

# SHOREBIRD ID TIPS



- Pick **ONE** bird from the crowd to ID.
- Narrow it down to a category from the silhouettes at right.
- Find **THREE** clues to its ID.  
Focus first on **SHAPE, SIZE,** and **BEHAVIOR,** THEN on color pattern, markings, habitat, range, and calls.

## SHAPE

- **Bill:** Length, curvature, tip pointing (up/down), shape (pointy/blunt)
- **Leg length**
- **Neck length**
- **Body shape:** Compact vs. elongated

## SIZE

- Size is important only in comparison with another bird.
- Killdeer is right in the middle on the size scale.
- "Small shorebirds" are smaller than a Killdeer.
- "Large shorebirds" are larger than a Killdeer.

## FORAGING BEHAVIORS

- **Peeps:** Head down, walk, pick, probe
- **Plover:** Run and stop, occasional "hiccup" (similar to Solitary Sandpiper's "bob up")
- **Lesser Yellowlegs:** Stroll and pick
- **Stilt Sandpiper:** "Oil derrick" up-and-down probe (like dowitcher but rear end tips up)
- **Dowitcher:** "Sewing machine" bill but body stays horizontal
- **White-rumped Sandpiper:** "Tip up"—tail goes up
- **Red-necked Phalarope:** Swim and run (moves all the time), also swim and spin



Peeps



Plovers



Curlews & Godwits



"Tringines"  
(genus Tringa, Stilt & Solitary Sandpipers, Willet)



Snipes



Phalaropes



Others  
(Upland and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Stilts, Avocets, Turnstones, Oystercatchers)

*Purchase our video-based, online Shorebird ID course hosted by Dr. Kevin McGowan. Learn all 47 shorebird species from across the U.S. and Canada:*

# SHOREBIRD QUICK GUIDE

**Least Sandpiper** 6"

Semipalmated Sandpiper  
Western Sandpiper  
Snowy Plover



Baird's Sandpiper  
White-rumped Sandpiper  
Piping Plover

**Semipalmated Plover** 7.5"

Red-necked Phalarope  
Spotted Sandpiper



Wilson's Plover 8"

Sanderling

Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Dunlin

Solitary Sandpiper 8.5"

Purple/Rock Sandpipers

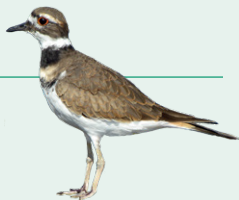
Stilt Sandpiper

Pectoral Sandpiper

**Wilson's Phalarope** 9.5"

Black Turnstone

Ruddy Turnstone



Lesser Yellowlegs

Red Knot

**Killdeer** 10.5"

Surfbird

Golden-Plovers

Dowitchers

Wandering Tattler 11"

Wilson's Snipe

Black-bellied Plover



**Greater Yellowlegs** 14"

Black-necked Stilt

Willet 15"

Hudsonian Godwit

Whimbrel

Marbled Godwit

American Avocet

**American Oystercatcher** 18"

Black Oystercatcher

Long-billed Curlew 23"



The **Cornell** Lab of Ornithology

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