are mid-May through June with 14 in May, 8 in June, and 1 in July. The most recent report was of a single bird at the sewage treatment plant at Cameron, Coconino County, 11-14 May 2024.

The White-rumped Sandpiper most resembles the Baird's Sandpiper (*C. bairdii*) in size and shape. Both are intermediate between small sandpiper species such as Western (*C. mauri*) and Least (*C. minutilla*) sandpipers, and larger species like Pectoral Sandpiper (*C. melanotos*). They both have black legs and black bills. Baird's Sandpiper's bill is relatively straight while the White-rumped Sandpiper's bill shows a slight droop. Unlike other *Calidris* sandpipers, both have long primary tips that noticeably extend beyond the tail tip. This can lead to misidentification unless other field marks are observed. The most distinctive characteristic distinguishing the White-rumped Sandpiper from Baird's and other *Calidris* sandpipers is the white band across the uppertail coverts (not actually on the rump as the name implies). This is mainly visible in flight, so other features need to be looked at for birds at rest or feeding on the ground. Baird's Sandpiper tends to be browner overall with a brownish wash across the breast whereas the White-rumped Sandpiper in alternate plumage shows touches of rufous on the back, cap, and auricular area. The breast is marked by thin black streaks, which extend to the flanks. In a close view, a small reddish area on the base of the lower mandible of the White-rumped Sandpiper may be visible in all plumages and ages. Its flight call is also distinctive, a high-pitched, thin squeak *tzeek* or *tseet*.



White-rumped Sandpiper, Santa Cruz Flats, Pinal County, 15 May 2016. Photo by Muriel Neddermeyer