



## TRYING TO FIND A WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER

### A SAD TALE FROM CRESSWELL

Birding on the 11th September this year wasn't easy. Hell, standing up wasn't easy as the edge of Hurricane Katia roared across Northern Britain but the weather system did smell of Nearctic vagrants. There was a small group of waders at the north end of Cresswell Pond; a Curlew Sandpiper, several Dunlin and a smaller greyer bird. Could this be the one to make my day – or even my year given the way it had gone so far?

On the plus side, this bird was distinctly smaller, paler and greyer than the Dunlin lacking the chestnut tones. It had a much shorter slightly down-curved bill without the usual kink of a Dunlin and it seemed to have a pectoral band. On the minus side although the wings overlapped the tail it wasn't a huge primary projection and it had some mid-grey spotting on the flanks.

The flock spooked several times and I could only see one white rump belonging to the Curlew Sandpiper but couldn't be sure as the birds skittered about in the strong wind. However, I eventually did get a good look and, yes, it did have a broad dark stripe down the centre of the rump.



**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* juv. moulting to winter plumage Cresswell Pond 11/09/2011 © Colin Bradshaw

Ah well, another time another place perhaps - but an exciting 20 minutes and a chance once again to bone up on White-rumped Sandpiper features. So here goes:-

- Small size
- Long wings extending well past the tail
- White rump
- Obvious broad supercilium
- Streaked breast often forming a pectoral band with some extension onto flanks
- Relatively short bill often with a pale base

In juvenile plumage quite a lot of chestnut edges on mantle & scapulars but by the time most arrive here much of this has been replaced by the grey feathers of 1<sup>st</sup> winter

And here are some 'real' White-rumped Sandpipers!



Nova Scotia September 2010

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Conneticut September 2011 juvenile

© Julian Hough



Norfolk, England October 2010 juvenile

© Kit Day

Observers in Briatin should remember that adult White-rumped Sandpipers migrate from the breeding grounds from early August while juveniles tend to leave much later, in mid- to late-September.

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COLIN BRADSHAW (September 2011)