WESTERN SANDPIPER
A YEAR IN PLUMAGE

A Year of Western Sandpiper Plumage

Juvenile

1 — Fresh Juvenile — August

2 — September — Juvenile Transition to Basic

No Photo yet

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3 — October — Juvenile Transition to Basic

No Photo yet

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Adult

4 — December — Basic

5 — Late March — Transition to Alternate

6 — April — Alternate

7 — July — Worn Alternate

8 — July — Very Worn Alternate

9 — August — Transition to Basic

All Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

1 August

Fresh Juvenile

Uniformly fresh plumage with crisply pale edges, relatively small scapulars and coverts – a "scaley" look.

2 September

Juvenile Transition to Basic

A few replaced scapulars look larger & plain gray

3 October

Juvenile Transition to Basic

Juveniles only molt most head & body feathers & some wing coverts during their first Pre-basic molt.

A few replaced scapulars look larger & plain gray.

Juvenile

4 December

Basic

For Adults all feathers will be molted in the Pre-basic molt. Non-breeding plumage shows no contrast between coverts and scapulars

5 Late March

Transition to Alternate

Birds in transition may show any combination of old, worn feathers from one plumage & new, fresh feathers from the next.

6 April

Alternate

Only body & head feathers will be molted in the Pre-alternate molt, (primaries, secondaries, tertials, & wing coverts are not molted, generally).

Some have very bright scapulars & head, & have chevrons on chest & flanks

Adult

Comments on
A Year of Western Sandpiper Plumage

7 June

Worn Alternate

By summer feather wear is apparent

8 July

Very Worn Alternate

Colors fade & white edges of feathers abrade, making the bird much darker

9 August

Transition to Basic

By fall-migration gray scapular & covert feathers of basic plumage begin to emerge