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SCHEDULE

TRAVIS AUDUBON SHOREBIRD CLASS SCHEDULE 2026

| CLASS | DATE | TIME | LOCATION |
|----------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| Class 1/Field Trip 1 | Sunday, March 29, 2026 | 7:00-9:30 am | Hornsby Bend Parking Lot |
| | | 10:00-12:30 pm | Hornsby Bend building |
| Class 2/Field Trip 2 | Sunday, April 5, 2026 | 7:00-9:30 am | Hornsby Ponds |
| | | 10:00-12:30 pm | Hornsby Bend building |
| Class 3/Field Trip 3 | Sunday, September 13, 2026 | 7:00-9:30 am | Hornsby Ponds |
| | | 10:00-12:30 pm | Hornsby Bend building |
| Class 4/Field Trip 4 | Sunday, October 18, 2026 | 7:00-9:30 am | Hornsby Ponds |
| | | 10:00-12:30 pm | Hornsby Bend building |
| Coast Field Trip | Friday, April 10, 2026, -- Sunday, April 12, 2026 | 5 pm Friday--Noon Sunday | Field Trip to Texas Coast (If conditions allow) |

TRAVIS AUDUBON SHOREBIRD CLASS 2026

“Perennially popular,



Yet strangely ineffective 😊”

TRAVIS AUDUBON SOCIETY 2026 SHOREBIRD CLASS



▶ **Jeff Patterson**

- ▶ Raised in Garland (no coast)
- ▶ Many days in Corpus
- ▶ Started birding age 10
- ▶ Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (retired)
- ▶ Former TAS field trip chair
- ▶ Former TAS Board

▶ **Eric Stager**

- ▶ Grew up in Houston (coast!!)
- ▶ Started birding age 13
- ▶ Leads field trips for TAS
- ▶ Coordinates Hornsby bird walks
- ▶ City of Austin Environmental Department (pre-retired)
- ▶ Former TAS President

JEFF'S WEBSITE

JEPBIRDING.COM

[Home](#)

[Classes Taught for Travis Audubon](#)

[Shorebirds Class](#)
(password: 90%Least)

Logistics

[2026 First Email to Class](#)

[2026 Shorebird Class Schedule](#)

[Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory](#)

[Field Trip to Corpus Christi Logistics](#)

[2026 Shorebirds Field Trip To Corpus Synopsis](#)

Class Presentations

[Shorebird Class 1 Presentations, Field Trip 1 Scorecard](#)

[Shorebird Class 2 Presentations, Field Trip 2 Scorecard](#)

[Shorebird Class 3 Presentations, Field Trip 3 Scorecard](#)

[Shorebird Class 4 Presentations, Field Trip 4 Scorecard](#)

Self Study

[Shorebird Self Study](#)

JEFF'S WEBSITE

SHOREBIRDS SELF STUDY

Shorebird Photographs & Commentaries

[Shorebird Photographs & Commentaries](#)

Shorebird Handouts

Birding for Shorebirds

- [Seven Habits of Highly Effective Birders](#)
- [Seven Habits for Mixed Flocks of Shorebirds](#)
- [Shorebird Topography](#)

Shorebirds of Texas

- [Texas State List of Shorebirds](#)
- [Shorebird ID Groups](#)
- [Shorebird Bill & Head](#)
- [Shorebirds by Height](#)
- [Shorebirds by Weight](#)
- [Shorebirds Top 3 ID Points](#)

Peep Handouts

- [Peep Diagnosis Flowchart](#)
- [Peep Summary Table](#)
- [A Year of Western Sandpiper Plumage](#)

Plover Handouts

- [Large Plover Diagnosis Flowchart](#)
- [Ringed Plover Diagnosis Flowchart](#)
- [Small Ringed Plovers ID Table](#)

Dowitcher Handouts

- [Dowitcher ID Table](#)
- [Dowitcher ID Table with Field Mark Review](#)

Shorebird References

Peep References

- [Identification of North American Peeps: A Different Approach to an Old Problem; Cox, Cameron; Birding Magazine, July/August 2008.](#)
- [The White Rump Revisited; Leukering, Tony; Birding Magazine, June 2019.](#)
- [Field Identification of Smaller Sandpipers within the Genus Calidris; Veit, Richard R. & Jonsson, Lars.](#)

Plover References

Dowitcher References

- [Advances in the Field Identification of North American Dowitchers; Lee, Cin-Ty, Birch, Andrew.](#)
- [The Identification and Migration of Breeding Plumaged Dowitchers in Southern Ontario; Jaramillo, Alvaro, Pitaway, Ron, & Burke, Peter.](#)
- [Variation in Winter Dowitchers; Floyd, Hannah, Pyle, Peter; Birding Magazine, January 2021.](#)
- [A Tale of Two Strategies: Fall Molts of Adult Dowitchers; Putnam, Caleb; Birding Magazine, July/August 2005.](#)

Willet References

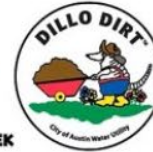
- [Subspecific Identification of the Willet; O'Brien, Michael; Birding Magazine, May/June 2006.](#)

Shorebird Videos

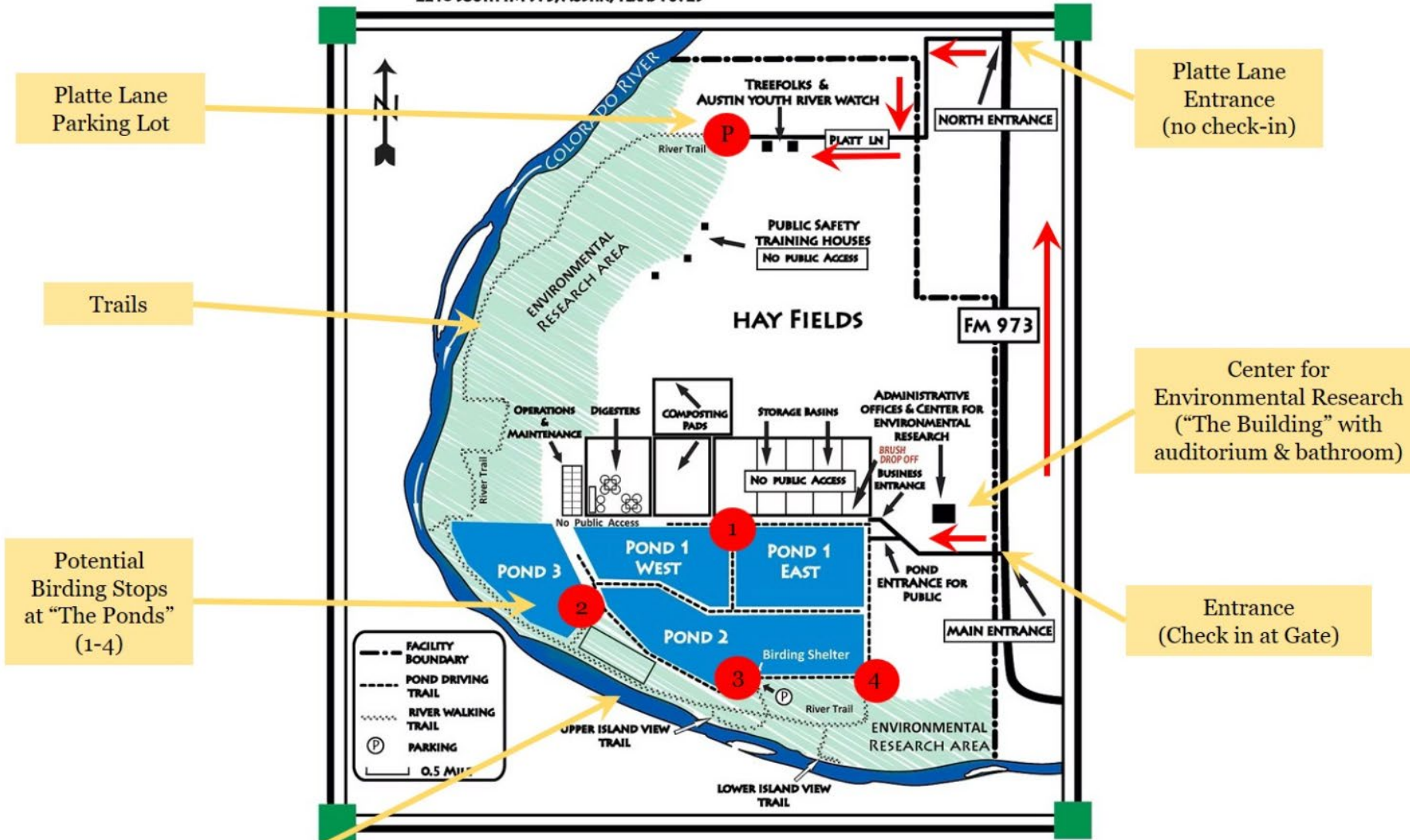
[PDF of Youtube Links](#)

Shorebird Videos

HORNSBY BEND BIOSOLIDS MANAGEMENT PLANT



FACILITY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC 6am - 9pm EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK
2210 SOUTH FM 973, AUSTIN, TEXAS 78725



Platte Lane Parking Lot

Trails

Potential Birding Stops at "The Ponds" (1-4)

Trails

Platte Lane Entrance (no check-in)

Center for Environmental Research ("The Building" with auditorium & bathroom)

Entrance (Check in at Gate)

For more information contact Kevin.Anderson@austintexas.gov

Dillo Dirt and Hornsby Bend Plant - www.austintexas.gov/water
 Center for Environmental Research [CER] - www.austintexas.gov/cer
 CER Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory program - www.hornsbybend.org

PUBLIC RESTROOMS IN THE CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

CER on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/austinwatercer>
 CER on Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/austinwatercer/>
 Hornsby Bend on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/hornsbybend>

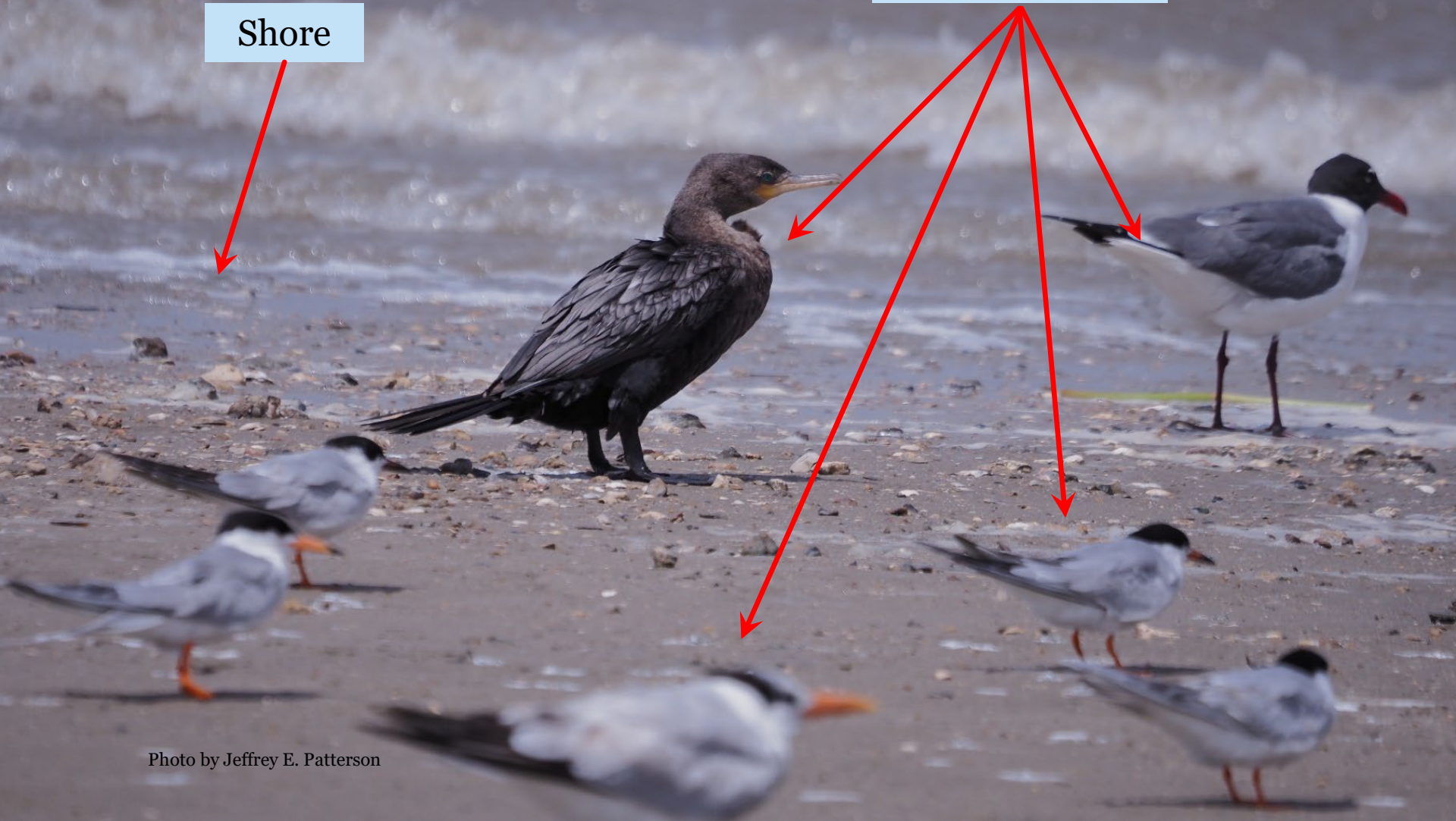
A FEW SHOREBIRD FACTS

- ▶ Vary widely in size, bill shape, leg length, & feeding behavior (all are ID clues !!!)
- ▶ **Order** – Charadriiformes “Kara-drya-for-mees”
 - ▶ "to cut into furrows"
 - ▶ May refer to the generally striped appearance of many shorebirds
 - ▶ Also includes gulls, terns, skuas, jaegers, skimmers and alcids
- ▶ **SPECIES**
 - ▶ ~217 Species world wide
 - ▶ ~ 50 Species in North America
 - ▶ ~40 Species each year in Texas (39 regular, 6 “regular rarities” possible)

WHAT IS A SHOREBIRD?

Shore

Not shorebirds

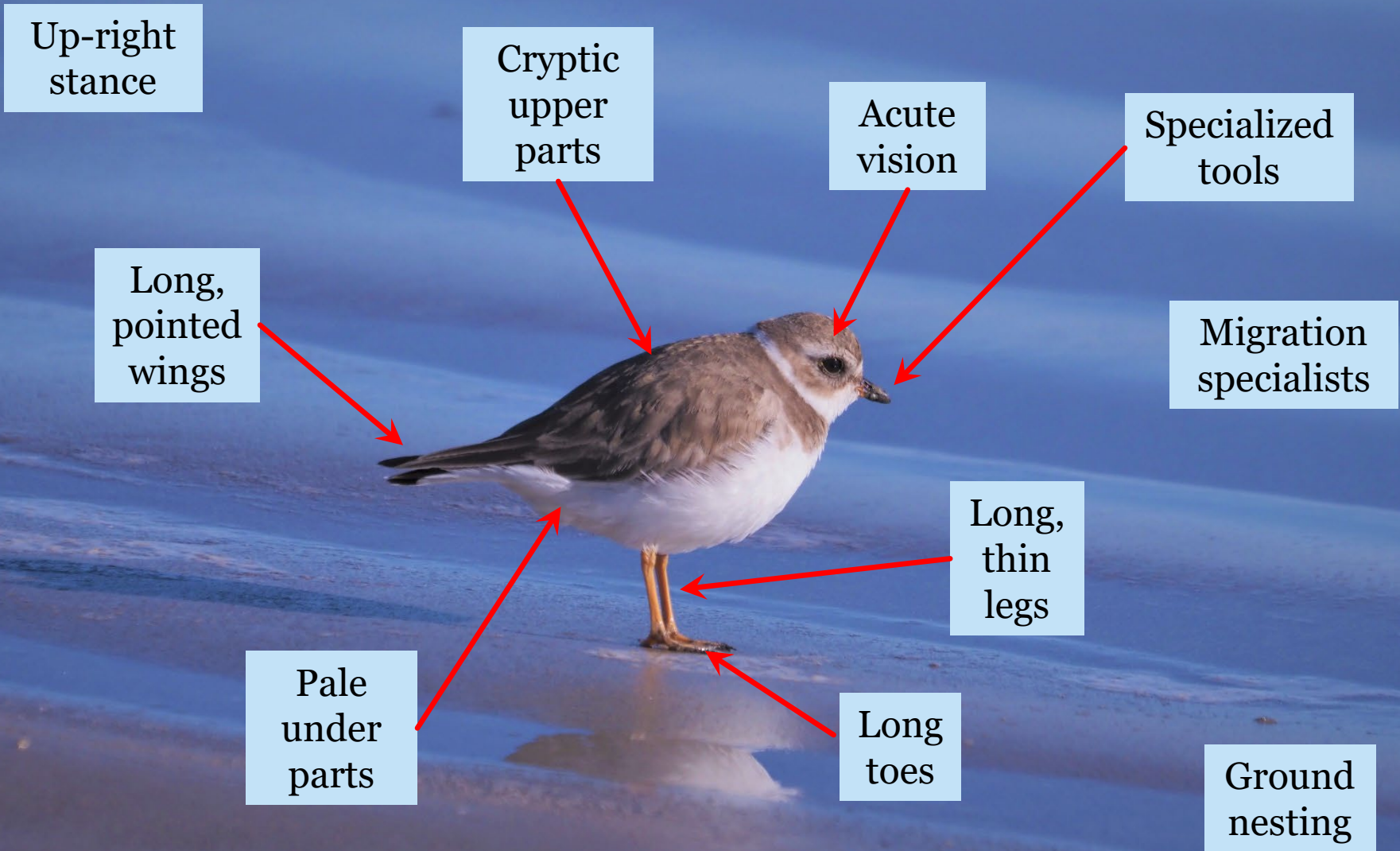


WHAT IS A SHOREBIRD?



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

WHAT IS A SHOREBIRD?



TAXONOMY

SYSTEMATIZED BY CARL LINNAEUS (SWEDISH BOTANIST)

Taxonomy – the science of naming, describing and classifying organisms

- ▶ Domain:
- ▶ Kingdom:
- ▶ Phylum:
- ▶ Class:
- ▶ Orders:
- ▶ Family:
- ▶ Genus:
- ▶ Species:

Do Kings Play Chess
On Fine Green Silk

TAXONOMY OF BIRDS

Domain: *Eukarya*

Kingdom: *Anamalia*

Phylum: *Chordata*

Class: *Aves*

Order: 41 bird orders

Families:
248 world wide
81 in North America

Genus

Species:
~10,000 bird speices
~217 shorebirds

“Birds”



WHAT IS A SHOREBIRD?

Domain: *Eukarya*

Kingdom: *Anamalia*

Phylum: *Chordata*

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Charadriiformes*

“Kara-drya-for-mees”

Families:
19 shorebird families world wide
5 shorebird families
in North America

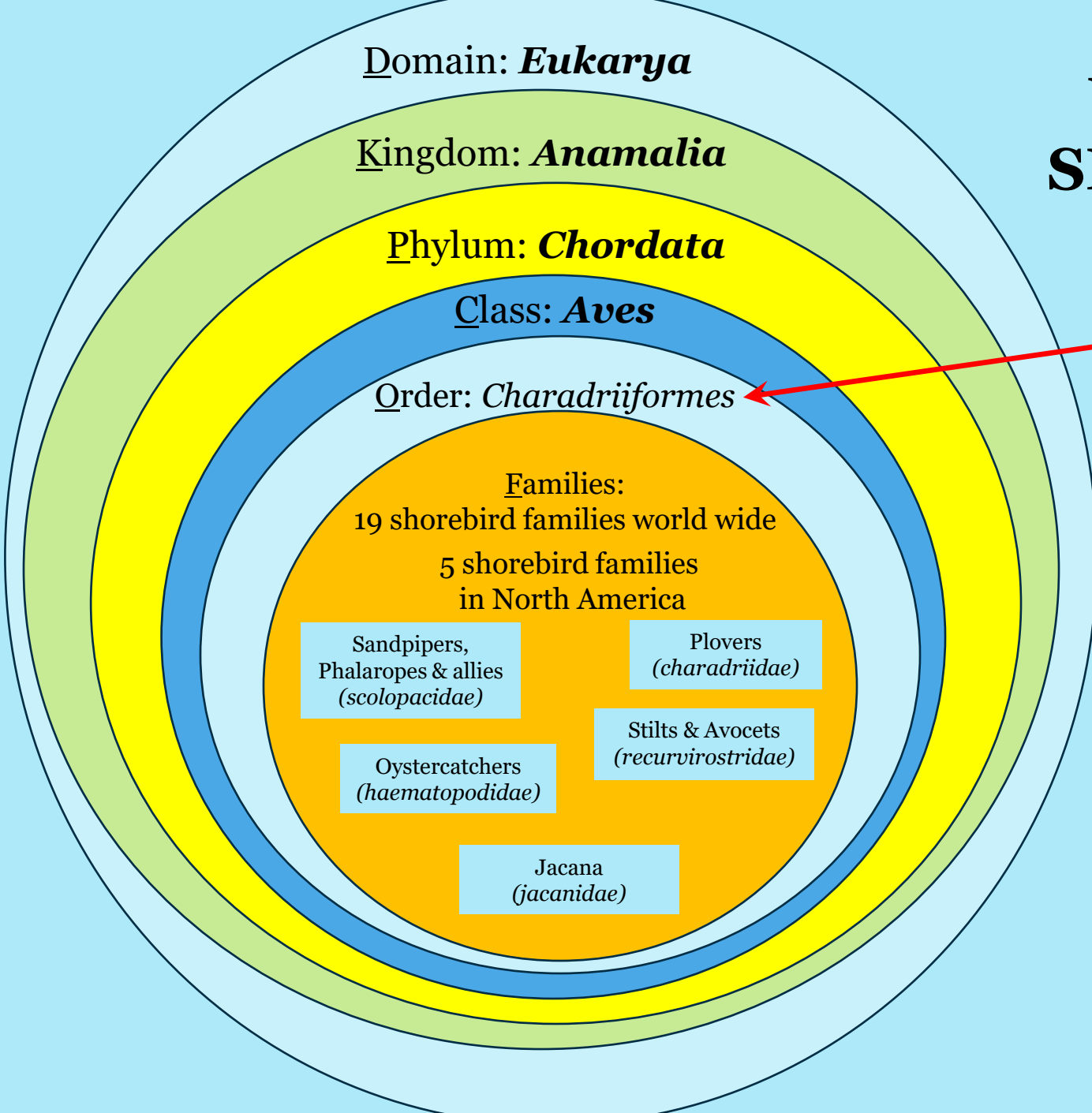
Sandpipers,
Phalaropes & allies
(*scolopacidae*)

Plovers
(*charadriidae*)

Oystercatchers
(*haematopodidae*)

Stilts & Avocets
(*recurvirostridae*)

Jacana
(*jacanidae*)



SO.....WHAT IS A SHOREBIRD ?

The order Charadriiformes contains 3 suborders, 19 families and 390 species.^{[8][9]}

- Suborder Charadrii
 - Family **Burhinidae** – stone-curlews, thick-knees (10 species)
 - Family **Pluvianellidae** – Magellanic plover
 - Family **Chionidae** – sheathbills (2 species)
 - Family **Pluvianidae** – Egyptian plover
 - ★ Family **Charadriidae** – plovers (68 species)
 - ★ Family **Recurvirostridae** – stilts, avocets (10 species)
 - Family **Ibidorhynchidae** – ibisbill
 - ★ Family **Haematopodidae** – oystercatchers (12 species)
- Suborder Scolopaci
 - Family **Rostratulidae** – painted-snipes (3 species)
 - ★ Family **Jacanidae** – jacanas (8 species)
 - Family **Pedionomidae** – plains-wanderer
 - Family **Thinocoridae** – seedsnipes (4 species)
 - ★ Family **Scelopacidae** – sandpipers, snipes (98 species)

Yes

- Suborder Lari
 - Family **Turnicidae** – buttonquails (18 species) **No**
 - Family **Dromadidae** – crab-plover **Maybe**
 - Family **Glareolidae** – coursers, pratincoles (17 species) **Likely**
 - Family **Laridae** – gulls, terns, skimmers (103 species)
 - Family **Stercorariidae** – skuas (7 species)
 - Family **Alcidae** – auks (25 species) **No**

All Shorebirds are in the Order Charadriiformes

Shorebird –
Defined by taxonomy

Shorebird –
a species in 1 of these ~13 families
in the
order Charadriiformes

But

Not all
Charadriiformes
are Shorebirds

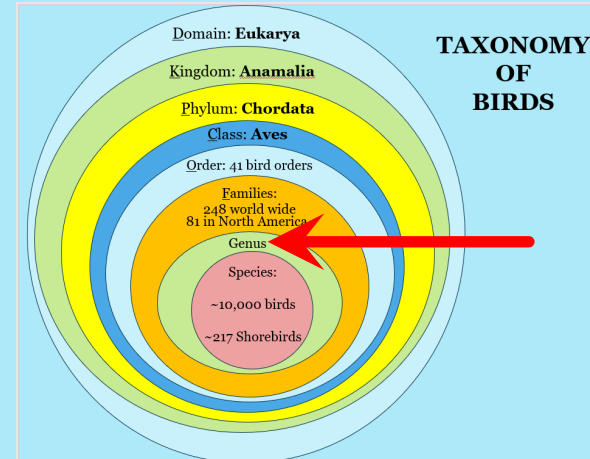
SHOREBIRD GENERA

5 Families



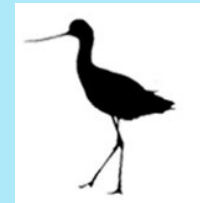
Useful
Genera
to Know

| ORDER | FAMILY | GENUS | COMMON NAMES |
|-------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| Charadriiformes | Recurvirostridae | <i>Himantopus</i> | Stilts |
| | | <i>Recurvirostra</i> | Avocets |
| | Haematopodidae | <i>Haematopus</i> | Oystercatchers |
| | | <i>Pluvialis</i> | Golden Plovers |
| | Charadriidae | <i>Charadrius</i> | Ringed Plovers |
| | | Subfamily Vanellinae | Lapwings |
| | Jacanidae | <i>Jacana</i> | Jacana |
| | Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies) | <i>Bartramia</i> | Upland Sandpiper |
| | | <i>Numenius</i> | Curlews |
| | | <i>Limosa</i> | Godwits |
| | | <i>Arenaria</i> | Turnstones |
| | | <i>Calidris</i> | Sandpipers |
| | | <i>Limnodromus</i> | Dowitchers |
| | | <i>Scolopax</i> | Woodcock |
| | | <i>Gallinago</i> | Snipe |
| | | <i>Actitis</i> | Spotted Sandpiper |
| | | <i>Tringa</i> | Yellowlegs Willet, Solitary Sandpiper |
| | | <i>Phalaropus</i> | Phalaropes |
| | | <i>Stercorarius</i> | Skuas & Jaegers |
| | | Laridae (Gulls, Terns & Skimmers) | <i>Rissa</i> |
| | <i>Xema</i> | | Sabine's Gull |
| | <i>Chroicocephalus</i> | | Medium to small gulls including Bonaparte's |
| | <i>Hydrocoloeus</i> | | Little Gull |
| | <i>Leucophaeus</i> | | Medium-sized New World gulls, including Laughing & Franklin's |
| | <i>Larus</i> | | Large white-headed gulls |
| | <i>Anous</i> | | Noddies |
| | <i>Onychoprion</i> | | "Brown-backed" terns including Bridled and Sooty |
| | <i>Sternula</i> | | Small white terns including Least |
| | <i>Gelochelidon</i> | | Gull-billed and Australian terns |
| | <i>Hydroprogne</i> | | Caspian Tern |
| <i>Chlidonias</i> | "Marsh terns" including Black | | |
| <i>Sterna</i> | Medium terns including Arctic, Forster's, Common and Roseate | | |
| <i>Thalasseus</i> | Medium to large terns including Royal, Sandwich, and Elegant | | |
| <i>Rynchops</i> | Skimmers | | |



TEXAS SHOREBIRD SPECIES

- ▶ 54 – Texas State List (1 likely extinct)
- ▶ 15 – Texas Review Species (1 likely extinct)
- ▶ ~42 – Species covered in this class (3 rarities)
- ▶ 31 – Family Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and allies)
- ▶ 8 – Family Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)
- ▶ 2 – Family Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)
- ▶ 1 – Family Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)
- ▶ 1 – Family Jacanidae (Jacanas)



TEXAS STATE LIST OF SHOREBIRDS

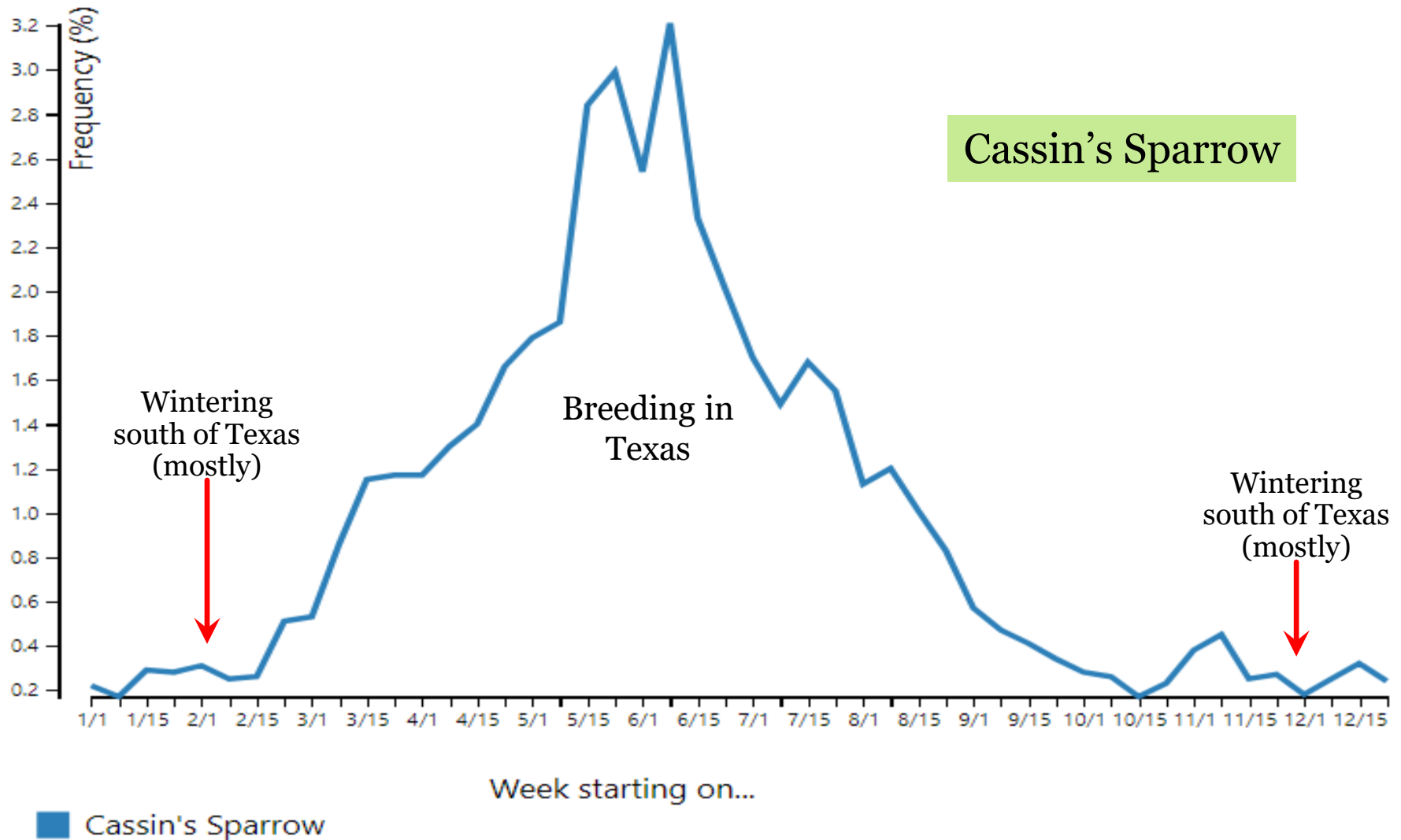
| TAS SHOREBIRD CLASS ID GROUP | COMMON NAME | FAMILY | FAMILY COMMON NAME | GENUS | SPECIES | TBRC ACCEPTED RECORDS | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---|
| 1 Distinct Shorebirds | Ruddy Turnstone | Scolopacidae | Sandpipers and Allies | <i>Arenaria</i> | <i>interpres</i> | | | |
| | Black-necked Stilt | Recurvirostridae | Stilts and Avocets | <i>Himantopus</i> | <i>mexicanus</i> | | | |
| | American Avocet | | | <i>Recurvirostra</i> | <i>americana</i> | | | |
| | American Oystercatcher | Haematopodidae | Oystercatchers | <i>Haematopus</i> | <i>palliatius</i> | | | |
| 2 Big Plovers | Black-bellied Plover | Charadriidae | Plovers and Lapwings | <i>Pluvialis</i> | <i>squatarola</i> | | | |
| | American Golden-Plover | | | <i>Pluvialis</i> | <i>dominica</i> | | | |
| | Mountain Plover | | | <i>Charadrius</i> | <i>montanus</i> | | | |
| 3 Ringed Plovers | Killdeer | Charadriidae | Plovers and Lapwings | <i>Charadrius</i> | <i>vociferus</i> | | | |
| | Semipalmated Plover | | | | <i>semipalmatus</i> | | | |
| | Piping Plover | | | | <i>melodus</i> | | | |
| | Wilson's Plover | | | | <i>wilsonia</i> | | | |
| 4 Calidris Peeps | Snowy Plover | | | | <i>nivosus</i> | | | |
| | Baird's Sandpiper | Scolopacidae | Sandpipers and Allies | <i>Calidris</i> | <i>bairdii</i> | | | |
| | Least Sandpiper | | | | <i>minutilla</i> | | | |
| | White-rumped Sandpiper | | | | <i>fuscicollis</i> | | | |
| | Semipalmated Sandpiper | | | | <i>pusilla</i> | | | |
| Western Sandpiper | <i>mauri</i> | | | | | | | |
| 5 Calidris Bigs | Red Knot | Scolopacidae | Sandpipers and Allies | <i>Calidris</i> | <i>canutus</i> | | | |
| | Stilt Sandpiper | | | | <i>himantopus</i> | | | |
| | Sanderling | | | | <i>alba</i> | | | |
| | Dunlin | | | | <i>alpina</i> | | | |
| | Pectoral Sandpiper | | | | <i>melanotos</i> | | | |
| 6 Tringa + Spotted | Spotted Sandpiper | Scolopacidae | Sandpipers and Allies | <i>Actitis</i> | <i>macularius</i> | | | |
| | Solitary Sandpiper | | | | <i>solitaria</i> | | | |
| | Lesser Yellowlegs | | | <i>Tringa</i> | <i>flavipes</i> | | | |
| | Willet (Eastern & Western subspecies) | | | | <i>semipalmata</i> | | | |
| | Greater Yellowlegs | | | | <i>melanoleuca</i> | | | |
| 7 Godwits & Curlews | Whimbrel | Scolopacidae | Sandpipers and Allies | <i>Numenius</i> | <i>phaeopus</i> | | | |
| | Long-billed Curlew | | | | <i>americanus</i> | | | |
| | Hudsonian Godwit | | | <i>Limosa</i> | <i>haemastica</i> | | | |
| | Marbled Godwit | | | | <i>fedoa</i> | | | |
| 8 Dowitchers | Short-billed Dowitcher | Scolopacidae | Sandpipers and Allies | <i>Limnodromus</i> | <i>griseus</i> | | | |
| | Long-billed Dowitcher | | | | <i>scolopaceus</i> | | | |
| 9 Grass-pipers | Upland Sandpiper | Scolopacidae | Sandpipers and Allies | <i>Bartramia</i> | <i>longicauda</i> | | | |
| | Buff-breasted Sandpiper | | | <i>Calidris</i> | <i>subruficollis</i> | | | |
| 10 Other Shorebirds | American Woodcock | Scolopacidae | Sandpipers and Allies | <i>Scolopax</i> | <i>minor</i> | | | |
| | Wilson's Snipe | | | <i>Gallinago</i> | <i>delicata</i> | | | |
| | Wilson's Phalarope | | | <i>Phalaropus</i> | <i>tricolor</i> | | | |
| | Red-necked Phalarope | | | | <i>lobatus</i> | | | |
| 11 Texas Rarities | Ruff | Scolopacidae | Sandpipers and Allies | <i>Calidris</i> | <i>pugnax</i> | 42 | | |
| | Curlew Sandpiper | | | | <i>ferruginea</i> | 13 | | |
| | Purple Sandpiper | | | | <i>maritima</i> | 29 | | |
| Texas Review List species (not covered) | Double-striped Thick-knee | Scolopacidae | Sandpipers and Allies | <i>Burhinus</i> | <i>bistriatus</i> | 1 | | |
| | Northern Jacana | | | <i>Jacana</i> | <i>spinosa</i> | 44 | | |
| | Eskimo Curlew | | | <i>Numenius</i> | <i>borealis</i> | 19 (presumed extinct) | | |
| | Bar-tailed Godwit | | | <i>Limosa</i> | <i>lapponica</i> | 1 | | |
| | Black-tailed Godwit | | | | <i>limosa</i> | 1 | | |
| | Black Turnstone | | | | <i>melanocephala</i> | 1 | | |
| | Surfbird | | | <i>Calidris</i> | <i>virgata</i> | 12 | | |
| | Sharp-tailed Sandpiper | | | | <i>acuminata</i> | 3 | | |
| | Red-necked Stint | | | | <i>ruficollis</i> | 2 | | |
| | Wandering Tattler | | | <i>Tringa</i> | <i>incana</i> | 1 | | |
| | Spotted Redshank | | | | <i>erythropus</i> | 1 | | |
| | Red Phalarope | | | | <i>Phalaropus</i> | <i>fulcarius</i> | 54 | |
| | Pacific Golden-Plover | | | Charadriidae | Plovers and Lapwings | <i>Pluvialis</i> | <i>fulva</i> | 1 |
| | Collared Plover | | | | | <i>Charadrius</i> | <i>collaris</i> | 3 |

3 MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF BIRDS

- ▶ Energy expensive -- must eat
 - ▶ Not much overlap
 - ▶ Affects “where” and “when”
 - ▶ Can aid in ID
 - ▶ Can you name them?
1. **Breeding**
 2. **Migrating**
 3. **Molting**

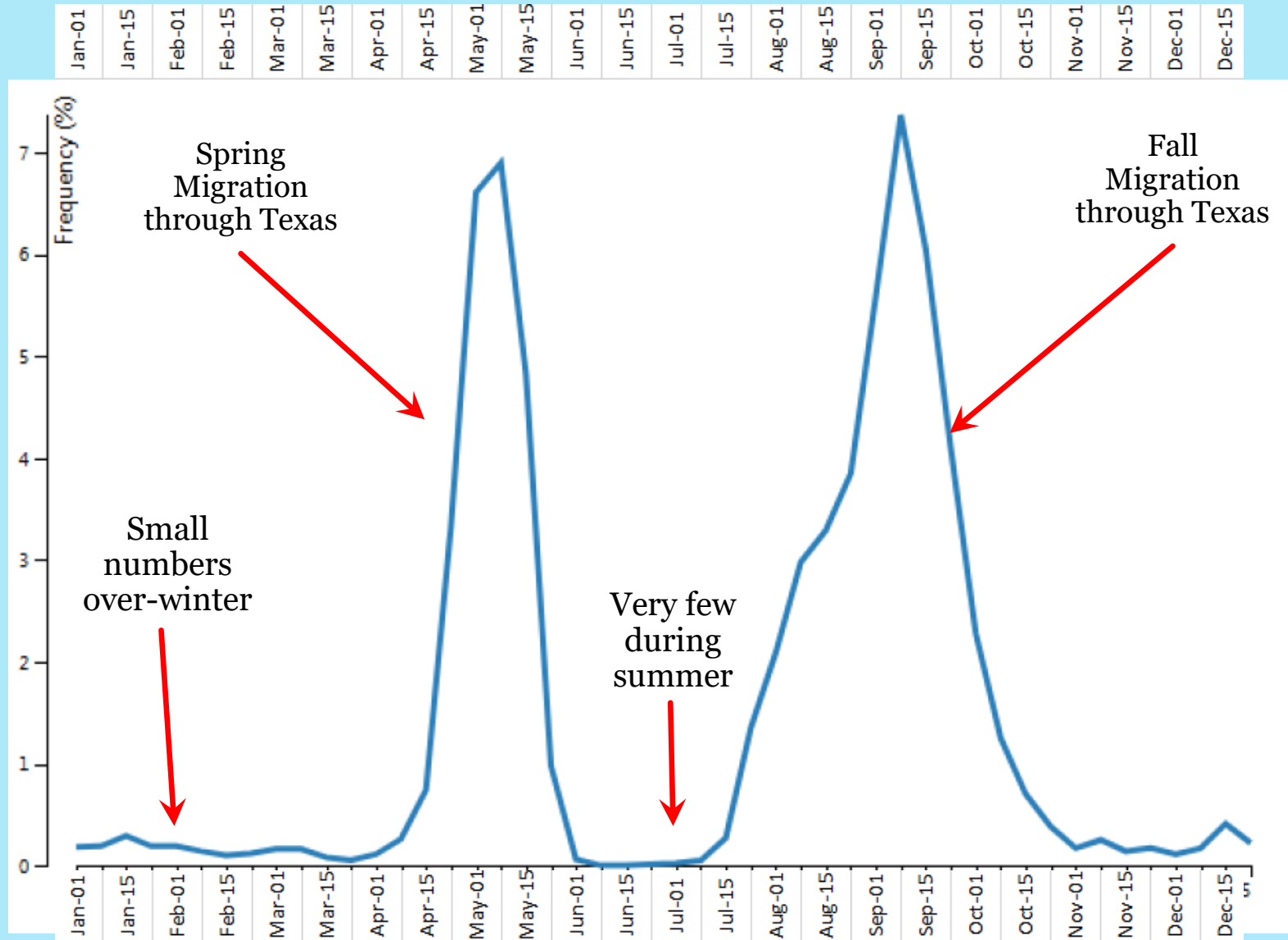
TIMING OF SHOREBIRDS IN TEXAS

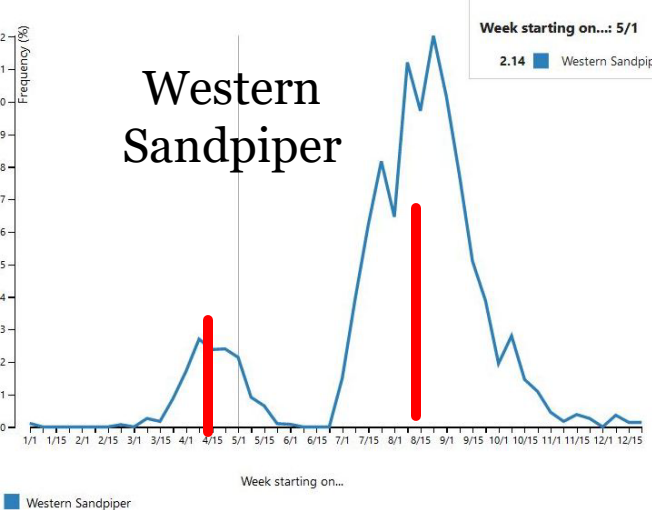
FREQUENCY GRAPH (HABITS 1,2,3) FOR SPECIFIC GEOGRAPHIC AREA (E.G. TEXAS)



FREQUENCY GRAPH (HABITS 1,2,3) FOR SPECIFIC GEOGRAPHIC AREA (E.G. TEXAS)

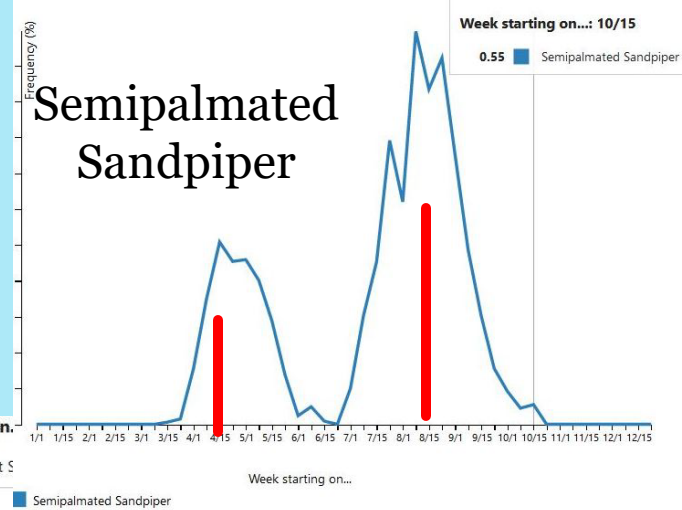
Least Flycatcher Timing in Texas (for the entire species)



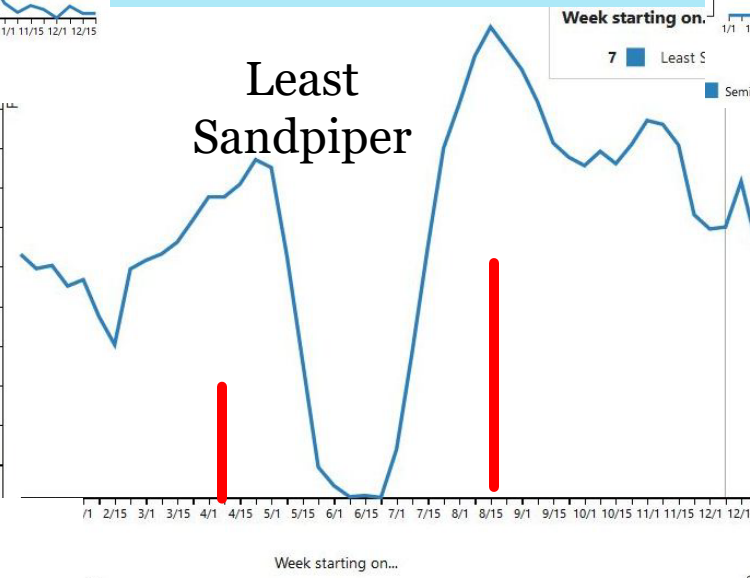


Frequency of “Peeps” in Travis County

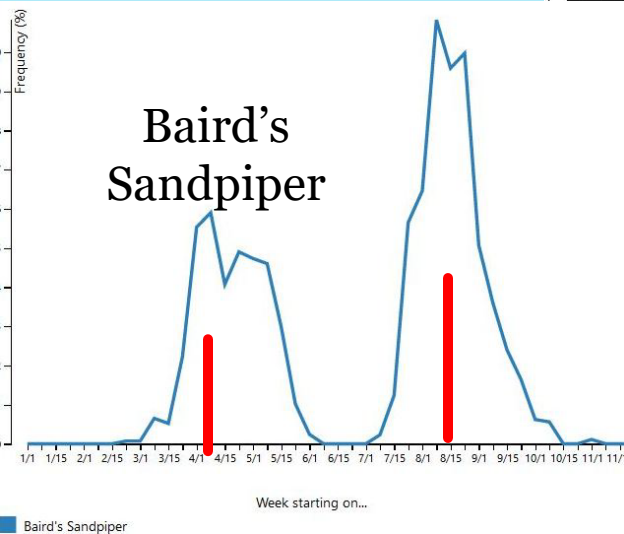
(“peeps” = 5 smallest sandpipers)



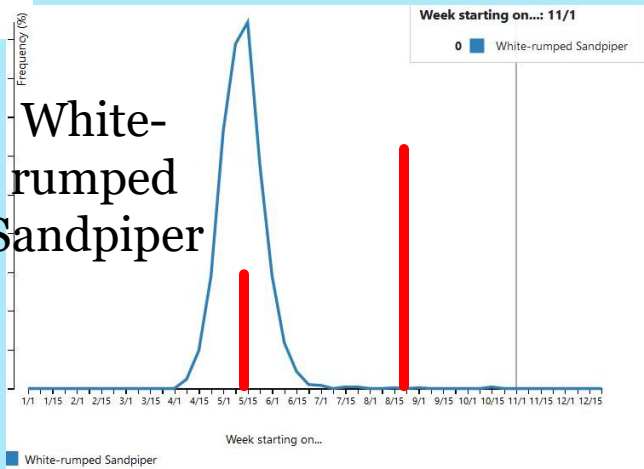
“Fall” migration begins before July 4 in some species



First southbound migrants are adults. Followed by a wave of juveniles.



Ebird Data For Travis County 1900-2017



SIGHTINGS AT HORNSBY

AUGUST 2025

| TAS SHOREBIRD CLASS ID GROUP | COMMON NAME | Hornsby |
|------------------------------|------------------------|---------|
| 1 Distinct Shorebirds | Black-necked Stilt | X |
| | American Avocet | X |
| | American Oystercatcher | |
| | Ruddy Turnstone | X |
| 2 Big Plovers | Black-bellied Plover | |
| | American Golden-Plover | |
| | Mountain Plover | |
| 3 Ringed Plovers | Killdeer | X |
| | Wilson's Plover | |
| | Semipalmated Plover | |
| | Piping Plover | |
| | Snowy Plover | |
| 4 Calidris Peeps | Baird's Sandpiper | X |
| | Least Sandpiper | X |
| | Semipalmated Sandpiper | X |
| | Western Sandpiper | X |
| | White-rumped Sandpiper | |
| 5 Calidris Bigs | Stilt Sandpiper | X |
| | Red Knot | |
| | Dunlin | |
| | Sanderling | |
| | Pectoral Sandpiper | X |

| TAS SHOREBIRD CLASS ID GROUP | COMMON NAME | Hornsby |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| 6 Tringa + Spotted | Spotted Sandpiper | X |
| | Solitary Sandpiper | X |
| | Lesser Yellowlegs | X |
| | Greater Yellowlegs | X |
| | Willet (Eastern Subspecies) | |
| | Willet (Western Subspecies) | |
| 7 Godwits & Curlews | Whimbrel | |
| | Long-billed Curlew | |
| | Hudsonian Godwit | |
| | Marbled Godwit | |
| 8 Dowitchers | Long-billed Dowitcher | |
| | Short-billed Dowitcher | |
| 9 Grass-pipers | Upland Sandpiper | X |
| | Buff-breasted Sandpiper | X |
| 10 Other Shorebirds | Red-necked Phalarope | |
| | Wilson's Phalarope | X |
| | American Woodcock | |
| | Wilson's Snipe | |
| 11- Texas Rarities | Ruff | |
| | Red Phalarope | |
| | Curlew Sandpiper | |
| | Purple Sandpiper | |
| | Spotted Redshank | |
| | | 17 |

JEFF'S LIST = 34 SPECIES

~42 SPECIES SHOREBIRDS

AT HORNSBY BEND ALL TIME

| TAS SHOREBIRD CLASS ID GROUP | COMMON NAME | All Time |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| | | Hornsby |
| 1 Distinct Shorebirds | Black-necked Stilt | X |
| | American Avocet | X |
| | American Oystercatcher | |
| | Ruddy Turnstone | X |
| 2 Big Plovers | Black-bellied Plover | X |
| | American Golden-Plover | X |
| | Mountain Plover | |
| 3 Ringed Plovers | Killdeer | X |
| | Wilson's Plover | |
| | Semipalmated Plover | X |
| | Piping Plover | X |
| | Snowy Plover | X |
| 4 Calidris Peeps | Baird's Sandpiper | X |
| | Least Sandpiper | X |
| | Semipalmated Sandpiper | X |
| | Western Sandpiper | X |
| | White-rumped Sandpiper | X |
| 5 Calidris Bigs | Stilt Sandpiper | X |
| | Red Knot | |
| | Dunlin | X |
| | Sanderling | X |
| | Pectoral Sandpiper | X |

| TAS SHOREBIRD CLASS ID GROUP | COMMON NAME | All Time |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | | Hornsby |
| 6 Tringa + Spotted | Spotted Sandpiper | X |
| | Solitary Sandpiper | X |
| | Lesser Yellowlegs | X |
| | Greater Yellowlegs | X |
| | Willet (Eastern Subspecies) | |
| | Willet (Western Subspecies) | X |
| 7 Godwits & Curlews | Whimbrel | |
| | Long-billed Curlew | X |
| | Hudsonian Godwit | X |
| | Marbled Godwit | |
| 8 Dowitchers | Long-billed Dowitcher | X |
| | Short-billed Dowitcher | X |
| 9 Grass-pipers | Upland Sandpiper | X |
| | Buff-breasted Sandpiper | X |
| 10 Other Shorebirds | Red-necked Phalarope | X |
| | Wilson's Phalarope | X |
| | American Woodcock | |
| | Wilson's Snipe | X |
| 11- Texas Rarities | Ruff | X |
| | Red Phalarope | X |
| | Curlew Sandpiper | |
| | Purple Sandpiper | |
| | Spotted Redshank | |
| | | 34 |

BECOMING A BETTER BIRDER

4 BIGGEST STEPS TO BECOMING A BETTER BIRDER

1. Learn **distribution** (Habits 1,2,3)
2. Learn **GISS/Structure** (Habit 4)
3. GO BIRD & **make your own IDs.**
4. Use a **process** (e.g. The 7 Habits)

THE 7 HABITS

BEING A BETTER BIRDER

Seven Habits of Highly Effective Birders

- 1) Where are we? – County, sub-county...
- 2) When are we? – Season, month, 1/2 month...
- 3) Where is he? – Habitat, micro-habitat...
- 4) GISS & Structure – posture, behavior, primary extension ...
- 5) Bill & Head – length, shape, thickness, use...
- 6) Field Marks – plumage, pattern, behavior..
- 7) Diagnostic Field Marks –

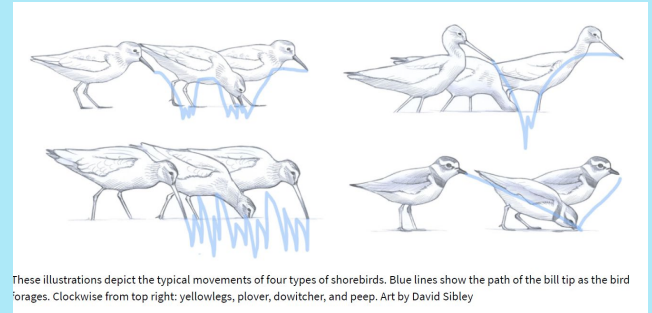
Distribution !!

Identity !!

RESULTS IN A DIAGNOSIS !!!

SHOREBIRD IDENTIFICATION

- ▶ Make a **diagnosis** –not a quick ID.
- ▶ **GISS, Structure, Relative Size** – most important.
- ▶ Find a **Reference Species**
- ▶ Behavior – especially feeding behavior.
 - ▶ A good clue
 - ▶ Plenty of overlap
- ▶ **Location & Season** also very important



DISTRIBUTION (HABITS 1,2,3) ANIMATED ABUNDANCE MAP



HABITAT (HABIT 3)

- **Habitat** – natural environment of an organism.

– Provides:

- food
- water
- shelter
- space to survive

Seven Habits of Highly Effective Birders

- 1) Where are we? – County, sub-county...
- 2) When are we? – Season, month, 1/2 month...
- 3) Where is he? – Habitat, micro-habitat...

- 4) GISS & Structure – posture, behavior, primary extension ...
- 5) Bill & Head – length, shape, thickness, use...
- 6) Field Marks – plumage, pattern, behavior..
- 7) Diagnostic Field Marks –

RESULTS IN A DIAGNOSIS !!!

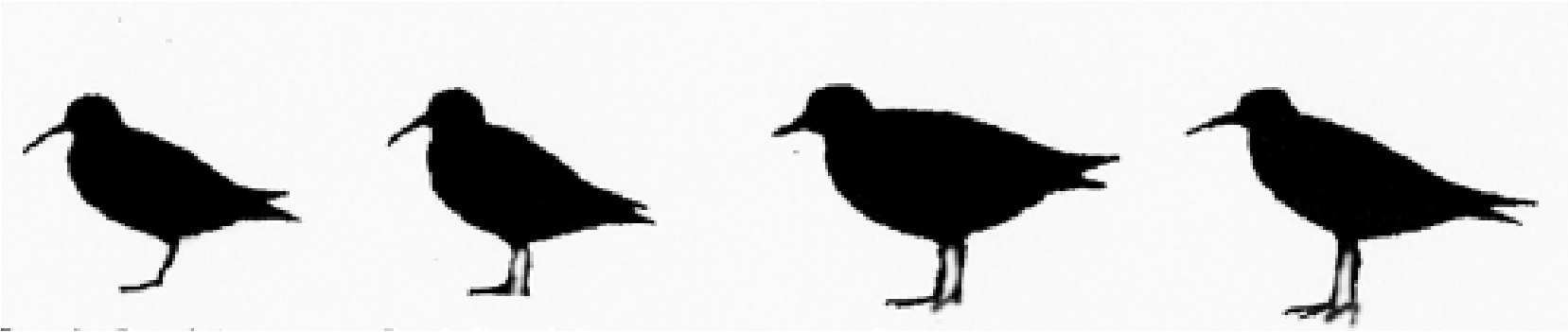
Jeffrey E. Patterson

- **Micro-habitat:** – a small specialized habitat, within a larger habitat



GISS & STRUCTURE (HABIT 4)

STRUCTURE

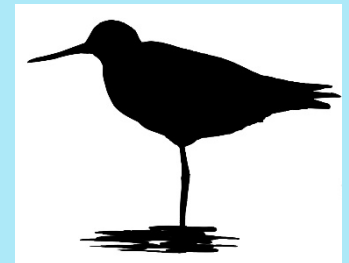
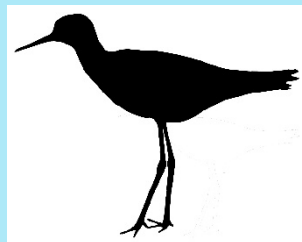
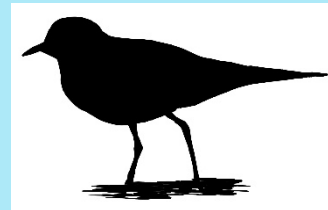


SHAPE (STRUCTURE)

“I cannot over-emphasize the importance of shape in recognizing shorebirds.

Shape provides up to 90% of the evidence in our sight identifications”.

Kenn Kaufman, *Advanced Birding*



GISS

(GENERAL IMPRESSION OF SIZE & SHAPE)

GISS (JIZZ, GESTALT)

GISS (or jizz) – the immediate sense of posture, shape, size, habits, bearing and movement.

GISS – the overall impression or appearance of a bird garnered from such features as shape, posture, flying style or other habitual movements, size and coloration combined with voice, habitat and location.

The concept originated in birding.

Jizz or giss is the overall impression or appearance of a bird garnered from such features as shape, posture, flying style or other habitual movements, size and coloration combined with voice, habitat and location. The concept originated in birdwatching, but is so useful that it has since been adopted increasingly widely by field biologists in referring to the impression of the general characteristics of other animals. It similarly appears in such fields of observational biology as microscopy. Ecologists and botanists may speak of "habitat jizz" or the jizz of a plant.

Sean Dooley described jizz as "the indefinable quality of a particular species, the 'vibe' it gives off" and notes that although it is "dismissed by many as some kind of birding alchemy, there is some physical basis to the idea of jizz."

Experienced birders can often make reliable identifications in the field at a glance by using jizz. Often jizz is useful for identifying to the family or genus level, rather than the species level, as in: "It definitely had the jizz of a thrush, but I couldn't see what kind."

The term was first used in print in 1922, in Thomas Coward's "Country Diary" column for the Manchester Guardian of 6 December 1921 – the piece was subsequently included in his 1922 book *Bird Haunts and Nature Memories*. He attributed it to "a west-coast Irishman", and explained

If we are walking on the road and see, far ahead, someone whom we recognize, although we can neither distinguish features nor particular clothes, we may be certain that we are not mistaken; there is something in the carriage, the walk, the general appearance which is familiar; it is, in fact, the individual's jizz.

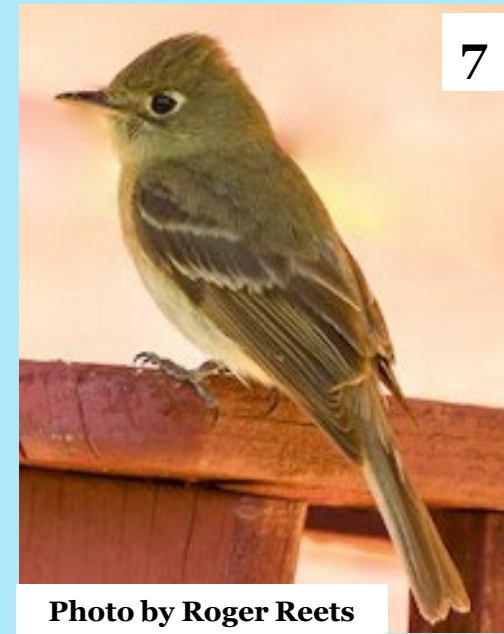
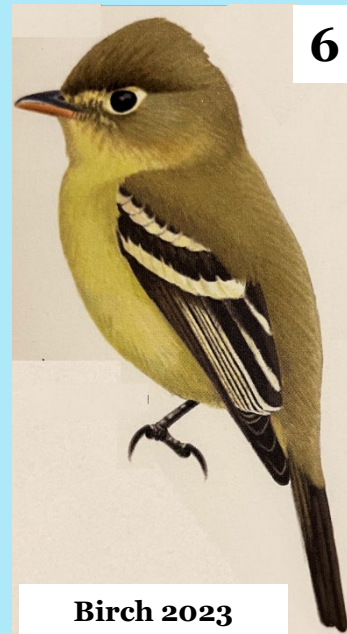
Jeremy Greenwood concludes that the term was further popularized by its use by Miss E.I. Turner, "a popular author", in the journal *Open Air* in 1923.

There is a theory that it comes from the World War II air force acronym GISS for "General Impression of Size and Shape (of an aircraft)", but the use of the term in 1922 precludes that. Another theory claims that jizz is a corruption of gestalt, a German word that roughly means form or shape. Other possibilities include the word gist, or a contraction of just is. These theories were debunked by Jeremy Greenwood and his brother Julian in 2018.

MODERN BIRDING

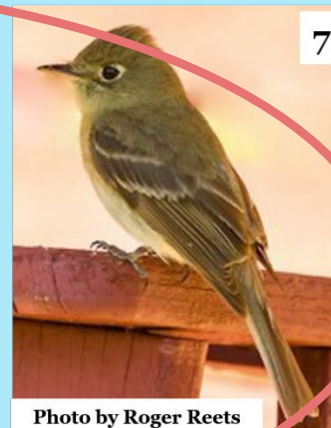
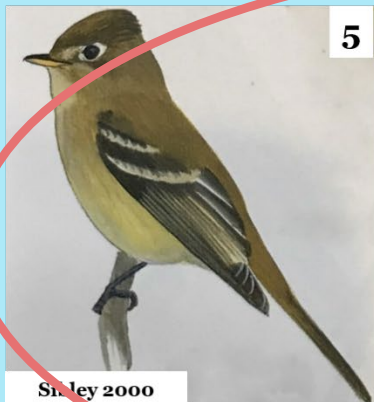
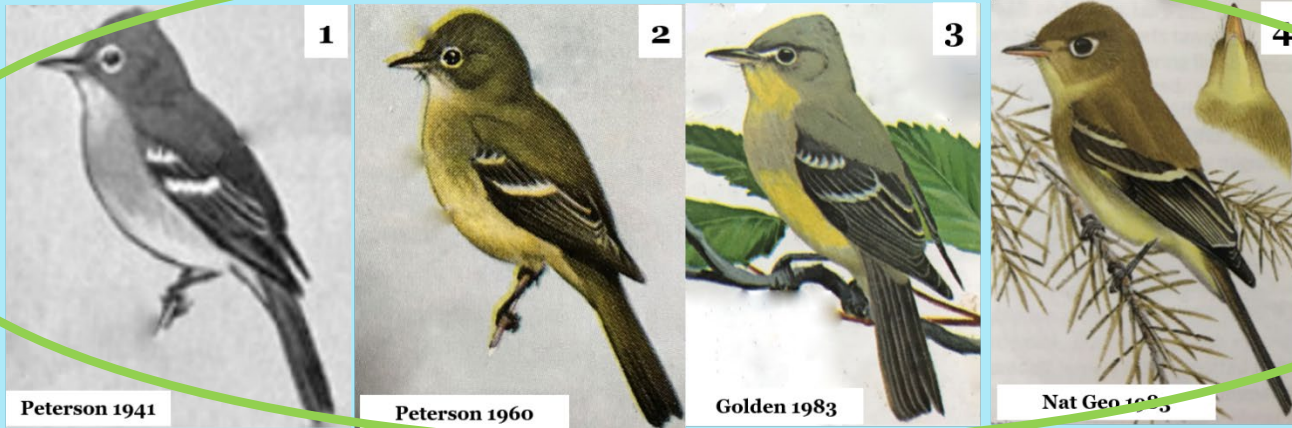
- Field guides – the great invention of (primarily) Roger Tory Peterson in the 1930s.
- Mostly plumage-based – “field marks”
- Modern birding – more emphasis on **shape**
- **GISS**
- **Structure**
- **Relative Size**

EVOLVING IMPRESSIONS (HABIT 4)



EVOLVING IMPRESSIONS (HABIT 4)

Key seems to be color, pattern field marks



Key is structure first, then other field marks (e.g. color, pattern)

GISS EXERCISE

GISS EXERCISE



“Beam me up, Scotty!”

“I need
ammunition,
not a ride.”



“Father told me that if I ever met a lady in a dress like yours, I must look her straight in the eyes.”



“Do you think people will still be using napkins in the year 2000, or is this mouth-vacuum thing for real?”



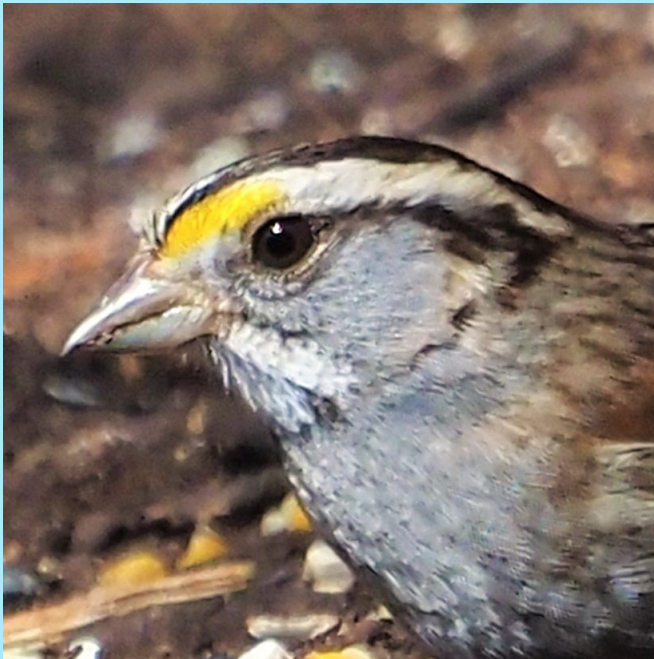
“Thank you.
Thank you very much.”



“That’s what I do.
I drink, and I know things.”



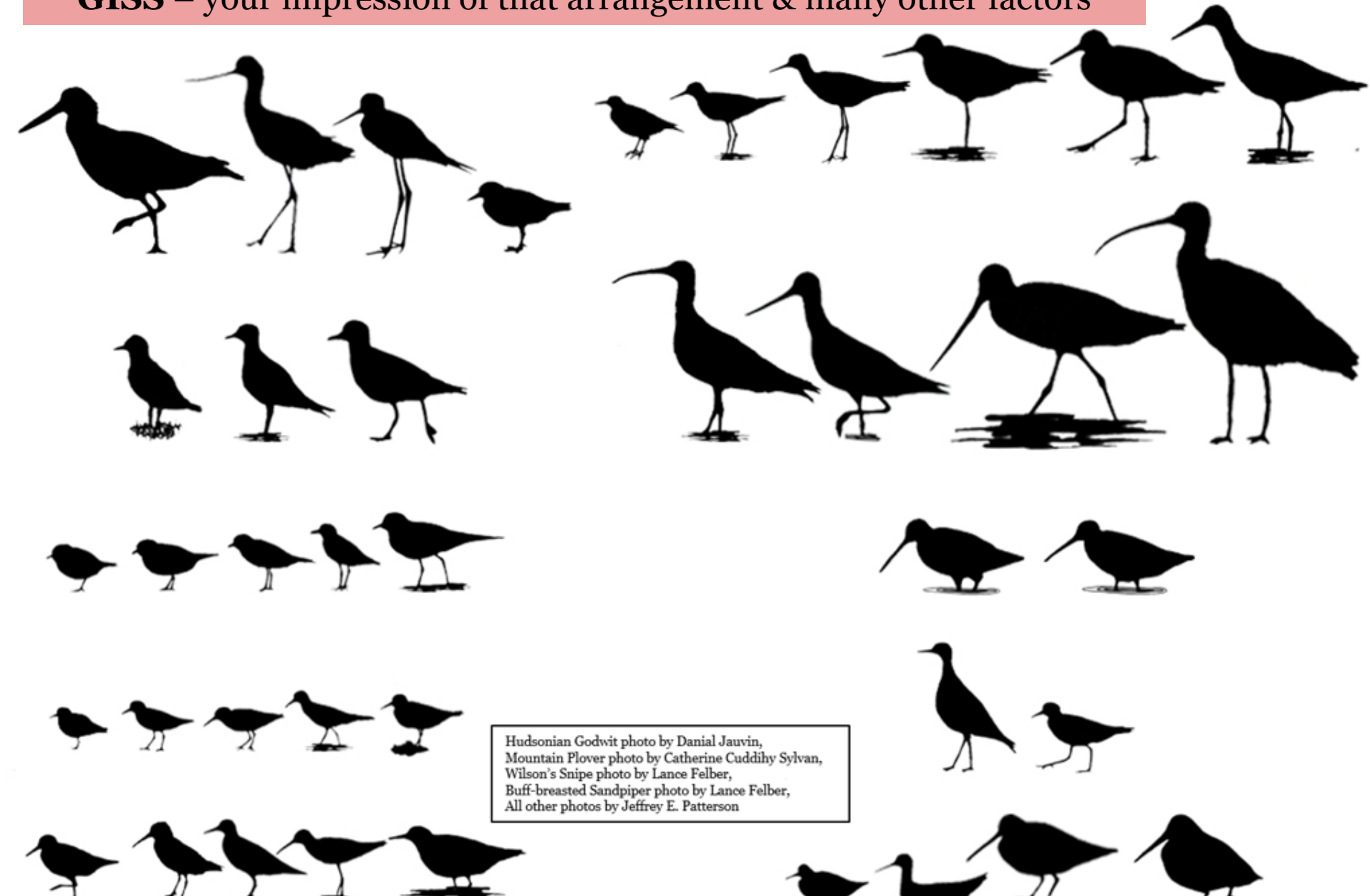
GISS & STRUCTURE (HABIT 4) FACIAL EXPRESSIONS



Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

Structure – the arrangement of & relationships between the parts

GISS – your impression of that arrangement & many other factors



STRUCTURE

“WE WON’T GET FOOLED AGAIN
!!!”



**SHOREBIRD SIZE
IT'S RELATIVE !!!**

RELATIVE SIZE



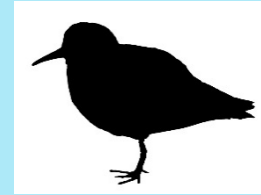
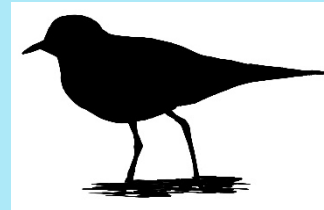
RELATIVE SIZE



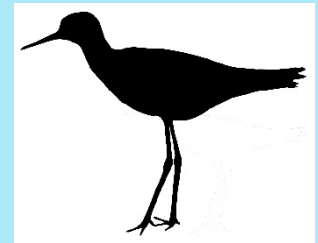
REFERENCE BIRDS

- ▶ Known size, regular occurrence

- ▶ Least Sandpiper

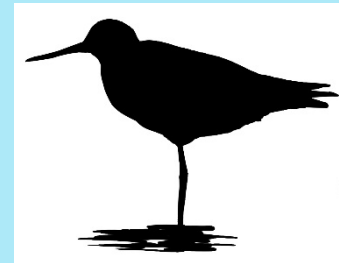


- ▶ Killdeer



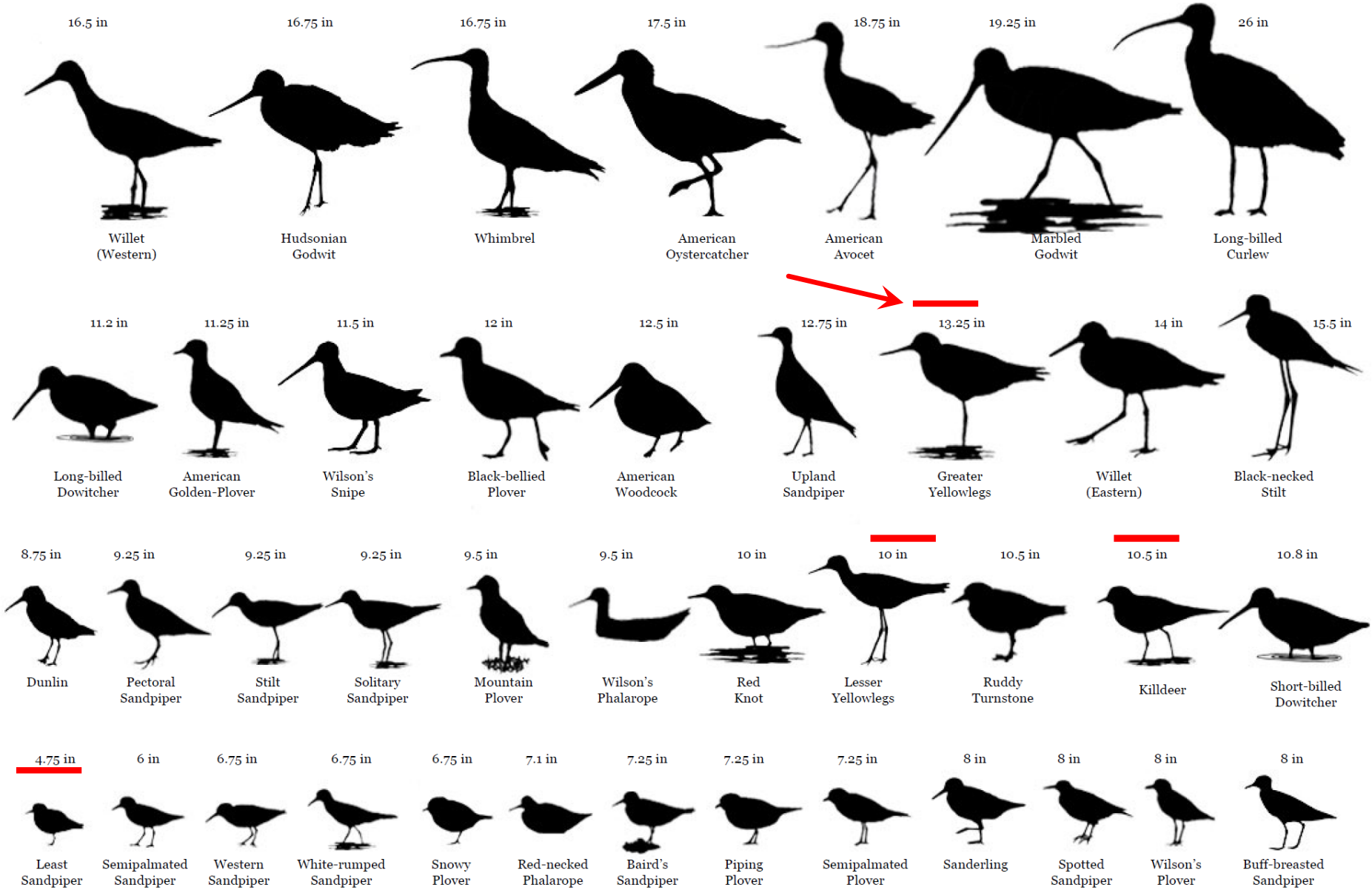
- ▶ Lesser Yellowlegs

- ▶ Greater Yellowlegs (sometimes)



SHOREBIRDS BY HEIGHT

Revised 6/13/25

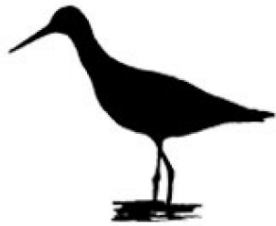


Mountain Plover photo by Catherine Cuddihy Sylvan, all other photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

SHOREBIRDS BY WEIGHT

Revised 6/13/25

339 g



Willet
(Western)

350 g



American
Avocet

358 g



Hudsonian
Godwit

454 g (1.0 lbs)



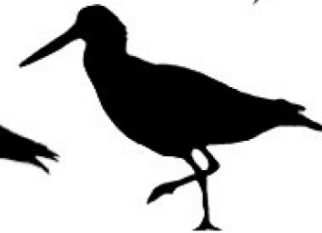
Marbled
Godwit

493 g



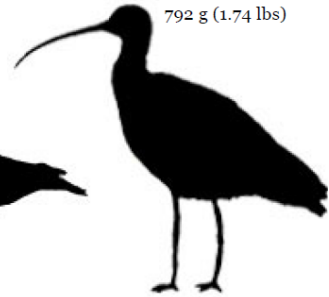
Whimbrel

700 g



American
Oystercatcher

792 g (1.74 lbs)



Long-billed
Curlew

190 g



Ruddy
Turnstone

200 g



American
Golden-Plover

211 g



American
Woodcock

215 g



Red
Knot

220 g



Black-necked
Stilt

226 g



Upland
Sandpiper

235 g (8.29 oz)



Greater
Yellowlegs

263 g



Willet
(Eastern)

320 g



Black-bellied
Plover

70 g



Stilt
Sandpiper

85 g



Wilson's
Phalarope

90 g (3.18 oz)



Killdeer

94 g



Buff-breasted
Sandpiper

100 g



Sanderling

108 g



Short-billed
Dowitcher

110 g



Mountain
Plover

111 g



Long-billed
Dowitcher

114 g (4.02 oz)



Lesser
Yellowlegs

117 g



Pectoral
Sandpiper

146 g



Wilson's
Snipe

27 g (0.95 oz)



Least
Sandpiper

35 g



Western
Sandpiper

41 g



Semipalmated
Sandpiper

48 g



Red-necked
Phalarope

50 g



Spotted
Sandpiper

51 g



White-rumped
Sandpiper

58 g



Snowy
Plover

58 g



Baird's
Sandpiper

63 g



Piping
Plover

64 g



Dunlin

65 g



Solitary
Sandpiper

69 g



Semipalmated
Plover

70 g



Wilson's
Plover

REFERENCE BIRDS



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

STRUCTURE

- ▶ **Bill**

- ▶ **Length** – compare to head size

- ▶ **Shape**

- ▶ **Tip** – Precise shape of tip, thickness at specific points

- ▶ **Body proportions and shape**

- ▶ Thickness of neck, chest, belly

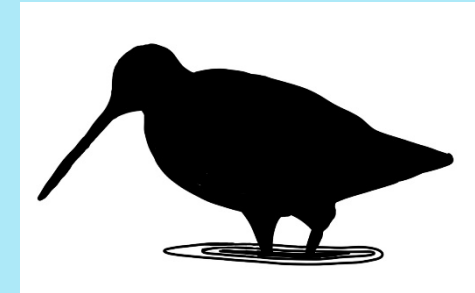
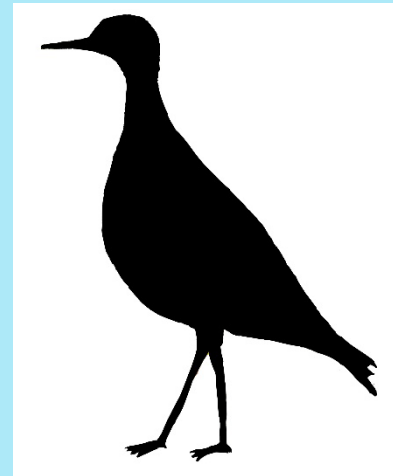
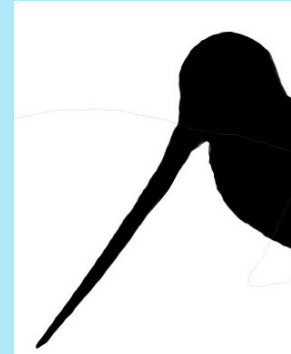
- ▶ **Posture**

- ▶ **Primary extension**

- ▶ **Size of head relative to body**

- ▶ **Forehead** – Angle

- ▶ **Legs** – Length & thickness



Describing bill length

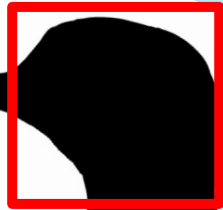
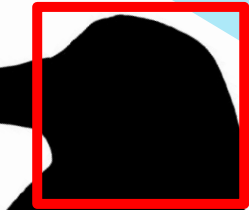
Long



Short



Very Long

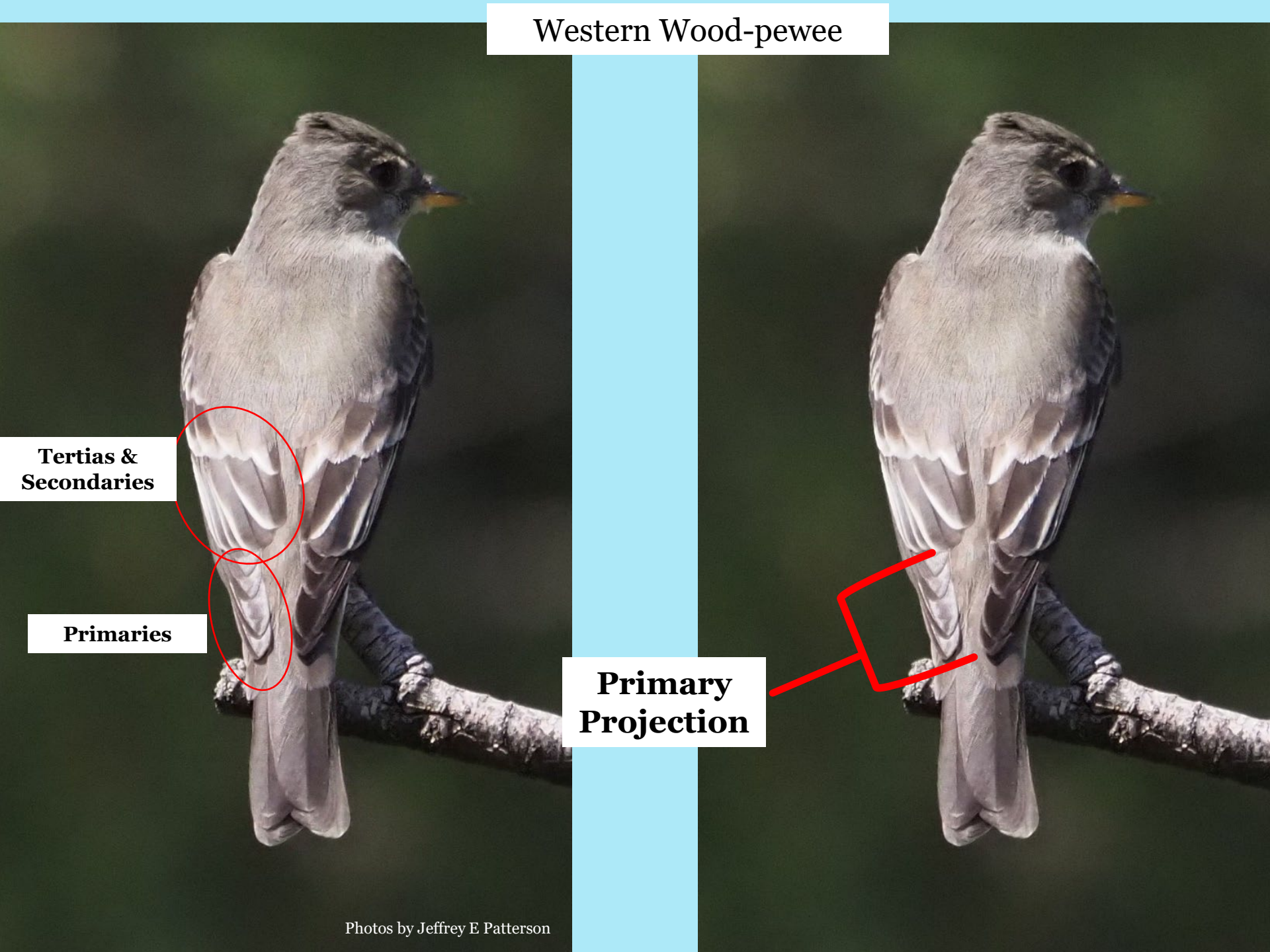


Western Wood-pewee

Tertias & Secondaries

Primaries

Primary Projection



PRIMARY EXTENSION

Primaries



Tail



PRIMARY EXTENSION IN SHOREBIRDS

**Primary
Projection**



Tail

Primaries

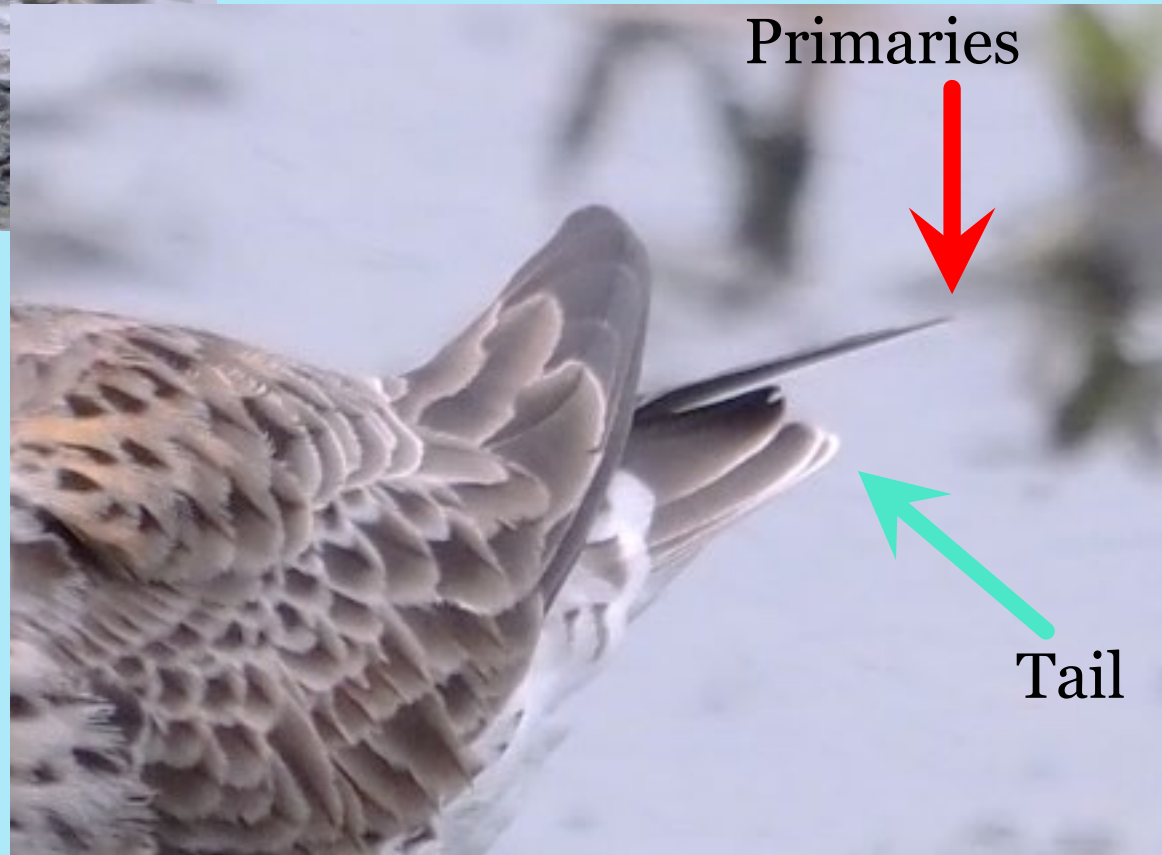
PRIMARY EXTENSION

Primaries



Tail

PRIMARY EXTENSION

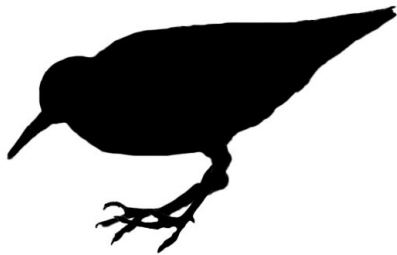


DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

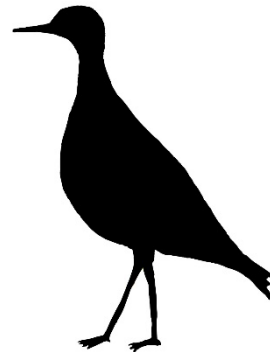
POSTURE

Crouched
Up-right
Horizontal

1



2



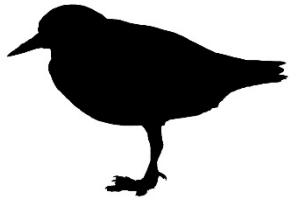
3



DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

STRUCTURE

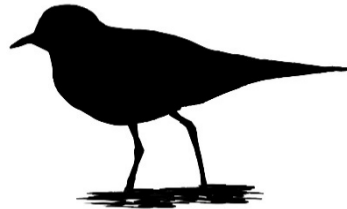
1



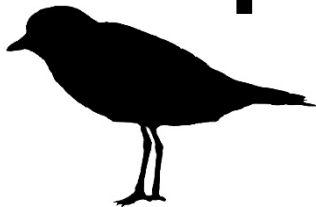
2



3



4



5



Bulky
Attenuated
Slender
Well-balanced
Front-heavy
Delicate

DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

BILL



Long
Stubby
Thick
Thin
Thin-tipped
Up-turned
Slightly decurved
Straight
Bulbous

DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

BILL

Notice these are all
relative comparisons

Thick
Thin

1

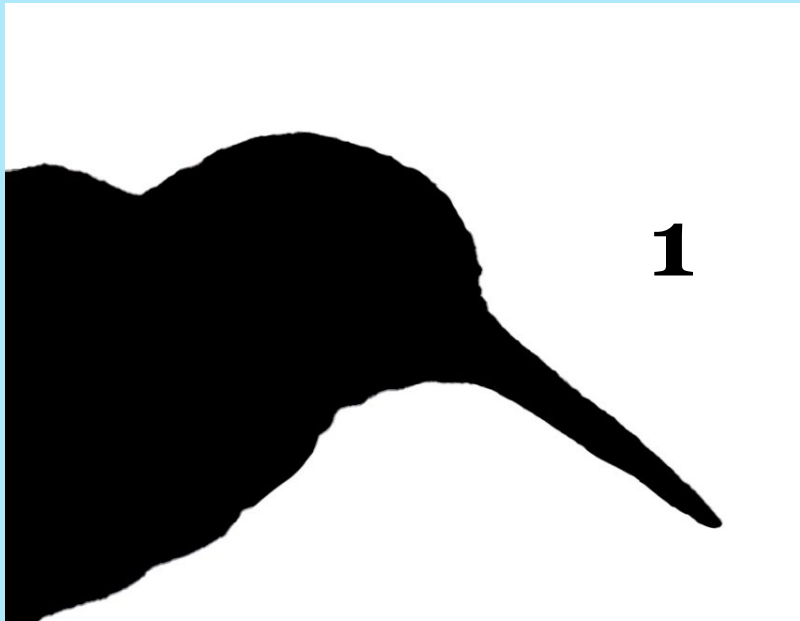


2

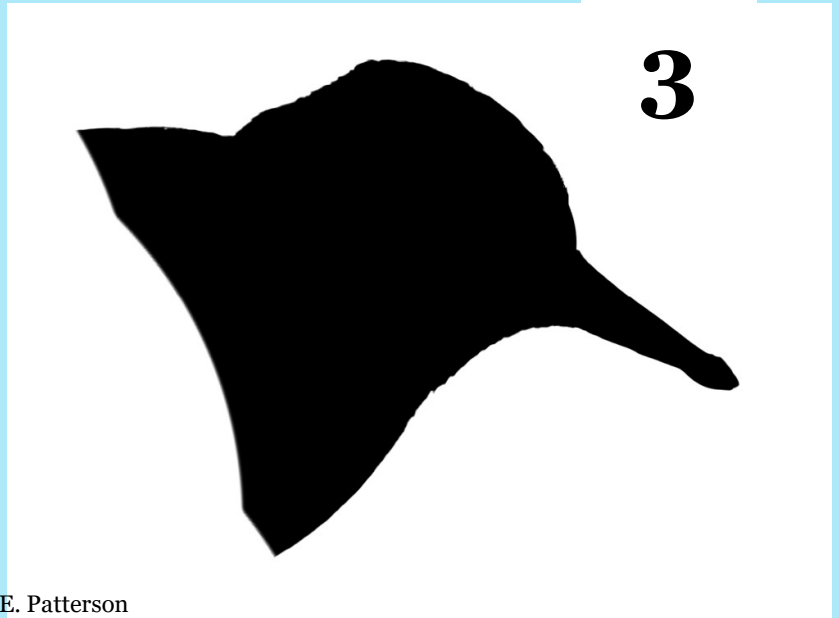


DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

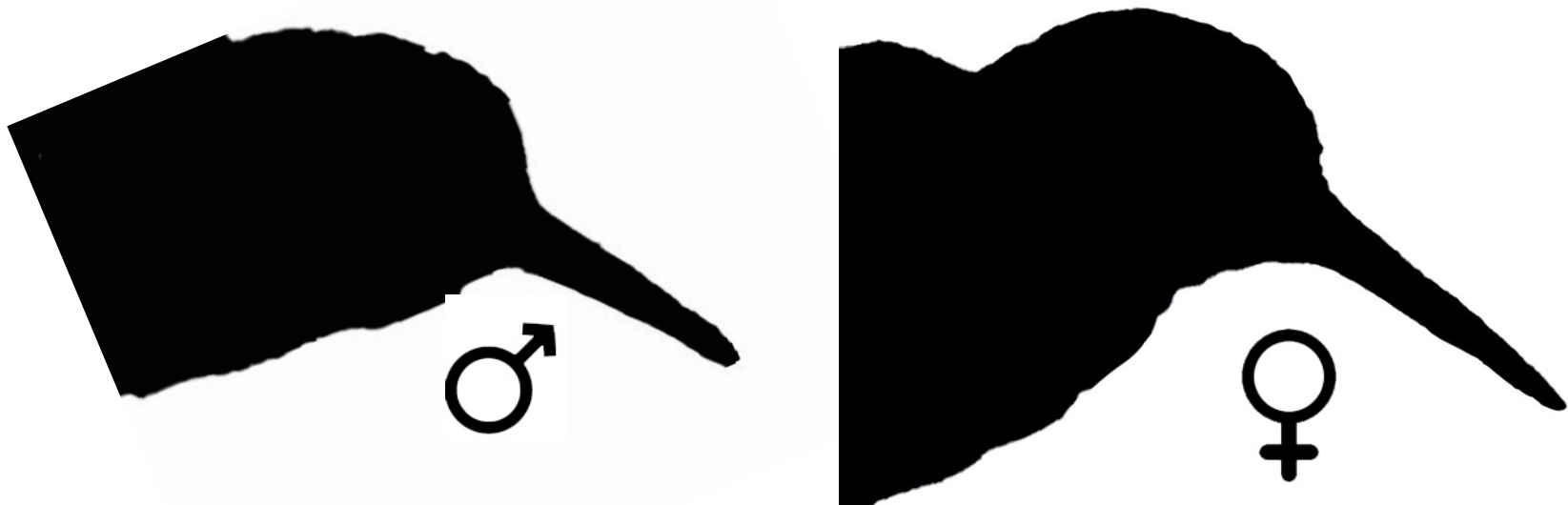
BILL



Straight
Slightly down-curved
Blunt-tipped
Droopy
Long
Bulbous...



FEMALES OFTEN
LARGER &
LONGER BILLED

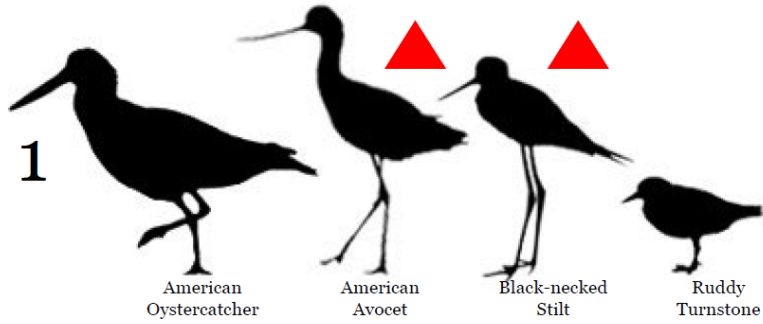


Same Species

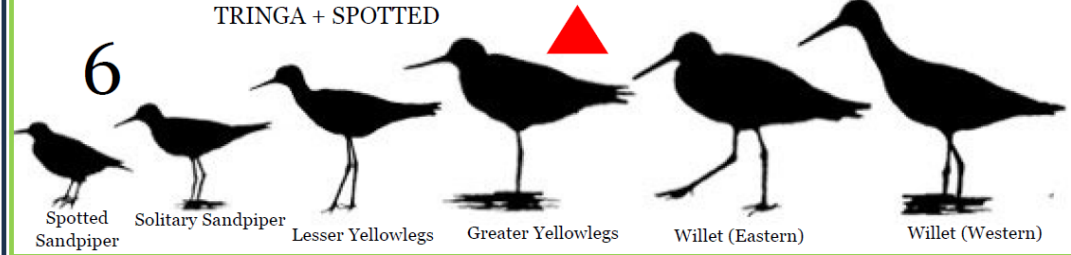
SHOREBIRD ID GROUPS

SHOREBIRD ID GROUPS

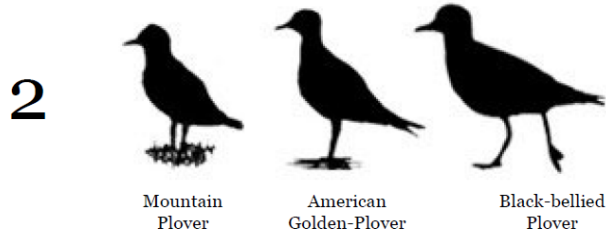
DISTINCT SHOREBIRDS



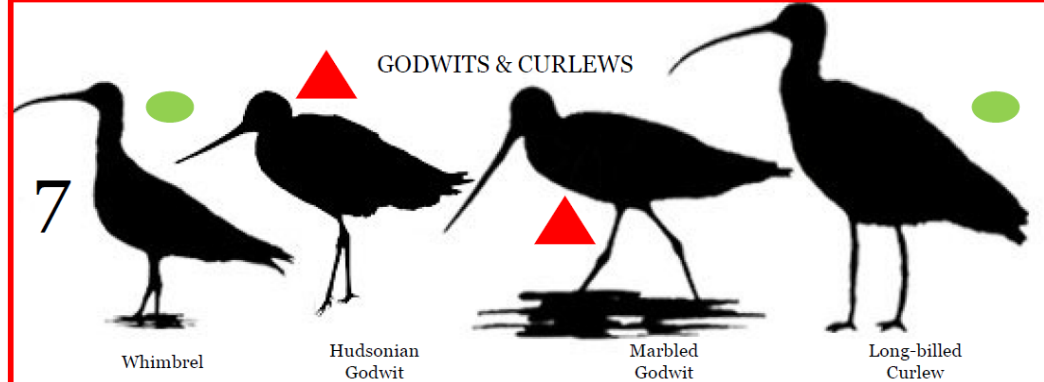
TRINGA + SPOTTED



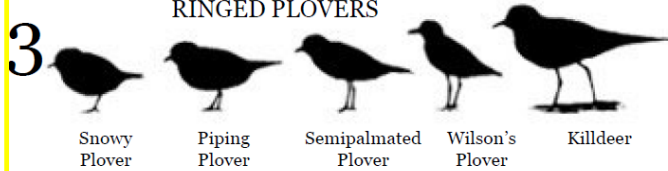
BIG PLOVERS



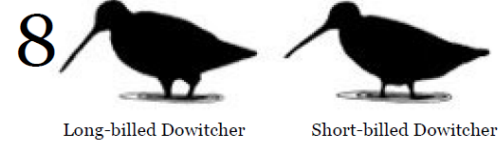
GODWITS & CURLEWS



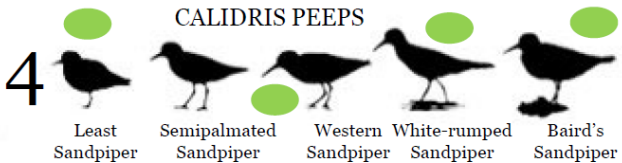
RINGED PLOVERS



DOWITCHERS



CALIDRIS PEEPS



UP-TURNED BILL (5)

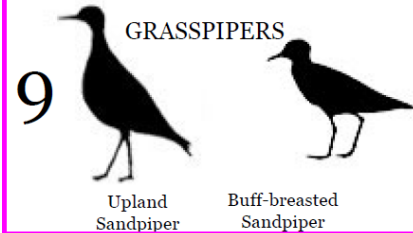


DOWN-TURNED BILL (9)

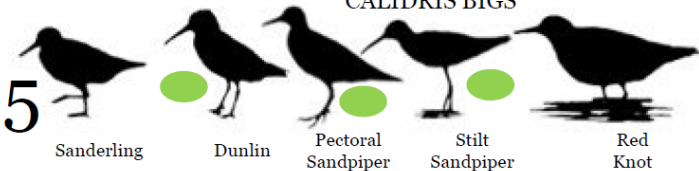
The rest have straight bills (26)

Mountain Plover photo by Catherine Cuddihy Sylvan,
All other photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

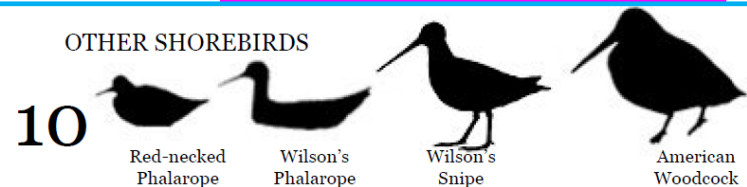
GRASSPIPERS



CALIDRIS BIGS

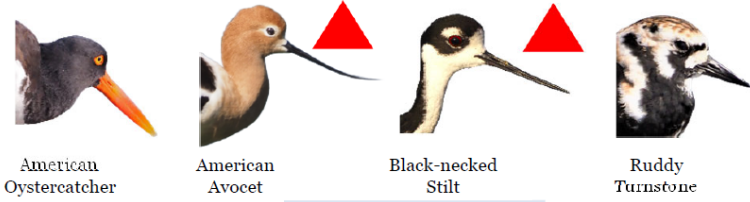


OTHER SHOREBIRDS



SHOREBIRD ID GROUPS BILL & HEAD

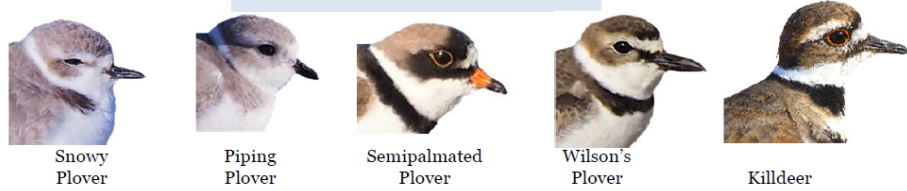
1 DISTINCT SHOREBIRDS



2 BIG PLOVERS



3 RINGED PLOVERS



4 CALIDRIS PEEPS



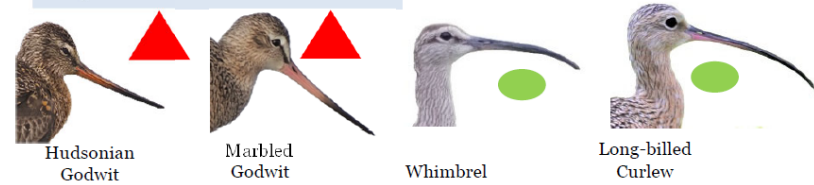
5 CALIDRIS BIGS



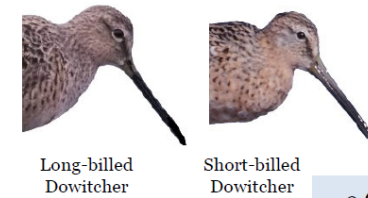
6 TRINGA + SPOTTED



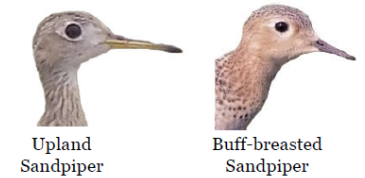
7 GODWITS & CURLEWS



8 DOWITCHERS



9 GRASSPIPERS



10 OTHER SHOREBIRDS



▲ UP-TURNED BILL (5)
● DOWN-TURNED BILL (9)
The rest have straight bills (26)

Mountain Plover photo by Gary Woods,
All other photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

HABIT 5
BILL & HEAD

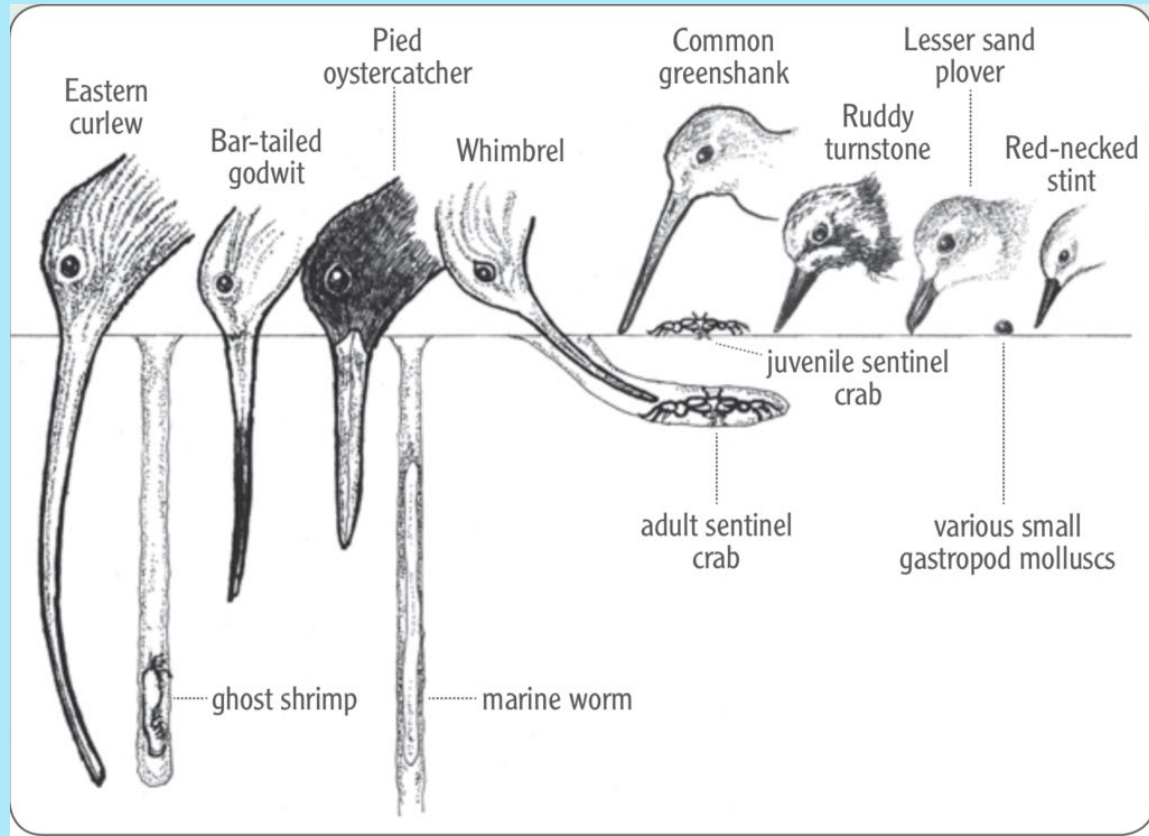
THE BILL

- ▶ Different bills = less competition within the same **habitat**.

OR

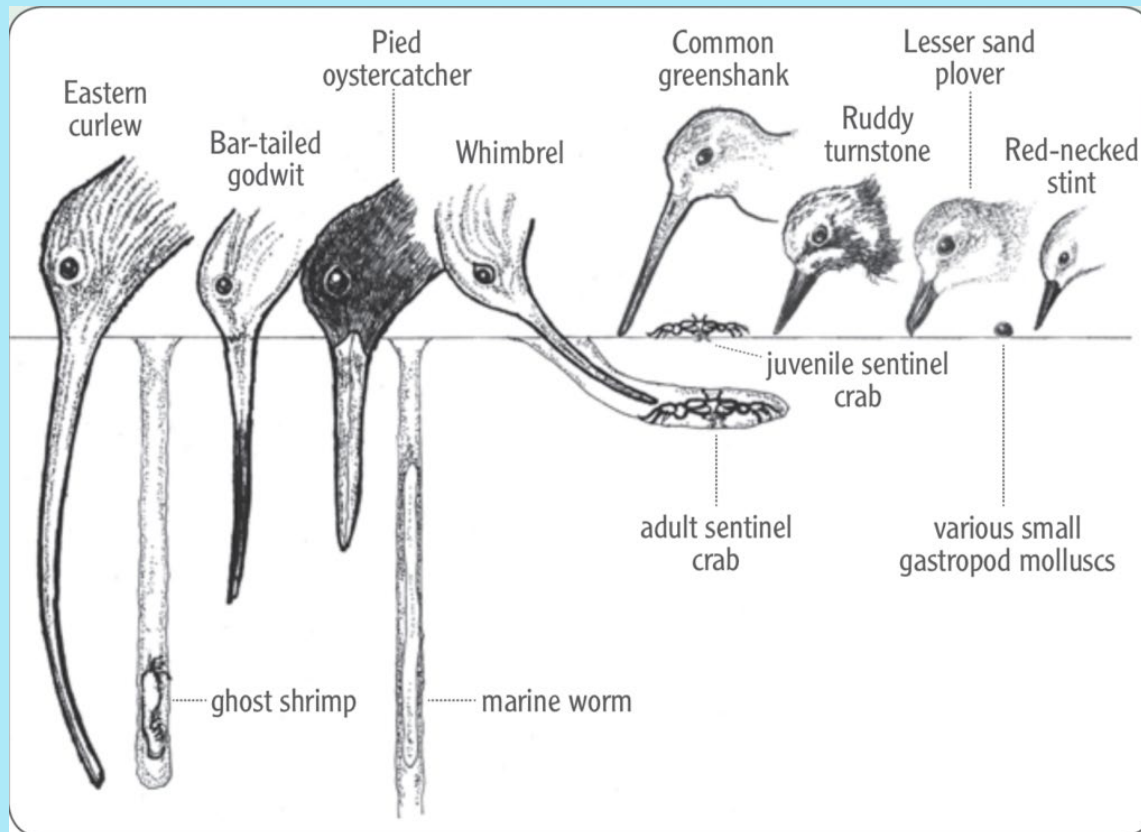
- ▶ Different bills = specialization within adjacent **microhabitats**.

- ▶ Very often a major clue in ID



THE NO-COMPETE CLAUSE

- ▶ Different bills = less competition in same **habitat**.

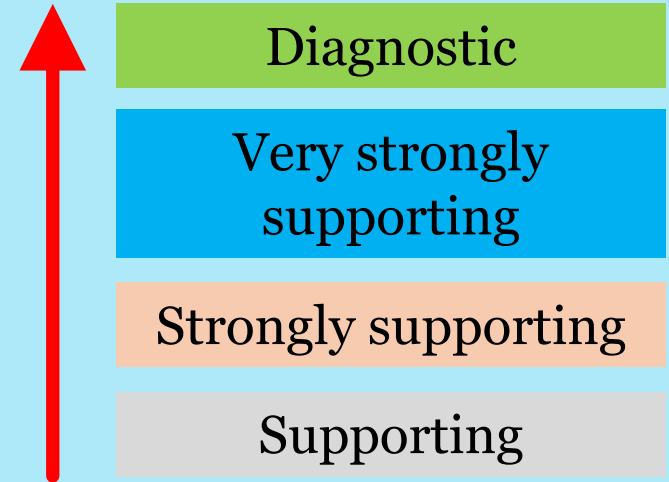


HABIT 6

FIELD MARKS

FIELD MARKS (HABIT 6)

1. All things we use to ID a bird are field marks.
2. **Not all Field Marks are equal – Some work better than others**
 - **Observable** – in the field (some are great in-the-hand)
 - **Consistent** – don't vary across individual birds
 - **Diagnostic** – serve to differentiate between species
 - **Hierarchy of Usefulness**
3. **WARNING WILL ROBINSON !!!!**
 1. Field marks are like fast food
 2. Everybody's got a favorite !!!
 3. All field marks can fail
4. **Make a diagnosis using all clues**



TYPES OF FIELD MARKS

- ▶ **Color** – plumage
- ▶ **Pattern** – plumage (feather groups or individual feathers)
- ▶ **Structure**
- ▶ **GISS**
- ▶ **Behavior**
- ▶ **Vocalizations**

CATEGORIES OF FIELD MARKS

- ▶ **Comparative** Field Marks
- ▶ **Relative** Field Marks
- ▶ **Proportional** Field Marks
- ▶ **Contrast** as Field Mark
- ▶ **Demarcation** as Field Mark

COMPARATIVE FIELD MARKS

more reddish



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

House Finch

more purplely



Photo by Henry Trombley

Purple Finch

- Subjective,
- May be difficult to convey
- Requires experience

RELATIVE FIELD MARKS

- Firmer ground
- But have to be lucky



Photo by TJ Adams

PROPORTIONAL FIELD MARKS

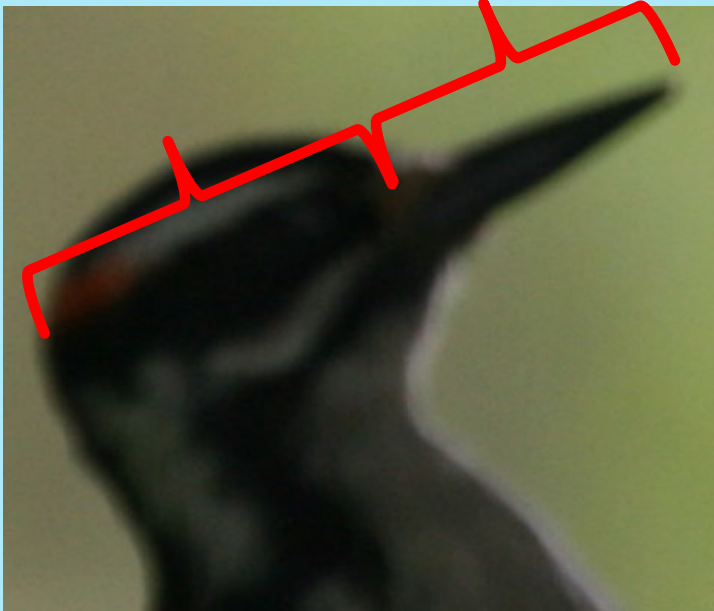


Photo by Jeffrey E Patterson

Hairy Woodpecker

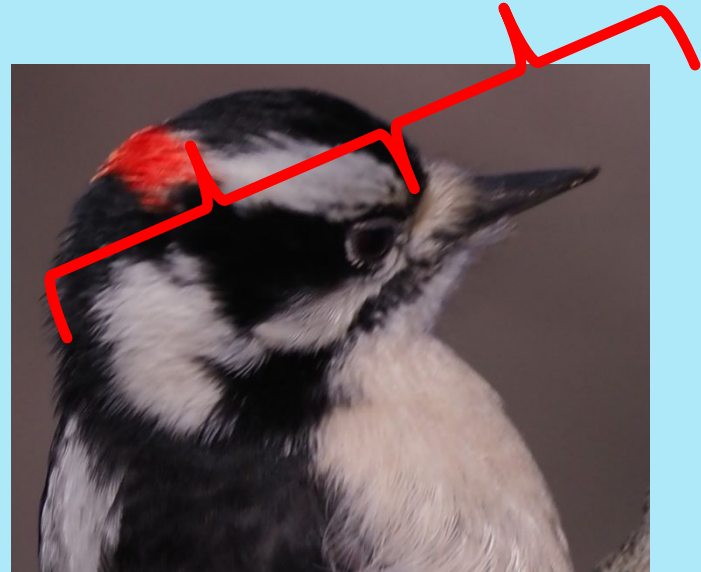


Photo by Jeffrey E Patterson

Downy Woodpecker

CONTRAST AS FIELD MARK

Contrast
is a field mark !!!!



High Contrast



Photos by Jeffrey E Patterson

Low Contrast

Abrupt
vs
diffuse

DEMARCATIION AS FIELD MARK



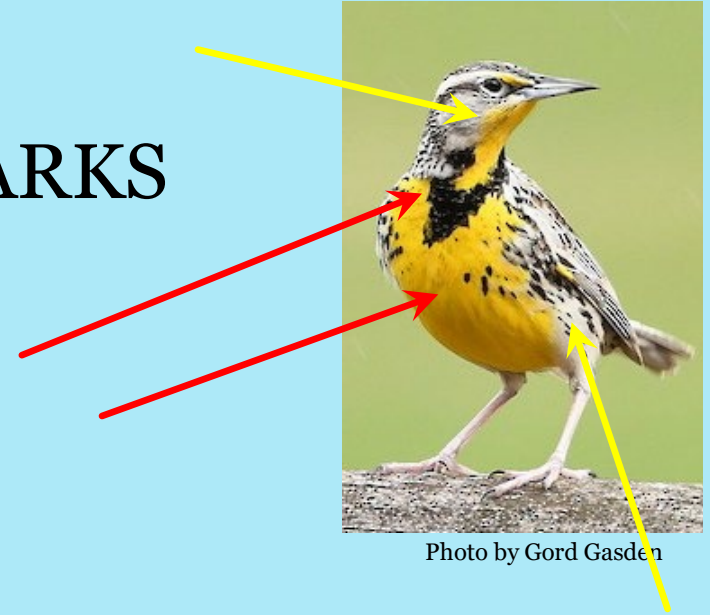
Photos by Jeffrey E Patterson

Abrupt Demarcation

Diffuse Demarcation

HABIT 7

DIAGNOSTIC FIELD MARKS



- ▶ **Observable** – in the field
- ▶ **Consistent** – across individual birds
- ▶ **Diagnostic**– serves to reliably and consistently differentiate between **closely related species.**
- ▶ Sometimes a single field mark can be diagnostic.