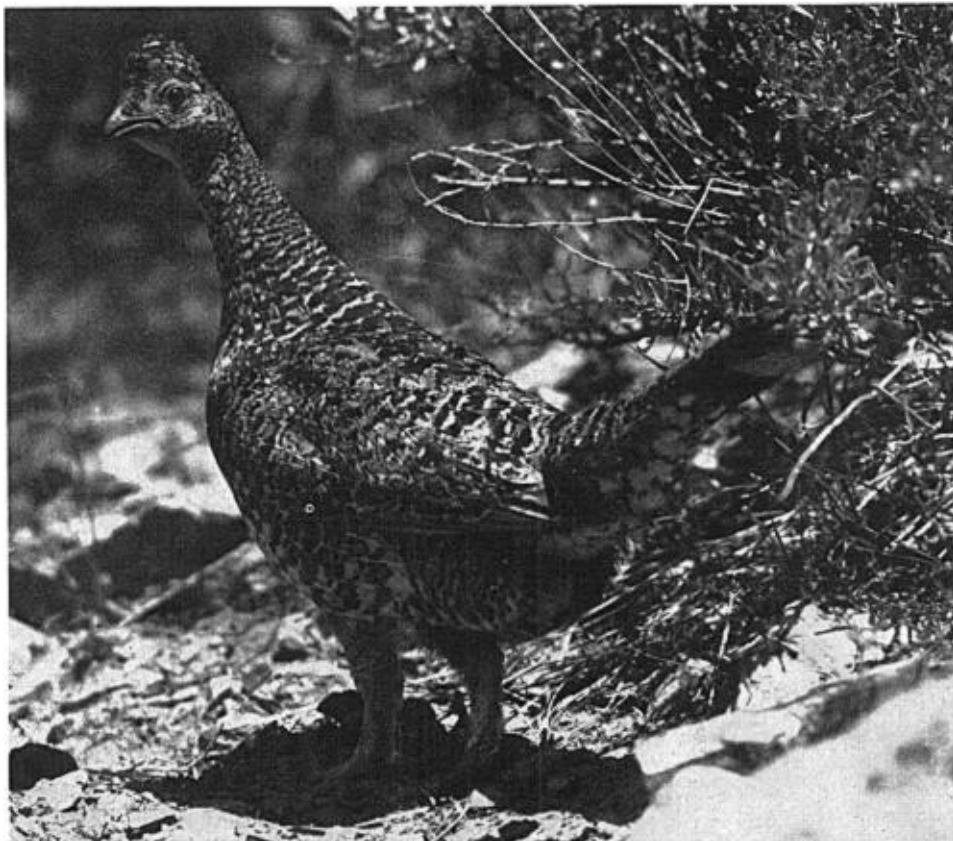


FROM FIELD AND STUDY



A female Sooty Grouse (*Dendragapus fuliginosus*) near sagebush (*Artemisia tridentata*).
Photograph taken on Rush Creek, south of Mono Lake, Mono County, California,
June 2, 1948, by Ed Harrison and Frances Roberts.

Notes on the Occurrence and Behavior of the Stilt Sandpiper on Vancouver Island.—
The Stilt Sandpiper (*Micropalama himantopus*), though decidedly rare on Vancouver Island, may be a regular migrant along the inner shore-line in the late summer. Munro and Cowan (*A Review of the Bird Fauna of British Columbia*, 1947:111) describe it as a "Scarce transient, more often seen in the interior than on the coast" and give no records for Vancouver Island.

During the past fifteen years I have observed the Stilt Sandpiper in the Comox district of Vancouver Island in the years 1937 (two individuals), 1942 (two), 1945 (four), 1947 (one), 1949 (one), and 1951 (one, on August 19). The occurrences were during the latter part of August or the first half of September, and the birds were in company with some or all of three other species, the Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) and Greater and Lesser yellow-legs (*Totanus melanoleucus* and *T. flavipes*).

The Stilt Sandpiper is most likely to be confused with the Lesser Yellow-legs, as the birds are similar in appearance when flying or feeding on land and have similar calls. Closer examination shows that the Stilt Sandpiper, at least in early fall as here reported, has more brown color in the plumage, contrasting with the gray of the yellow-legs, and has conspicuous, light colored superciliary lines which often join across the forehead. The beak is noticeably shorter and blunter than that of the yellow-legs, but the slight thickening and downward curve near the tip are not very apparent in the

field. The color of the legs of the juvenal Stilt Sandpiper is not always diagnostic; in the case of the 1951 bird, the only noticeable difference was that the color was not as bright as the yellow of the yellow-legs. Various authors give greenish or colors intermediate between green and yellow, and, in the birds seen here, a tinge of green was generally apparent except in the 1951 bird; but to state that green legs are diagnostic, as some writers do, is incorrect.

All the Stilt Sandpipers seen on Vancouver Island, except two on August 19, 1937, showed a decided buffy tinge on the breast and flanks, indicative of juveniles. I originally recorded these two 1937 birds as juveniles also, but later concluded that they were adults which still showed some of the summer barring on the breast and flanks. The bird seen on the latest date, September 11, had more gray in the plumage, presumably due to a more advanced stage of molt.

My experiences as to general behavior of the Stilt Sandpiper concur with the descriptions in Bent (U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. No. 142, 1927:126) and Forbush (Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States, vol. 1, 1925:401). Foraging is done primarily by probing like the Dowitcher; and, like that species, the body is often immersed up to the shoulders. The individuals observed here exhibited a tendency to stay in the same place, the 1951 bird and others being observed for over an hour, during which time they did not move from an area of about 30 square yards. They were generally sedate in actions as compared with the fussy yellow-legs. When its shoulders were immersed, the 1951 bird would on occasions kick with its legs in the endeavor to reach the food, just as some surface-feeding ducks do. Although I could not determine positively that both feet were off the bottom at the same time, it certainly appeared so. On the one occasion when they were seen feeding on a sandy foreshore, the Stilt Sandpipers did not wade in like their companions the Dowitchers, but probed into the water-covered sand.

The 1951 bird was the only one that showed resentment at the presence of another bird feeding near it. There would, generally, be one or more Lesser Yellow-legs feeding in the same area. Sometimes the Stilt Sandpiper would take no notice and both birds would feed peaceably close together; but, on other occasions, when the Yellow-legs settled and started to feed, the sandpiper would at once fly toward it, drop into the water one or two feet away, and assume a very defiant attitude with the head drawn back and depressed into the neck, the beak pointing downward and touching the surface of the water and the body slightly submerged. If the Yellow-legs did not fly off, the sandpiper would fly toward it and both birds would rise in the air a few feet in fighting attitude, the legs and feet being stretched out toward the other as though threatening to strike; but I did not see any actual attempt to strike by either bird. The Yellow-legs would then retire. Once, when a Yellow-legs settled some yards away, the Stilt Sandpiper at once attacked it and drove it away. The fight, if it could be so described, would generally take place close in-shore where the water was only inches deep, but on one occasion the birds drifted out; and, when the Stilt Sandpiper dropped down into water too deep for it to wade, it swam inshore, seemingly quite adept in so doing. In one instance the Yellow-legs, on the approach of the Stilt Sandpiper, lowered one of its wings in a defensive attitude but this did not deter the Stilt Sandpiper, and the Yellow-legs then left without further argument.

Whether it was one particular Yellow-legs that caused these reactions in the sandpiper, it was quite impossible to say; but it would often take no notice of a Yellow-legs flying in and the two species would then feed side by side. There must have been three or four of these encounters during the hour of observation. A juvenal Dowitcher feeding in the same area was never attacked.

When in the aggressive attitude the bird kept up a continuous low sizzling, distinctly threatening note with the beak slightly open. This note would be intensified during the attack together with the noisy call very similar to that of the Yellow-legs. Generally speaking, however, the Stilt Sandpiper is a quiet bird. It seldom makes use of the noisy note similar to that of the Lesser Yellow-legs; and, apart from those mentioned, the only notes heard from it have been the following: (1) when feeding, a low *kurk-wik*, or *quick*, sometimes repeated; (2) on taking wing sometimes, a note like the *kip* of the Lesser Yellow-legs, but much subdued; (3) at another time a very soft *purwee* and a low rolling *gurr* were heard.—THEED PEARSE, *Comox, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, September 14, 1951.*

New Records of Birds from Chiapas, Mexico.—With the appearance of part one of the "Distributional Check-List of the Birds of Mexico" by Friedmann, Griscom, and Moore (Pac. Coast