

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*



Folk Name: (none)

Status: Migrant

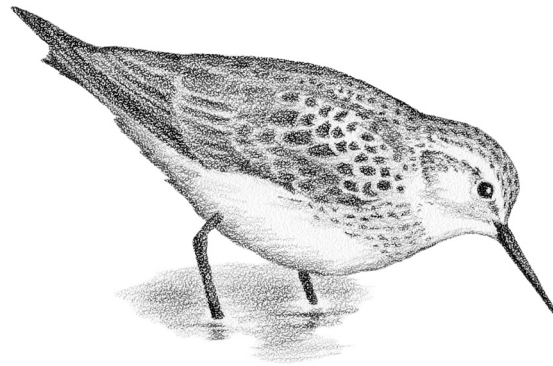
Abundance: Very Rare to Rare

Habitat: Mudflats

The Baird's Sandpiper was considered accidental in North Carolina until at least the late 1960s. By 1980, it was designated an extremely rare spring migrant and rare fall migrant on the coast. Today, it is rare to uncommon on the coast in the fall and still extremely rare in spring at any location. In South Carolina, it is an exceedingly rare spring migrant anywhere in the state and a rare fall migrant in the Piedmont. This peep has been reported about 11 times around this region, and all records but one are from the fall season. Sightings are from Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Lincoln, Gaston, and Spartanburg counties.

There were four reports in the 1980s and two in the 1990s. Bill and Pat Brokaw reported the first Baird's Sandpiper in the region in Mecklenburg County on August 28, 1982. On September 8, 1984, David Wright spied one at the McAlpine WWTP near Pineville. This bird lingered until 14 September. Five years later, David Wright sighted one in Gaston County at the Riverbend Steam Station on September 4, 1987, just across the river from Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge. The following year, Mecklenburg Audubon members reported a Baird's Sandpiper present at the Irwin Creek WWTP from 1 September through 5 September in 1988. On August 16, 1991, David Wright discovered another Baird's Sandpiper north of Charlotte, providing our earliest fall arrival date. The bird lingered until 20 August. Lyle Campbell found one in Needmore in Spartanburg County on May 10–11, 1997. An editor later pronounced Campbell's extremely rare spring sighting as "well described." Danny Swicegood reported three at Lake Don T. Howell on September 16, 1999.

There have been five recent occurrences. Alan Kneidel reported one at Lake Don T. Howell on September 2, 2000, and he and Ken Kneidel found two Baird's Sandpipers there the following year on August 19, 2001. Brad and Pat Carlson found one still present there on



August 29, 2001. Taylor Piephoff reported two at this reservoir on September 15, 2002. Tom Sanders and Ron Clark watched one Baird's Sandpiper with a flock of 20 Least Sandpipers at the McAlpine WWTP in Pineville on September 14–15, 2011. Jeff Lemons photographed one in Lincoln County on September 8, 2012, and provided this description: "Larger than nearby Semipalmated Sandpiper. Wings extended past tail, buffy breastband across chest and generally more brown overall than White-rumped Sandpiper."



Baird's Sandpiper on shore of Lake Norman. (Jeff Lemons)

A Note Regarding Peeps

The Baird's Sandpiper is the first of five species of small *Calidris* sandpipers commonly referred to as "peeps." The others are: Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, and White-rumped Sandpiper. These birds are notoriously difficult to identify and "tend to create more identification headaches than the rest of the shorebirds put together." Readers should refer to the July/August 2008 issue of *Birding* magazine for a primer on how to identify these tiny shorebirds. It is available for free online.