

see this species again and this note is offered simply as a contribution to what seems a rather limited knowledge of a declining species.

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### SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER DISPLAYS

During a visit to the southern side of the Manawatu River estuary on 20 February 1977, R. H. D. Stidolph, C. E. Scadden and I found a compact flock of 17 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (*Calidris acuminata*) resting quietly on mud freshly exposed by the falling tide. Suddenly, one of the birds raised and slightly opened its wings, and vertically erected and fully spread its tail, rather like a fantail (*Rhipidura*). At the same time, it raised the feathers of the nape, mantle and scapulars, dramatically increasing its apparent size. It then chased a second bird for about 40 seconds, occasionally jumping into the air and flicking its wings open vigorously. The chased bird ran rodent fashion in and out of the flock without displaying or calling, while the rest of the flock remained quietly resting, apparently unaffected by the two birds' behaviour.

This flock had been at the Manawatu estuary since October 1976. When I visited the estuary three weeks after this observation, the flock had gone, presumably on the way to its Siberian breeding grounds.

Aggressive displays are more likely to occur when waders are feeding than when resting. Because this display occurred when the birds were resting and seemed to be spontaneous, it may have been a courtship display. Backen (1958, *Emu* 58: 267-270) gave a detailed account of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper displays seen in Victoria in January-February 1957. He described three basic displays, which he assumed were courtship displays, and variations and combinations of them. The Manawatu display fits Backen's Type II, the type he saw most often and that once both preceded and followed a copulation attempt.

R. H. D. Stidolph (pers. comm.) saw a slightly different, less elaborate display on 8 November 1950 at Miranda in a group of 12 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, probably not long back from their breeding grounds. This display fitted Backen's Type I. One bird, adopting a semi-erect posture, with feathers raised and wings drooped, chased another. Since a courtship display is unlikely in November, this and Backen's Type I are probably a basic aggressive display that may be elaborated at courtship times into Backen's Type II, as seen at Manawatu estuary.

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