

Sandpipers a crash course

By David Thomas of Birds Canterbury/Westcoast



Pectoral Sandpiper

- Cold tones to feathers
- Strongly streaked breast with white belly
- Clean demarcation between breast and belly
- Bi-coloured bill with yellow base to upper & lower mandible
- White-eye ring indistinct/reduced
- White supercilium indistinct/reduced
- Slightly larger than Sharp-tailed Sandpiper







Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

- Warm tones to feathers esp. Cap
- Indistinct & sparse breast streaking
- Brownish speckles on the breast feathers merge into the pale belly in a diffuse border
- Bi-coloured bill with yellow base much reduced, especially on
- White-eye ring distinct and larger whiter supercillium
- Slightly smaller than Pectoral Sandpiper







Pectoral Sandpiper vs Sharp-tailed Sandpiper



Curlew Sandpiper

- Cold tones to feathers, often very grey and plain looking
- Poorly streaked breast restricted to around the shoulders/neck
- Big white belly
- Long downcurved black bill
- Long black legs
- White supercilium indistinct/reduced
- Larger and longer legged than Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Pectoral Sandpiper
- Brick red breeding plumage





Potential confusion species

Red Knot



- Much larger, short jet-black bill
- Plain grey above, white below
- Obvious chevrons on the flanks and breast

Cox's Sandpiper



- Intermediate between Pectoral and Curlew Sand
- Less distinct streaking on breast, white not clean
- Long downcurved bill with a pale base

