

FIRST WINTER RECORD IN FLORIDA OF THE BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER (*Calidris subruficollis*)

BILL PRANTY,¹ SMITH JUAN,² AND DONALD FRASER³
¹8515 Village Mill Row, Bayonet Point, Florida 34667-2662

Email: billpranty@hotmail.com

²16455 NE 32nd Avenue, North Miami Beach, Florida 33160

Email: snookseason@gmail.com

³2181 Gulf View Boulevard, Dunedin, Florida 34698

Email: dmfraser31@gmail.com

Over the past 25 years, notes in *Florida Field Naturalist* have documented the first records of 14 species of Neotropical migrants found in Florida during winter (1 December–28/29 February; Pranty and Ponzo 2020). Here, we provide details for another Neotropical migrant discovered wintering in Florida: a Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Calidris subruficollis*) in Palm Beach County, 20–21 January 2020.

Location.—The Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) is an area of more than 285,000 ha² located between Lake Okeechobee and the Northern Everglades. The region was originally sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*) marsh that was converted to agriculture beginning in 1948. The EAA is characterized by flat, low-lying terrain composed of peat soils and criss-crossed by drainage canals. Sugarcane (*Saccharum* spp.) is the primary crop grown, with sod, rice, and winter vegetables also planted. Since the mid-1990s, much hectareage in the EAA has been purchased by public agencies to improve water quality and to restore habitats in the region. Stormwater Treatment Area 1W (STA 1W), comprising 4,450 ha in Palm Beach County, is one of the areas that is undergoing habitat restoration. It is bordered on the north, west, and south by existing agricultural lands, and on the east by Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. The western portion of STA 1W is visible from a dike that parallels a road that connects with County Road 880. In January 2020, the western portion of STA 1W was composed of a mix of shallowly flooded and unflooded fields. Vegetation ranged from none in the recently flooded fields to reeds growing taller than 1.5 m in areas that had been flooded for a longer duration.

Discovery.—On 20 January 2020, more than a dozen birders, including the three authors, were searching for a Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) that had been discovered by Richard Crossley four days earlier. More than 1,000 shorebirds were present, and we carefully scoped the flocks as they rested on exposed bars or foraged in shallow water. On an exposed bar, we discovered a Buff-breasted Sandpiper among more than 200 Black-bellied Plovers (*P. squatarola*). Several photographers, including Dan Scolaro, obtained diagnostic images (Fig. 1). Other birders, including Carl Edwards on the same day, and Alex Lamoreaux on 21 January 2020, saw the Buff-breasted Sandpiper, but it was not seen afterward.

Description and behavior.—The following description of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper in STA 1W is based on our observations over more than an hour on 20



Figure 1. Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Stormwater Treatment Area 1W, Everglades Agricultural Area, Palm Beach County, Florida, 20 January 2020. The color photograph shows the typical upright stance, a buffy body with whitish underparts, a pale face with a prominent black eye, and yellow legs and feet. This individual, which was observed the following day but not subsequently, provides the first record of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Florida during winter. Palm Beach County, Florida is more than 7,000 km from its typical wintering range. Photograph by Dan Sclaro.

January 2020, as it rested and foraged on exposed bars. The individual observed was a small sandpiper, larger than a Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) but much smaller than a Black-bellied Plover, with both species in direct comparison. It was rather long-legged and walked in a semi-upright posture (Fig. 1). The upperparts were rich buff, with dark mantle feathers edged broadly in buff creating a scaly appearance. The small, dovelike head was characterized by a plain buffy face with large, conspicuous dark eyes surrounded by pale eyerings, and a short, thick, pale bill. The underparts from the chin to the breast were pale buff, shading to whitish through the undertail coverts. The legs and feet were yellow. When foraging, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper picked deliberately from bare ground or shallow water. It chased away at least one individual each of three species: Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), and Least Sandpiper. We heard no vocalizations.

Status and distribution.—Buff-breasted Sandpipers breed in the High Arctic from western Chukota, Russia east across Alaska to Nunavut, Canada, and they winter in grasslands, including the pampas, from southern Brazil through Uruguay to northern Argentina (McCarty et al. 2017). Southward migration is more widespread than during spring, with many birds occurring along the Atlantic coast (McCarty et al. 2017). In Florida, Buff-breasted Sandpipers are a “. . . regular, rare to fairly common transient throughout, except very rare in the Keys . . .” with seasonal occurrences from late March through late May and from late July through late October (Greenlaw et al. 2014). Thus, the STA 1W Buff-breasted Sandpiper furnishes the first record (and report) in Florida during winter, and represents an extralimital wintering record of more than 7,000 km. Other winter records of Buff-breasted Sandpipers in the Northern Hemisphere exist: eBird contains photographic records from Texas (at four sites; e.g., Micallef 2013, Weeks 2014, Surya 2018, Ortego 2019), Hawaii (Summers 2007), Senegal (Bacuez 2016), and Hong Kong (Thomas 2016).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to Dan Scolaro for providing the image in Figure 1, and to John Groskopf for his assistance. We thank Scott Robinson for improving a draft of the manuscript.

LITERATURE CITED

- BACUEZ, F. 2016. eBird checklist: Saint-Louis, Senegal, 21 December 2016. <<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52808401>>. Accessed 9 February 2020.
- GREENLAW, J. S., B. PRANTY, AND R. BOWMAN. 2014. The Robertson and Woolfenden Florida Bird Species: An Annotated List. Special Publication No. 8, Florida Ornithological Society, Gainesville, FL.
- MCCARTY, J. P., L. L. WOLFENBARGER, C. D. LAREDO, P. PYLE, AND R. B. LANCTOT. 2017. Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Calidris subruficollis*). Version 2 in The Birds of North America (P. G. Rodewald, Ed.). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York.
- MICALLEF, C. 2013. eBird checklist: Chambers County, Texas, 5 February 2013. <<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S35396916>>. Accessed 9 February 2020.
- ORTEGO, B. 2019. eBird checklist: Refugio County, Texas, 2 January 2019. <<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S51465010>>. Accessed 9 February 2020.
- PRANTY, B., AND V. PONZO. 2020. First winter record in Florida of the Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*). Florida Field Naturalist 48:8–11.
- SUMMERS, S. 2007. eBird checklist: Hawaii County, Hawaii, 28 February 2007. <<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S11305125>>. Accessed 9 February 2020.
- SURYA, G. 2018. eBird checklist: Refugio County, Texas, 2 January 2018. <<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S41555952>>. Accessed 9 February 2020.
- THOMAS, D. 2016. eBird checklist: Mai Po Nature Reserve, Hong Kong, 22 December 2016. <<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S33143326>>. Accessed 9 February 2020.
- WEEKS, R. 2014. eBird checklist: Matagorda County, Texas, 4 January 2014. <<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S16233715>>. Accessed 9 February 2020.