Shorebird Identification

- 40 Species Common to NA
- 31 Migrate Through the Tennessee River Valley

*Your Requirement = 17*

>50% of All Species Have Declined Over the Past 30 Years

MAV = 500,000

Plovers Family Charadriidae

- **Required: 3 Species**
  - **Piping Plover**
    - Small, plump-bodied
    - Short, thick bills
    - Forage visually
    - Often heard before seen (e.g., Killdeer)
  - **Killdeer**
  - **Black-bellied Plover**
    - *Pluvialis squatarola*
    - Dark, Thick Bill
    - White Wing Stripe (visible in flight)
    - White Rump
    - Black Legs
    - Mainly Coastal but frequent lakeshores and agricultural fields

**WINTER**

**BREEDING**
Semipalmated Plover
(Charadrius semipalmatus)

- **Length**: 5.75 in
- **Shape**: Orange legs
- **Bill and Feet**: Short, orange bill; orange legs
- **Upperparts**: Brown/gray
- **Underparts**: White
- **Breeding**: 1 breast band
- **Winter**: About ½ the size of Killdeer

Killdeer
(Charadrius vociferus)

- **Length**: 8 inches
- **Wing Stripe**: White wing stripe (visible in flight)
- **Appearance**: Rust-colored rump
- **Additional Features**: Reddish eye rings
- **Commonality**: Very common in U.S.

Stilts & Avocets
Family Recurvirostridae

- **Required**: 2 Species
- **Features**: Sleek, graceful waders; long, slender bills; "spindly" legs
- **Stilt**: Black-necked Stilt
- **American Avocet**: Normally forage out in shallow water (not on mudflats)
Black-necked Stilt
*(Himantopus mexicanus)*

- Length = 13 in
- Long and Very Thin Black Bill
- Black Cap with White Spot Above Eye
- IN FLIGHT: Legs Extend Well Past Tail

American Avocet
*(Recurvirostra americana)*

- Length = 15 in
- Very Thin, “Upturned” Bill
- White Back Bordered by 2 Longitudinal Black Stripes
- BREEDING: White Rump & Tail
- WINTER: Long, Blue/Gray Legs

Family Scolopacidae
Sandpipers and Phalaropes

- Inhabit Mudflats and Sandy Shorelines
- Many Adapted for High-Speed Flight
- Required: 15 Species
- Very Diverse Group

- Semipalmated Sandpipers
- Greater Yellowlegs
Greater Yellowlegs  
(*Tringa melanoleuca*)

- Length = 11 in
- Long, Thin Bill Curved Slightly Upward
- Black and White “Flecking” on Back
- Bright Yellow Legs
- Bill Length = 1.5X’s Length of Head
- 1.5

Lesser Yellowlegs  
(*Tringa flavipes*)

- Length = 8.75 in
- Bill Not Upturned
- Similar Flecking
- Roughly Half the Size of Greater Yellowlegs

Solitary Sandpiper  
(*Tringa solitaria*)

- Length = 7 in
- Usually Solitary and Often Bobs Tail
- BOLD White Eye Ring
- Short, Olive-Colored Legs
- White Underside
**Spotted Sandpiper**  
(*Actitis macularius*)

- Distinctive, “Fluttery” Flight
- Bobs tail during feeding
- Length = 6.25 in
- **Little, If Any Flecking on Back**
- **Orange** Tone to Bill
- **Yellow/Orange** Legs
- **Spots on Chest**

**Semipalmated Sandpiper**  
(*Calidris pusilla*)

- Length = 5 in
- Overall **Grayish** in Color
- Thin, White Wing Stripe
- Thin, Dark Bill
- **Dark (Black) Legs**
- **Thin, White** Wing Stripe

**Least Sandpiper**  
(*Calidris minutilla*)

- Very Common in east TN
- **Yellow** Legs
- **Very Thin, Dark Bill** (Slightly Decurved)
- **Very Small Shorebird** (Smallest in NA)
- Overall, **Brownish** in Color with White Underparts
- Thin, White Wing Stripe
### Pectoral Sandpiper
*(Calidris melanotos)*
- **Length**: 7.5 in
- **Yellow Legs**
- **Distinct Division Between Brown Breast and White Belly**
- **Very Similar to Least in Appearance but Significantly Larger (~Killdeer-size)**
- **Orange Bill**

### Dunlin
*(Calidris alpina)*
- **Length**: 7 in
- **Thin, Dark Bill with Droop at Tip**
- **White Wing Stripe**
- **Black Legs**
- **Medium-Sized Shorebird**

### Long-billed Dowitcher
*(Limnodromus scolopaceus)*
- **Length**: 10 in
- **Tail Barred Black and White**
- **Barred Upper Chest AND Red Belly**
- **Long Straight Bill**
- **Dull Yellow Legs**
- **Call**: Single Sharp “Keek”
Short-billed Dowitcher  
(*Limnodromus griseus*)

- **Length:** 9.5 in
- **Call:** Quick Mellow “tu-tu-tu”
- **Breeding Bars and Spots**
- **Long Straight Bill**
- **Dull Yellow Legs**
- **Similar Winter Plumage**
- **Barred Upper Chest**
- **Red Belly (Not Both)**

Wilson’s Snipe  
(*Gallinago delicata*)

- **Length:** 9 in
- **“Stocky” Appearance With Short, Olive-Colored Legs**
- **Brownish Appearance**
- **Pointed Wings and a Rapid Zigzag Flight**
- **Very Long, Straight Bill**
- **Found in “marshy” habitat**

American Woodcock  
(*Scolopax minor*)

- **Length:** 8.25 in
- **More of a Grayish Overall Appearance**
- **Very Long, Straight Bill**
- **Stocky and Short-legged**
- **Black Nape Crossed by Pale Lines**
- **Found in Woodlands/Shrubby Fields**
Other Resources:

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)  
Bird Identification Center  

Shorebird Photo Quiz  
http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/4413/sh_quiz.html