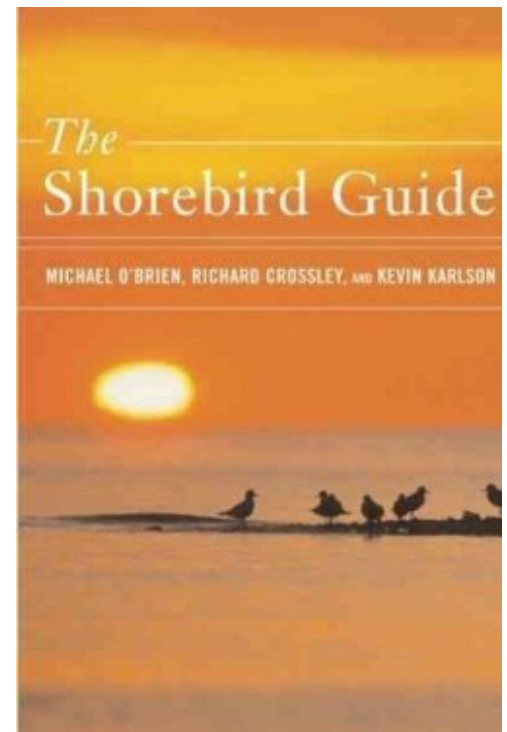
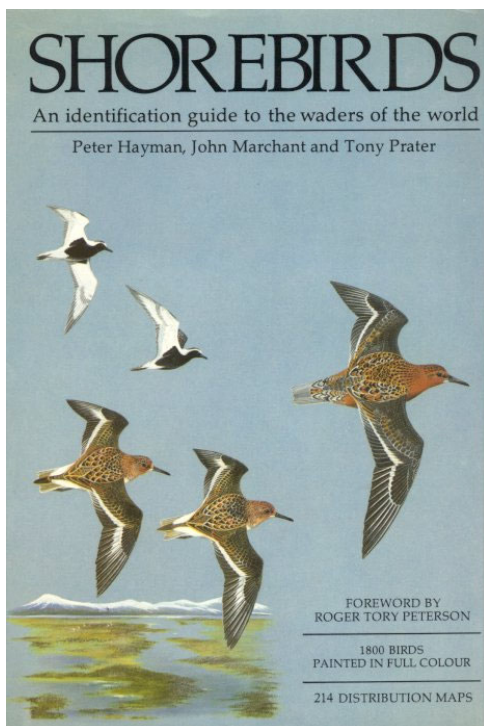
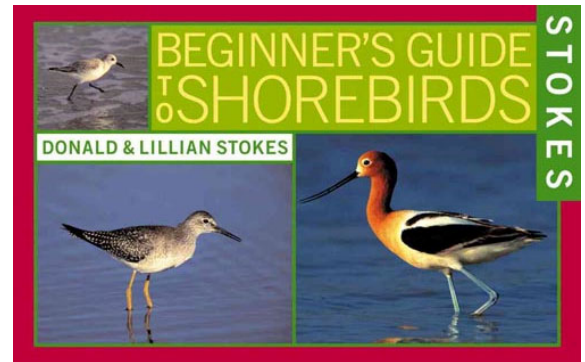


Shorebird ID Resources Sampler

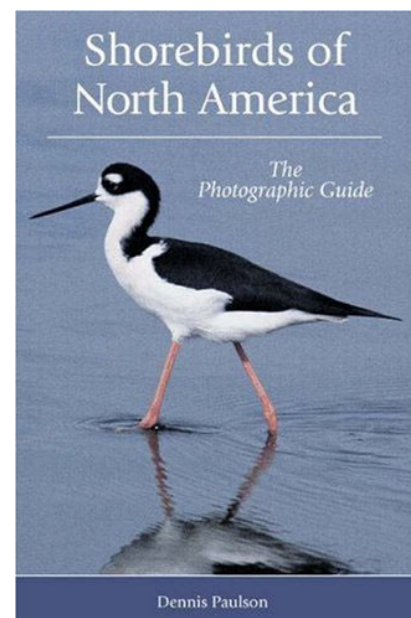
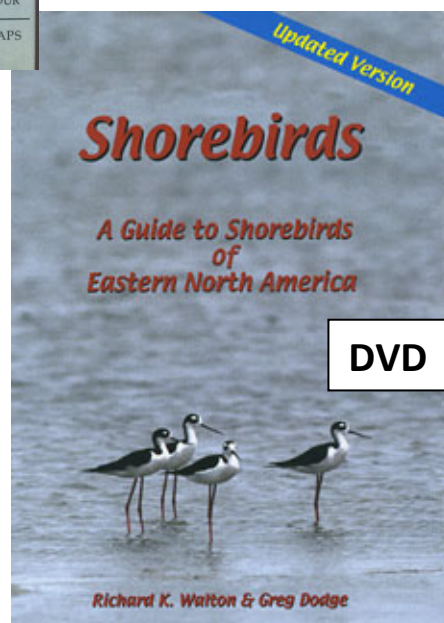
The Cornell Lab of Ornithology Bird Academy



Basic Shorebird
Identification w/ Kenn
Kaufman [[video link](#)]

Shorebird ID Secrets
Revealed (5 min on
peeps) [[video link](#)]

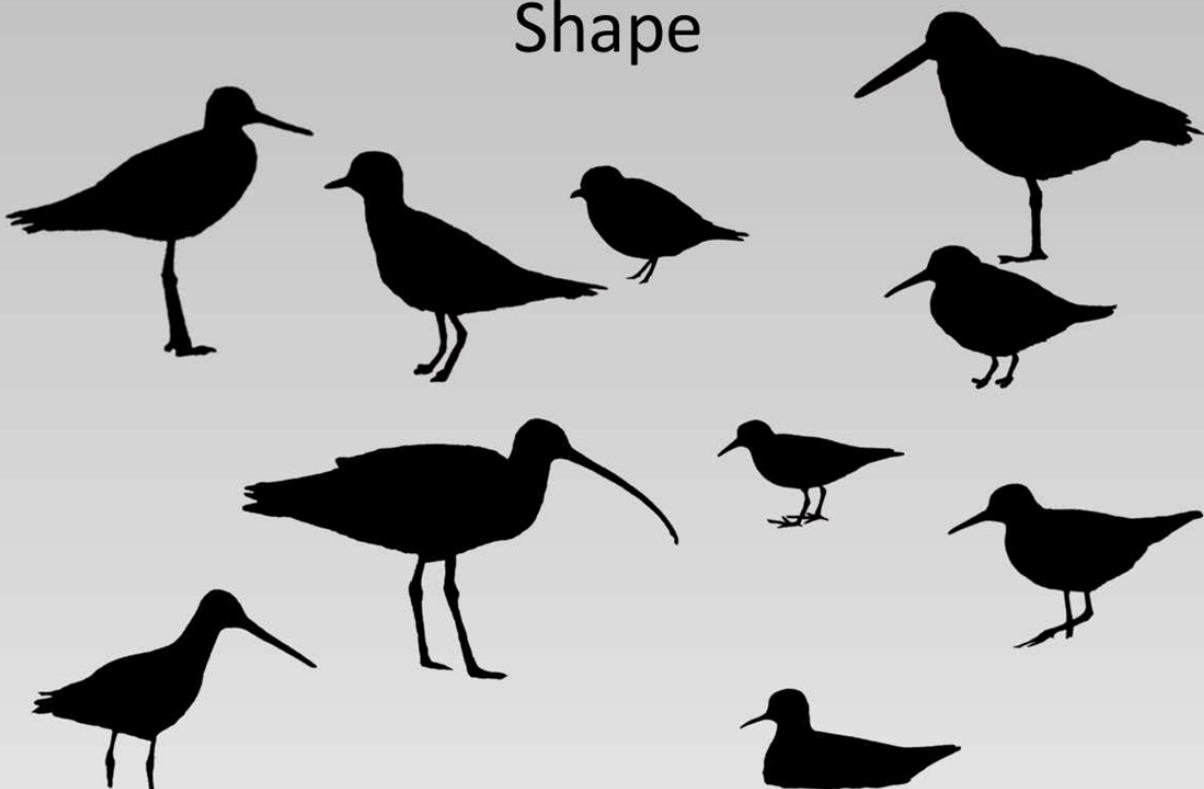
Art of Identifying
Shorebirds w/ Michael
O'Brien [[video link](#)]



Size – Shorebird Yardstick

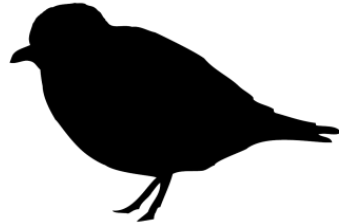


Shape

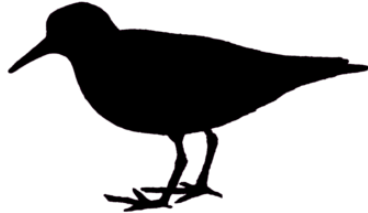


Basic Shorebird Diversity

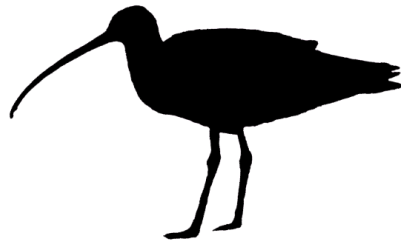
- Plovers



- Peeps



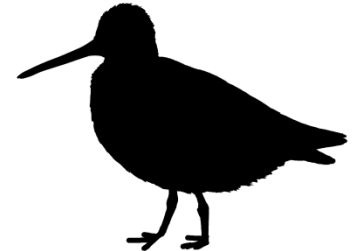
- Curlews and godwits



- Tringines



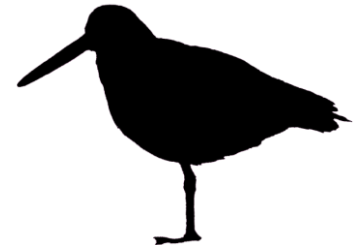
- Snipe



- Phalaropes



- Others



Silhouettes of North American Shorebirds

Arranged from Largest to Smallest



Long-billed Curlew American Avocet Marbled Godwit Oystercatchers Whimbrel



Bar-tailed Godwit Hudsonian Godwit Willet Greater Yellowlegs Black-necked Stilt



Upland Sandpiper Black-bellied Plover Dowitchers American Woodcock Wandering Tattler Golden-Plovers Red Knot Common Snipe Lesser Yellowlegs Killdeer



Surf-bird Turnstones Wilson's Phalarope Purple Sandpiper Rock Sandpiper Ruff Mountain Plover



Pectoral Sandpiper Red Phalarope Dunlin Stilt Sandpiper Solitary Sandpiper Buff-breasted Sandpiper Sanderling Red-necked Phalarope Wilson's Plover Baird's Sandpiper White-rumped Sandpiper



Spotted Sandpiper Piping Plover Semipalmated Plover Western Sandpiper Semipalmated Sandpiper Snowy Plover Least Sandpiper

Large Shorebirds 14–23"

(About the size of a crow.) These birds generally have long legs and long bills. Many are "unmistakables" because of distinctive bill shapes or colors, or leg colors.



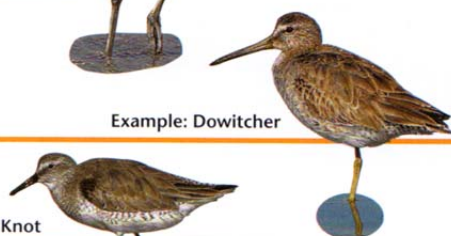
Example: Willet

Medium Shorebirds 8½–12"

(About the size of a robin.) Look at bill length to place in subgroups.

Bill considerably longer than head

Example: Dowitcher



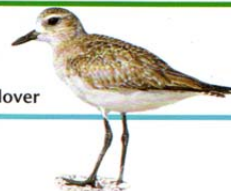
Bill about as long as head

Example: Red Knot



Bill clearly shorter than head

Example: Black-bellied Plover



Small Shorebirds 6–8"

(About the size of a sparrow.) Tiny, move fast, have short legs and short to medium bills.



Examples: Sanderling



Least Sandpiper

Notes on Semipalmated Sandpiper v. Western Sandpiper

Excerpted from recommended article here: *North American Peep Identification. A different look at an old problem* (<https://www.surfbirds.com/Features/coxpeeps1006/coxpeeps1006pt2.html>)

Western AND Semipalmated Sandpipers are the only peeps with “palmations”, small webs of skin between the toes, which can be seen if you look for them, especially on birds standing on sandy beaches.

Semipalmated Sandpiper	Western Sandpiper
<p>Semipalmated is the dominant species of peep throughout most of eastern North America except during the late fall and winter, when virtually all depart for wintering areas in the West Indies and northern South America.</p> <p>Adult Semipalmateds molt to varying degrees during migration, rarely up to 95% of their body plumage, but will very rarely show full basic plumage in the US or Canada and never molt flight feathers until they reach their winter grounds.</p> <p>In late fall, first-year Semipalmated Sandpipers are instantly separated from Westerns because they maintain their brown juvenile plumage while Westerns are in gray formative (winter) plumage.</p> <p>It has been suggested that Semipalmated is significantly more aggressive than Western, often engaging in intense and drawn-out physical interactions, even among juveniles</p> <p>Semipalmated Sandpipers look compact, with even proportions.</p> <p>Both the breast and the belly are robust so the underparts are smoothly rounded and their heads are proportionally smaller than Western's. (See 2nd picture on next page.)</p> <p>The species often appears bull-necked, unlike Western, which looks rangier.</p> <p>Their legs appear to be placed at the center of the body, so the distribution of weight looks even.</p>	<p>Western is by far the dominant peep on the West Coast, and Western along with Least are the only peeps likely to be seen in North America in winter.</p> <p>In fall, molt timing can be a quick way to separate Western from Semipalmated.</p> <p>Western Sandpipers molt much earlier, with some attaining full basic plumage by August. Large gaps appear in the wings of adult Western due to missing flight feathers, while Semipalmated Sandpiper is unlikely to be seen replacing flight feathers in North America.</p> <p>Any first-year standard peep with extensive gray, formative (winter) plumage is a Western.</p> <p>Western is lanky and long-legged compared to Semipalmated.</p> <p>Their head usually looks slightly too large for their bodies, while the reverse is true of Semipalmated. (Picture below.)</p> <p>Western appears to be carrying more weight in front of their legs which are placed slightly farther back on the body compared to Semipalmated.</p> <p>This creates a heavy-chested appearance that can be so pronounced that it seems surprising that they are able to stay upright. This is particularly apparent on roosting birds.</p>



Western and Semipalmated Sandpiper. In this great comparison of Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers notice the head of the Semi is proportionally smaller and the underparts are smoothly rounded. To put it succinctly, the Western looks lean and the Semipalmated looks portly. With these individuals the difference in bill shape is striking, likely a female Western and a male Semipalmated. These adults in spring are also easily separated by plumage. When such a clear comparison is available it is valuable to spend time studying the differences in structure and behavior.

Photo: Bill Schmoker-Weld Co, CO 06 Apr

Other Peep Views



Semipalmated, Least and Western Sandpipers.

From top to bottom. Semipalmated, Least, Western. Start by comparing the two standard peeps. Note how the Semipalmated looks compact while the Western looks lanky. The difference in bill structure is quite minimal. In this photo, head size seems more telling than bill structure. The Least is noticeably smaller than the standard peeps. The leg bones of the Least have a delicate appearance. Compare the knee joints of all three. Also notice how easy it is to see the presence/absence of toe webbing. In this situation, feeding on a tilted rock, feeding postures completely change.

Photo: Tony Leukering 09/23/05 Avalon NJ



Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers. See how the Semipalmated, sandwiched between these two Westerns, looks compact while the Westerns look rangier. The difference in bill structure is clear compared to the Western on the left and while it is still noticeable compared to the right-hand Western it is less obvious.

Photo: Cin-Ty Lee Brazoria NWR, TX 05 July

Shorebird ID Resources Sampler
Saw Mill River Audubon
July 2022 update

<https://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/shorebirds>