

Commonly Encountered Shorebirds of Northern California Estuaries

Plovers

Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

L 11.5" WS 29"

Large, with stout, thick bill. In fall, upperparts grayish, underparts streaked; white undertail coverts. In flight, notice black axillaries. Feeds solitarily on beaches, open marshes, mud flats, and fields.



Killdeer *Charadrius vociferous*

L 10.5" WS 24"

Tall, slender, with double breast-band. In flight long, rufous tail and rump. "Kill deer" call distinctive. Forages in loose groups at fields, mud flats, river banks, and shores.

Semipalmated Plover

Charadrius semipalmatus L 7.25" WS 19"

Small, slender, and the color of wet mud with a complete, single breast-band and orange legs. In fall, stout orange bill turns dark. Feeds on beaches, lakeshores and tidal flats.



Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

L 6.25" WS 17"

Uncommon on sand beaches, and some inland lakes. Pale gray-brown upperparts, white belly, gray legs, thin bill, and dark eye-line; broken breast-band. Feeds solitarily; may roost in small numbers.

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*

L 14" WS 29"

Large and slender with striking black and white pattern, needlelike bill, and very long red legs. Unique. Feeds in small groups at grassy marshes, mud flats, pools, ponds and lakes.



American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana*

L 18" WS 31"

Large and distinctive with thin upturned bill. In fall black-and-white above, white below, long gray legs, and pale gray head. Forages in groups at beaches, flats, marshes, lakes and ponds.

Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus bachmani*

L 17.5" WS 32"

Large size, overall blackish color, pale legs, and bright orange-red bill distinctive. Usually in pairs or small groups which are often heard before seen along coastal rocky shorelines and islands.



Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*

L 15" WS 26"

A large, nondescript sandpiper...until it takes flight. Note striking black-and-white wings in flight, as well as muted gray upperparts, white underparts, and bluish-gray legs. Gives loud calls: *Pill-will-willet* and *whee-wee-wee*.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

L 11.5" WS 19"

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*

L 11" WS 19"

Medium-sized, stocky, long-billed sandpipers with entirely white rumps, dark streaked backs and sides, barred flanks, and distinct pale eyebrows. Species often indistinguishable in the field. Forage in tight groups; usually in water up to their bellies. Can be seen on mud flats, tidal marshes, and pond edges. Long-billed more likely to prefer fresh water.



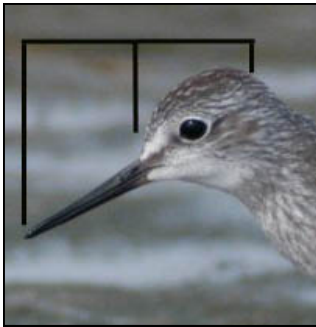
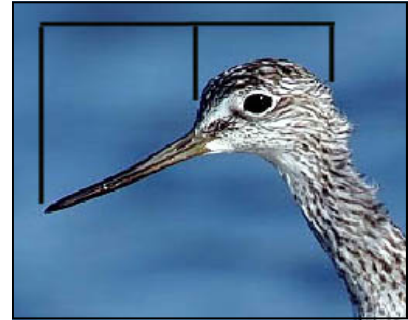
Large Sandpipers

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

L 14" WS 28"

Tall, long neck, and long yellow legs. Fall birds gray-brown, back checkered in gray, black, and white. Bill length noticeably longer than head length. Solitary or in loose groups, often with Lesser Yellowlegs.

Distinctive Tu-Tu-tu call.



Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* L 10.5" WS 24"

Very similar to Greater Yellowlegs, but noticeably smaller and more petite. Bill length equal to or slightly longer than head length. Often forages in open marshes, mud flats, streams, ponds, and shores.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa* L 18" WS 30"

Large, with a very long, slightly upturned, bill; black at tip with pink base. Buffy overall; in flight note large size, and broad wings with cinnamon. Associates with other shorebirds on mudflats, sandflats, and beaches.



Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* L 17.5" WS 32"

Large gray-brown shorebird with long decurved bill. Similar to Long-billed Curlew, but grayer with dark head stripes, and shorter bill. Found in grassy marshes, and tidal flats. Often seen flying in lines along the shore.

Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus*

L 23" WS 35"

Largest N.A. shorebird, with extraordinarily long, decurved bill. Buff-brown overall; lacking dark crown-stripes of Whimbrel. In flight, note broad, rounded wings, with cinnamon wing-lining. Tidflats, beaches, and salt marshes.



Small Sandpipers

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

L 8" WS 17"

Similar in size to Dunlin. The palest shorebird around, and almost exclusively found on sand beaches chasing waves. Note very pale-gray plumage, dark "shoulder", and large white wing-stripe in flight.



Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

L 8.5" WS 17"

Larger than the peep sandpipers, with short legs and neck, and a long, slightly drooping bill. Non-breeding birds drab gray-brown, and weakly marked. Feeds hunched-backed on sandy beaches and mudflats.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*

L 6.5" WS 14"

Small, reddish brown back in fall, clear gray in winter. White underparts and throat. Legs black, bill medium length and slightly decurved. Feeds at tide-line, lower in marsh than Least.



Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

L 6" WS 13"

Very similar to Western Sandpiper. Note darker, more brown back in late fall and winter; smaller, straighter bill, and greenish-yellow legs. Crouching posture distinctive. Often in smaller flocks than Westerns.