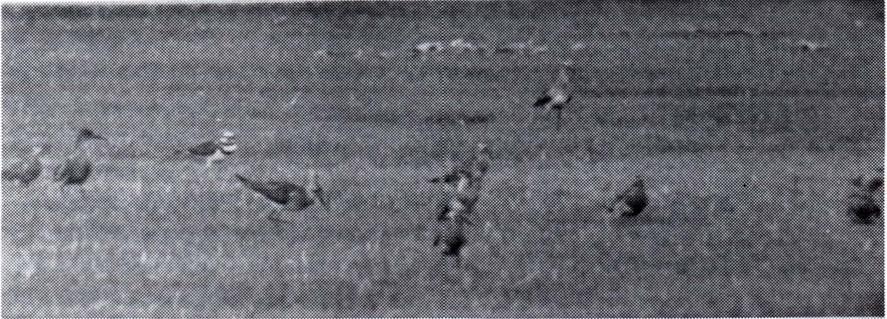


**THIRD RECORD FOR THE RUFF  
(*PHILOMACHUS PUGNAX*) IN ALABAMA**

Ann Miller



**Figure 1. Ruff (second from left) feeding among Pectoral Sandpipers, yellowlegs and a Killdeer. (Photo by Ann Miller)**



**Figure 2. Ruff in flight (center right) with Pectoral Sandpipers and Starlings. (Photo by Ann Miller)**

On 2 September 1989, during a routine birding trip to a sod farm about 50 km (30 mi) southeast of Birmingham, Alice Stevens, my companion, and I noticed a different looking bird among a small flock of Pectoral Sandpipers (*Calidris melanotos*) that were feeding on the open,

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

lawn-like turf (Fig. 1 and 2). Since our highest expectations were to find Buff-breasted Sandpipers (*Tryngites subruficollis*), Lesser Golden-Plovers (*Pluvialis dominica*), or other short-grass shorebirds, one can imagine our elation when we identified the bird as an immature male Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*).

We had excellent lighting for viewing both the Ruff and Pectoral Sandpipers which were about 45 m (135 ft) away. It was immediately obvious that the Ruff was larger by several centimeters than the Pectoral Sandpipers and heavier in appearance. The upper parts were dark brown with buffy, chestnut-fringed feathers, the breast and upper belly strongly washed with buff, and the sides of the breast faintly streaked. The bill was dark except for a pale area at the base, and relatively short, with a slight droop at the tip. The legs and feet were gray, and in flight the oval white patches on the rump and the white underwings were very noticeable. During the breeding season, adult males have spectacular rufous, black, or white ruffs about the neck, and thus the name Ruff. Females lack this conspicuous plumage and are smaller. Leg color varies and may be red, orange, or yellow.

Even though this Old World species is a regular migrant throughout North America and has nested in Alaska, it is considered rare and irregular in Alabama, this sighting being only the third record for the state. Previous sightings were in the fall of 1971 and spring of 1976, both at Eufaula Refuge. The 1989 record is by far the most thoroughly documented due to the fact that approximately 50 people observed it, some from as far away as Tennessee. It is probably safe to say that we can expect more records of this distinctive bird as the number of observers continues to increase. *Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Dr., Birmingham, AL 35209.*

