

## A NEW SANDPIPER FOR SAMOA

On 7 February 1980, at the sand and rock shoreline in front of the village of Malua in Western Samoa, we saw a small sandpiper foraging among the rocks and driftwood at the water's edge. We were immediately impressed with its resemblance to the familiar Spotted Sandpiper (*Tringa macularia*) in winter plumage, which is found throughout North America.

We watched the bird for over an hour under cloudy skies along the 300-metre shoreline. It was flushed from time to time but always resumed feeding after flying only a short distance. Its feeding activity was quite animated and brisk, with characteristic bobbing and dipping of the neck and tail. Occasionally it paused, motionless.

It was about two-thirds the size of nearby Wandering Tattlers (*T. incana*), and was judged to be about 18 cm (7 inches) in length. The back was uniform brownish, slightly lighter on the nape and crown, and even lighter on the sides of the head. The sides of the breast were also light brown and faded into the pure white of the belly and flanks. It had a rather distinct white orbital ring but no outstanding white eyestripe. The legs were grey-green. The bill was dark brown and slightly longer than the head. In flight, white wingbars were visible on the mid-wing and the outer tail feathers were barred. Its flight was stiff and the wing-beats shallow. It did not call.

A second bird was seen flying up the shoreline later, while the first bird was perched on a concrete pile. On subsequent visits we did not find the birds, but on 15 February we saw two birds in flight at the Mulinu'u Lagoon near Apia, some 24 km from Malua. Both birds seemed to have the same markings as the sandpiper but could not be positively identified.

The birds were clearly either the Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*) or the Spotted Sandpiper of America. The two are very alike in winter plumage, differing only slightly in the pattern on the wing coverts and the coloration of the legs. We agreed that, based on the literature we had, the location and the field markings, the birds were probably Common Sandpipers. Most authorities to whom we have shown our field notes and slides have agreed with our opinion.

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[New Zealand authorities, to whom text and photographs were shown, agree that the bird was either Common or Spotted Sandpiper, almost certainly Common Sandpiper, appearing to have the length of tail of this species. See Prater, Marchant & Vuorinen, **Guide to the identification and ageing of Holarctic waders**. BTO guide 17, 1977. Plate 14. — Ed.]