

A Sanderling *Calidris alba* from Hokersar Wetland, Jammu & Kashmir, India

The Sanderling *Calidris alba* is a small, plump sandpiper, most commonly associated with sandy coastal beaches (Sangha 2021) with gilt artwork on front board, and gilt lettering on spine; with illus., dust cover. It is a long-distance migrant, breeding primarily in the high arctic tundra in Alaska, Canadian Arctic Archipelago, Greenland, Norway, the Taymyr Peninsula, Severnaya Zemlya, mouth of the Lena River, and the New Siberian Islands, Russia (Macwhirter et al. 2020). In winter, it is found throughout almost all temperate and tropical marine beaches (Myers et al. 1985; Macwhirter et al. 2020). In India, it winters on both western and eastern coast as well as Lakshadweep, South Andaman, and Car Nicobar Islands and rarely found inland during passage migration (Praveen 2025).

On the evening of 22 May 2025, we were birdwatching at Hokersar Wetland Conservation Reserve (34.103°N, 74.717°E; c. 1,580 m asl), located in the Kashmir Valley, Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, India. At about 1840 h, we noticed a bird actively foraging along the exposed muddy shoreline of the wetland along with a Little Stint *Calidris minuta*. Initially, we thought it to be a female of a Little Stint. However, after a close observation, HS pointed towards its distinctive size and plumage identifying it as a Sanderling [289]. The bird appeared noticeably bulkier and paler than the accompanying Little Stint [290]. We managed to take several photographs and subsequently shared them on the 'Birds of Kashmir' WhatsApp group, where it was confirmed as Sanderling by Irfan Jeelani and Ashwin Viswanathan. It stayed at Hokersar Wetland for two days and was not seen thereafter.



289. Sanderling photographed from Hokersar Wetland, Jammu & Kashmir on 22 May 2025.

Both Photos: Reyansofi



290. Size comparison between Sanderling and Little Stint photographed from Hokersar Wetland, Jammu & Kashmir on 22 May 2025.

The present record constitutes the first photographic record of Sanderling from Jammu & Kashmir. The species is listed in the checklist of birds of Jammu & Kashmir by Kichloo et al. (2024) based on a historical specimen of a female bird collected by W. L. Abbott from Wular Lake on 23 October 1891, which is now housed in the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, USA (GBIF 2025). Considering the rarity of Sanderling being recorded inland in the Indian subcontinent (Praveen 2025), its appearance at Hokersar Wetland, a freshwater habitat in Jammu & Kashmir, is a noteworthy record and expands our understanding of the species' migratory patterns and habitat use in northern India.

We thank Muzaffar A Kichloo for helping with the manuscript.

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We would like to take this opportunity to thank the editorial board of Indian BIRDS, and all our external referees who helped us with manuscripts that were published in volume 21: Abhinand Chandran, Anand Krishnan, Andrea Corso, Anil Kumar, Anindya Naskar, Ankit Vikrant, Anurag Mishra, Ashwin Warudkar, Charles Anderson, Chitra Som R. S., Chris Bowden, Dave Bakewell, David Raju, Devika P. Uday, Dipu Karuthedathu, Gnanaskandan K., Gopalakrishna Ramachandran, Gurpartap Singh, Hein van Grouw, James Eaton, K. A. Subramanian, Kulbhushansingh Suryawanshi, Leons Mathew Abraham, Mehnaz Nazir, Moditha Kodikara Arachchi, Nirav Bhatt, Padma Gyalpo, Pamela Rasmussen, Peeyush Sekhsaria, Peter Allen, Peter Clement, Pooja Pawar, Poornima Viswanathan, Pranav Gokhale, Priti Bangal, Priyam Chattopadhyay, Pronoy Baidya, Rahul Khot, Rajah Jayapal, Rajat Bhargava, Raju Kasambe, Ramit Singal, Rathish R. L., Robert Prŷs-Jones, S. Prasanth Narayanan, Sahil Zutshi, Samir Kumar Sinha, Sandeep Biswas, Sandip Das, Sanjay Sondhi, Santanu Manna, Shariq Safi, Sidharth Srinivasan, Suhridam Roy, Swetashree Purohit, T. Badrinarayanan, Tshering Tobgay, V. Santharam, Vinoba Anand, Vivek Ramachandran, and Yong Ding Li.

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