

Spotted Sandpiper

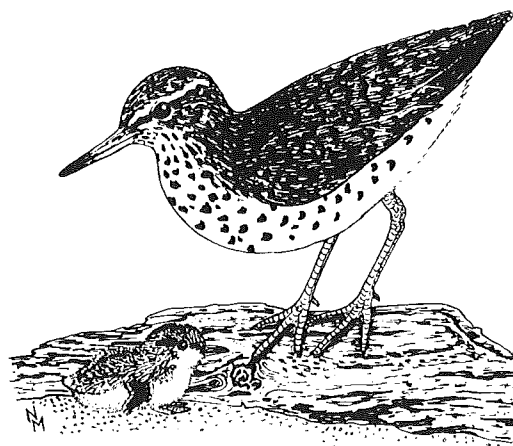
Actitis macularia

The Spotted Sandpiper is one of the most familiar shorebirds in North America. Most moderate to large streams or ponds and lakes with extensively open shorelines have one or more pairs of these engaging birds. Breeding habitats of the species are thinly vegetated areas near clean waters, and include recently cultivated fields, gravel bars, sandbars, stony pastureland, and even road shoulders and gravel parking lots.

Detecting Spotted Sandpipers is usually not difficult. A methodical search of the larger streams and ponds will normally reveal the species. The birds actively forage along shorelines, exhibit a characteristic tendency to bob their tails, and fly on bowed wings with rapid, shallow wing beats. The sharp, disyllabic flight note, and the song of several mellow, whistled notes sounded in a series, also call attention to the species.

Parents with young accounted for 61% of Atlas Project confirmations; most of these were recently fledged young. Nests accounted for 17% of confirmations, and distraction displays led to another 17%.

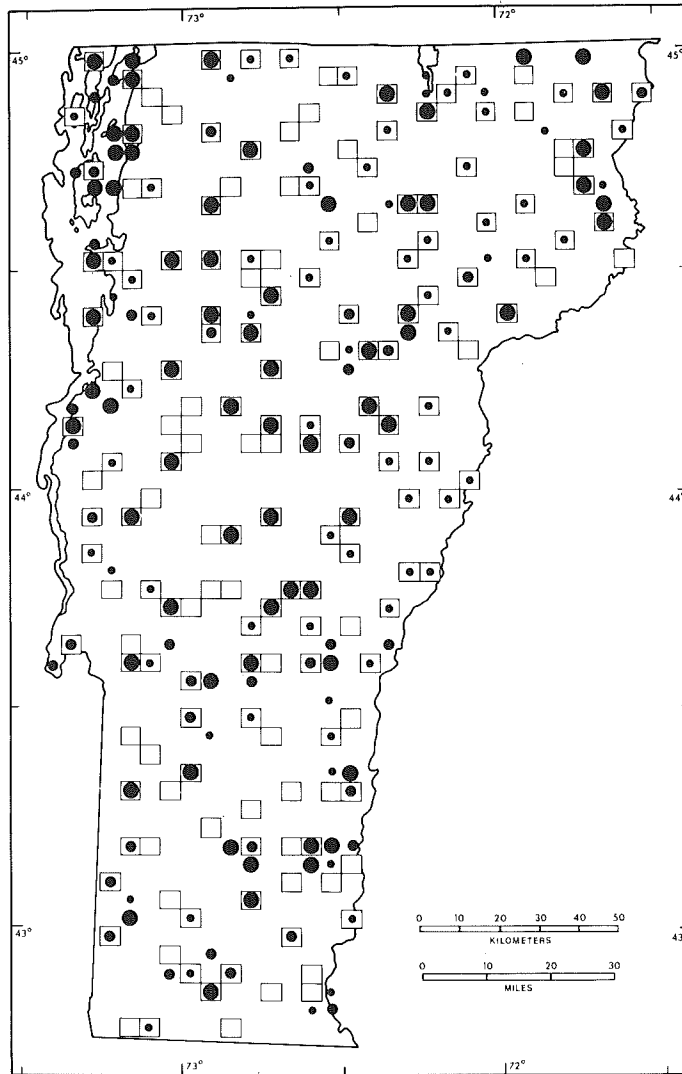
Spotted Sandpipers are migratory, with the bulk of the population wintering in Central America and northern South America (Cramp and Simmons 1983). Adult females return ahead of males in late April and early May; males arrive over a period of a month (Oring and Lank 1982). Dates for 42 nests in Vermont range from May 20 to July 23. The nest is a sparsely lined scrape placed under sheltering vegetation or objects. Eggs in 37 Vermont clutches numbered from 3 to 5, with an average of 3.9. Oring et al. (1983) reported an average clutch size of 3.6 eggs for 317 nests. The eggs are buff with dark brown and black blotches and spots. The incubation period normally lasts from 20 to 22 days; the young are precocial and leave the nest after the last chick hatched has dried (Miller and Miller 1948). Ten dates for downy young in Vermont range from June 18 to August 1. The young are



able to fly at 13 to 16 days (Stout 1967). Recently fledged young have been reported in Vermont from June 30 to July 16 (seven dates). The autumn migration commences in July and peaks in August, though individual stragglers have been observed as late as October in most years.

The Spotted Sandpiper's breeding system is unusual. Females take the initiative in courtship and leave the majority of incubation to the male. Males are also largely responsible for attendance to the young. In areas where there is a surplus of males in the population, females are usually polyandrous, mating sequentially with up to four males (Hays 1972; Oring and Knudson 1972). Oring et al. (1983) indicated that fluctuating environmental factors such as predation and flooding have led to a need for a high incidence of replacement clutches. A greater male involvement in nesting is a successful reproductive strategy because of the energy needed by females to produce eggs; under favorable circumstances, this in turn leads to multiple nestings with surplus males.

The Spotted Sandpiper is common in suitable habitats in Vermont. Although widespread, the species exhibits a patchy distribution because of the nature of its habitat requirements. The Spotted Sandpiper is best represented in the North Central and East Central regions, where many natural ponds and lakes are present, as well as in portions



No. of priority blocks in which recorded

TOTAL 122 (66%)

Possible breeding: 54 (44% of total)

Probable breeding: 20 (17% of total)

Confirmed breeding: 48 (39% of total)

Physiographic regions in which recorded

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	25	81	20
Green Mountains	30	55	25
North Central	18	95	15
Northeast Highlands	10	62	8
East Central	17	89	14
Taconic Mountains	10	62	8
Eastern Foothills	12	50	10

of five major river drainage systems. The species is also common in the Champlain Lowlands. It is least well represented in the Green Mountains and Eastern Foothills, where the distribution is limited to major streams and the few suitable permanent ponds.

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