

## Fish eating by Common Sandpiper

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* is a small size wader bird of the family Scolopacidae having a vertical white stripe between wing shoulder and dusky breast-band. A narrow white-wing bar is clearly visible in jerking flight low over the water. It is a common winter visitor to inland water and seashores of southeastern and eastern Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and Indus Valley (Pakistan), all India including Assam Valley, South Assam hills, Lakshadweep, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives (Ali & Ripley 2007; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

I visited the wetland of Arwad (Bhilwara) Rajasthan (29.828N & 74.818E) on 8 April 2017. The water from the wetland is used for irrigation chiefly and it is a government authorized fish farming site. The water of the dam had almost dried up besides a few ditches and the catchment area of the dam was almost covered by the zaid crops. Walking along the bankside, a clutch of birds was seen around a ditch having two Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*, two Pond Herons *Ardeola grayii*, three Intermediate Egrets *Mesophoyx intermedia*, two River Terns *Sterna aurantia*, two Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*, and two

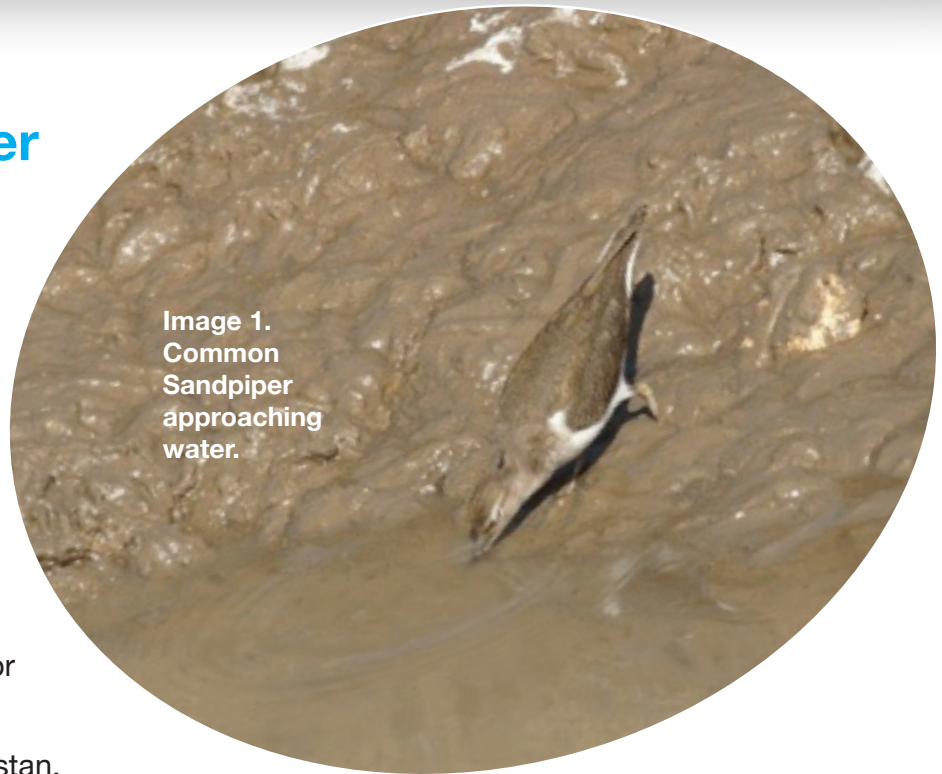


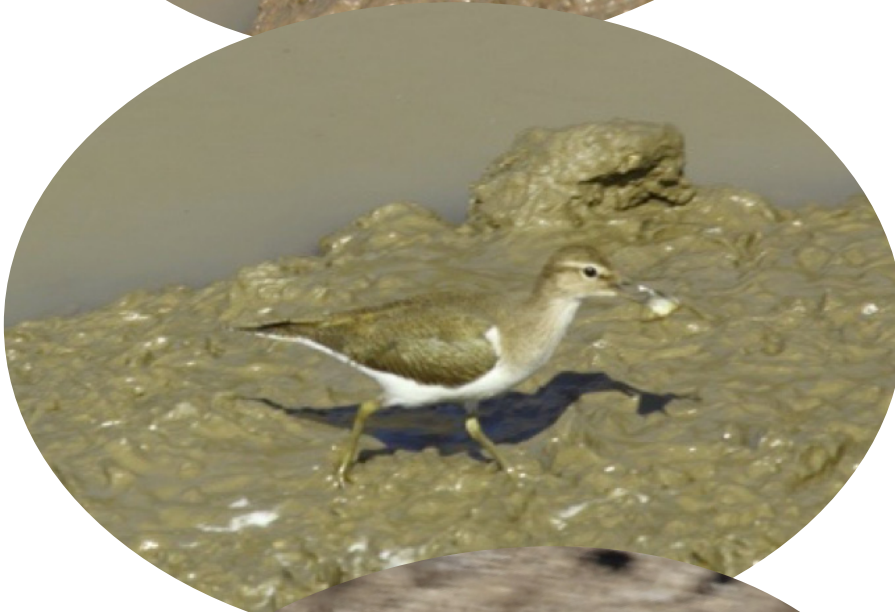
Image 1.  
Common  
Sandpiper  
approaching  
water.

Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos*. There were a lot of small fishes in the ditch and the birds were actively engaged in catching them. The activities of the birds were clicked with Canon 1200 DSLR camera keeping a safe distance from behind a Desi Babool or Gum Arabic Tree *Vachellia nilotica*. Among these birds, two Common Sandpipers walked along the sloped edge of the ditch and suddenly one of them caught a fish in its beak (Image 1&2), ran three-four meters away (Image 3 & 4) and put it on the ground, possibly to save its food from other birds.

It was a fish fingerling approximately 6cm long. In no time, the bird again picked the fish and gulped it from the head side and again approached the water. The other Common Sandpiper also picked a fish after an unsuccessful attempt, took away, and swallowed it. The diet of Common Sandpiper



Image 2. Common Sandpiper with fish fingerling.



Images 3&4. Common Sandpiper running away from water with catch.

comprises invertebrates including earthworms (Lumbricidae), insects like mayfly (Ephemeroptera), caddisfly (Trichoptera) & stonefly (Plecoptera) larvae, beetles (Elateridae), crustaceans, and tiny mollusks, but fish is not recorded as a food of Common Sandpiper in studies (Yalden 1986; Natiamao-Baidu et al. 1998; Robinson 2005; Ali & Ripley 2007; Vyas 2013; Kazmierczak 2014; Grewal et al. 2017).

The presence of plenty of gastropod shells in the drier part of the dam indicated that there was enough food available before for the Common Sandpipers. But since the water had almost dried up, the scarcity of food had diverted the bird towards an easily available food option. Therefore, fish may be added as an occasional food choice of the Common Sandpiper.

## References

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