



WADER
GURU



'Mystery Wader'

Kirsty - Leicestershire UK

'Mystery Wader' Kirsty - Leicestershire, UK.

Question: I'm not very good at wader identification, but I've seen a mystery wader at my local reservoir (Thornton Reservoir) that I just can't seem to spot with my very poor scope, but I hear it calling really loudly! I mistook it for a Kingfisher but when it flew out of the reeds it was definitely wader shaped! It flew just above the water, it had white underneath and greyish on the top, it flew with a stiff but manic flapping in action. It surprised me to see it as Thornton reservoir has no mud flats or anything (I call it a blue desert) so was totally shocked to see it there. Even with the water low, there are some mud flats but its easily accessible to dogs, unfortunately.

The Guru's answer: You mentioned the Kingfisher-like call and the call of the Common Sandpiper does sound a bit like that.

[Common Kingfisher](#)

[Common Sandpiper](#)

Another clue to this bird's ID is the fluttering flight you described so well. When disturbed Common Sandpipers will fly away low over the water with a stiff, bat-like wing action.

Common Sandpipers don't necessarily need mud. They can often be seen tottering around the edges of reservoirs on concrete dams, or on wooden jetties as well as grassy banks. They tend not to wade but feed along the very edge of the water.



Stiff-winged low flight © Cyril Vathelet



On concrete substrate © Elis Simpson

Access to the water's edge and muddy areas can create an unexpected habitat for waders when water is low, but sadly people and dogs also feel the need to explore it and birds taking advantage very often get disturbed .

Your mystery wader is a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*.

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Common Sandpiper © Elis Simpson