

A wooded area overgrown with bushes and vines, including Japanese Honey-suckle, was directly behind the feeding area and the towhee spent most of its time there, appearing at the feeders periodically. For a few days in January, it was also reported at the feeder of James Clinton, about three-fourths of a mile to the east. On one occasion, it was heard to give the soft "mew" call note typical of the species, and on January 16 it was lured from cover, obviously excited, by a tape-recording of the species' song. However, it failed to respond to repeated playbacks a short time later. Recognizable photographs were obtained by at least two photographers but none was adequate for publication. One photo has been deposited in the American Museum of Natural History to verify the record.

Bull (1974) listed three previous records from mainland New York State and earlier (1964) reported two occurrences in northern New Jersey. Three of the previous birds were first seen in December or January, one in October and one in May.

This bird survived one of the coldest Januaries in many years with the ground nearly continuously covered with snow and ice. After warmer weather returned and the snow cover disappeared in mid-February, it visited the feeder less frequently but was seen sporadically through April 22, 1977. During its stay, it was seen at least 56 times on 51 days by the Adamos and other observers.

REFERENCES

- Bull, J. 1964. *Birds of the New York Area*. New York, Harper and Row, 540pp.
Bull, J. 1974. *Birds of New York State*. Garden City, New York, Doubleday, 655pp.
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Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Oswego County in May: Because spring shorebirds are often difficult to observe in the Oneida Lake basin region, and encouraged by the low level of Lake Ontario, on 28 May 1977 I led my Syracuse University Ornithology Class to the inlet of Sandy Pond, Oswego Co., where we were rewarded by one of the finest collections of spring shorebirds I have seen in upstate New York. While attempting to center a small group of Black-bellied Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*) in my spotting scope, I noticed what seemed to be an over-sized pipit staggering about in a wrack line of dead alewives (*Pomolobus*). A second glance immediately suggested Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*), an identification confirmed by detailed and repeated observations, at times within 15 m through a 30x telescope, during the next two hours under good lighting conditions.

The bird was between the accompanying White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*) and Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) in size, but had a more erect stance than either. The characteristically small-headed, large-bodied appearance of the

species was obvious. The bill was short, straight, slender and black; its legs were golden yellow; and its dark eye was accentuated by a paler eye-ring. The upperparts were dark golden buff, the back conspicuously scaled, and the feather centers, particularly on the crown and neck, were vaguely streaked with blackish; its closed remiges were darker than the rest of the upperparts. The face and underparts were unmarked and of a lighter, brighter, golden buff, shading gradually to an off white on the crissum. In flight the bird was easily picked out by its color and lack of pattern, excepting the white underwing, neatly bordered with darker buff or brownish. It was silent and spent most of its time feeding actively by moving erratically and pecking at the ground in the wrack lines of dead alewives away from the water's edge but in loose association with a small group of White-rumped and Semipalmated Sandpipers.

I knew that this species was unusual locally in the spring, but was surprised to find no previous spring records listed for New York State. Kathi Carlson, Anne Farnsworth, Richard Grabman, Kevin Judge, and George Painter, although new to birding, were able to compare the bird with Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Red Knot, Semipalmated and White-rumped Sandpiper, Dunlin and Sanderling. F. G. Scheider observed this bird at the same location on 30 May. The lengthy, detailed observations, in direct comparison with other shorebirds, noting in particular the characteristic flight pattern, eliminate the possibility of all other species. Its presence was doubtlessly associated with the concurrent passage of a cold front, conditions which regularly bring down migrating shorebirds at Sandy Pond.

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Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nesting attempt in Clinton County: On 1 May 1977, Harold Klein, Ray Payson, Steve Sanford, and I found two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers (*Polioptila caerulea*) at the Ausable River delta area in southeastern Clinton County. Due to the light and dark coloration differences of the two birds, we felt this was a mated pair. On 7 May, I returned to the area and discovered the two birds actively building a nest in the vertical fork of a small tree. The nest was approximately eight meters above the flooded ground. On one occasion the male fed the female a soft caterpillar as she worked on the nest. Subsequent visits to the completed nest, by many observers, have produced no further sightings. The tree has no foliage and is apparently dead, which may have been the reason for the abandonment. This nest is located only 7 miles north of the nest found by Peterson on Schuyler Island, Essex County (1976, *Kingbird*, 26(3): 150). This species has been observed only once before in Clinton County, near Chazy by Mitchell (Bull, 1976, *Supplement to Birds of New York State*, p. 33).

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