

various sizes and rise on a wheeling high-level flight until almost out of sight. This activity would be followed by scattered dispersal again and return in smaller groups for low-level hawking, even to the extent of touching the water surface. No call was heard.

The area was visited again on 13 July 1974 for the purpose of photographing the Martins. In this we were unsuccessful, possibly on account of the dull and rather windy conditions. However, c. 20 were observed in the same general area, but in smaller more widely-scattered groups, and all flying low. These groups of two to six birds ranged more widely than the closer larger association noted on the first observation.

The initial momentary and distant glimpse of these Martins gave an impression of native bats in flight. When seen to be birds, there remained the possibility of the more common Welcome Swallow. However, after several flights within 10 feet of the observers and the perching of 7 birds within 30 feet, detailed records thus made possible are felt to sufficiently match formal records as to warrant a confirmed sighting.

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J. C. HENLEY

*Waitakaro,
Ruatoria.*



COMMON SANDPIPER IN THE KAIPARA HARBOUR

A Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*) was seen at Port Albert, on the Kaipara Harbour, on 23 February 1974 by J. A. Brown, E. D. Metherell, D. M. Walter, Mrs Pamela Walter and the writer.

The bird was in the air when first seen. It had the prominent white wing-bar and distinctive manner of flight, with alternating periods of rapid wing-beats and short glides on bowed wings, described by Merton *et al.* (1965) and Edgar (1969). It alighted and we were able to watch as it fed actively over an expanse of estuarine mud close to a main channel, or perched on a shelly hummock and a clump of exposed roots, at times hiding on the far side of these and taking brief looks at us over the top.

Upper surfaces were a soft even brown, darker on the head, while the underparts were white. The straight bill was fine, dark and short, with a paler area, possibly pinkish-yellow, at the base of the lower mandible. A brownish wash spread over face, neck and onto

the upper breast, where it formed a "bib" whose lower margin curved high at the shoulder. Here, a white area in front of the angle of the wing was most noticeable, as also were the almost horizontal stance, tail-jerking and bobbing. The stance and shoulder pattern are well illustrated by Watson & Campbell (1964: 72-73). Witherby *et al.* (1940: plate 117) do not show the shoulder marking. Edgar (1969) suggests that this may be a variable field character. The rump and tail were easily seen as the bird flew on more than one occasion showing the brown centre and white edges with some barring on the tail. The legs were greenish yellow. No call was heard. We watched until after a time the bird moved into mangroves and did not re-appear.

Three previous sightings, each of a single Common Sandpiper, have been recorded in this journal. These were at New Plymouth on 24 October 1964, Kerikeri on 20 March 1969 and Waikanae on 24 November 1972. W. F. Cash (pers. comm.) found one at the mouth of the Waiongona River, Taranaki, on 13 February 1972, where it was seen on four other occasions. The final sighting was on 9 April 1972.

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BETH BROWN

39 Red Hill Road,
 Papakura



A SIGHTING OF THE PIOPIO OR NATIVE THRUSH

Sometime about March 1970, we were seeking *Pittosporum turneri* in the Hauhungaroa Range when we observed a young Piopio sitting on a branch and chirping. Shortly a parent flew in at seven or eight feet from the ground and fed it. This was repeated several times in the twenty minutes or so that we watched them, eight or ten feet above us. The parent made no sound and moved almost stealthily through the heavy scrub, taking note of us but showing no alarm. She would fly straight in, feed the chick, turn sideways and observe us for a few seconds and then fly off, keeping low. We kept perfectly still and studied every detail of the parent bird, also the chick, which differed little from the parent in general appearance. Another chick was chirping a little further downhill in the cover. They gave a straight plain chirp, not a trilly chirp like the Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelus*). RB was quite sure of the identity of the bird as he had been shown a newly dead one by an old man at Raurimu in the King Country many years before and remembered very well the details of it.