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Birds of the Rocky Mountains -- Paul A. Johnsgard

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***Birds of the Rocky Mountains*—Species Accounts, pages
142–182: Rails, Cranes, & Shorebirds**

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Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*)

Identification: This small marsh bird is elusive, and is usually seen when flushed from marshy vegetation, when its fairly long and reddish bill is evident, and its rusty to brownish plumage can be seen. It is more often heard than seen; a metallic ticking and a descending laughing call are its most common vocalizations.

LATILONG STATUS

	M		
	S		
V	S		

s	M	S	M
s		M	
s	M	M	M

	M	S	M
		M	S
S	S	S	R

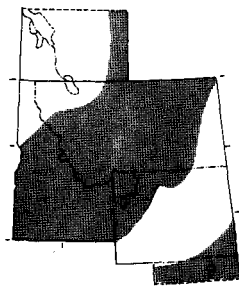
Status: A local summer resident and breeder in the general region, especially at lower elevations; generally rare or lacking in the montane parks except for Rocky Mountain N.P., where a rare breeder in the Colorado River valley (in 1954).

Habitats and Ecology: Inhabits marshes with dense stands of emergent vegetation, nesting on wet ground or over shallow water in such stands.

Seasonality: A summer resident in the region, with rather few actual records, but in Montana and Wyoming the birds apparently arrive in May, and remain until October or November. There are several nest records for Wyoming in mid-May.

Comments: This little-known species is often detected in late spring, when its distinctive "ticket, ticket" notes are uttered, during territorial establishment by males. Besides the actual nests, these rails also construct several "dummy" nests, some of which later serve as brooding sites. Both sexes participate in incubation, and the blackish chicks are cared for until they are about two months old, after which they are chased from their parents' territory.

Suggested Reading: Sanderson, 1977; Pospichal & Marshall, 1954; Horak, 1970; Kaufmann, 1970.



Sora (*Porzana carolina*)

Identification: Similar to the Virginia rail, but with a much shorter bill that is more yellowish and (in adults) with a black facial mask. The calls are similar, but sora rails utter a distinctive descending whinny-like call, and a plaintive *kerwee* note.

Status: An uncommon to occasional summer resident in the region; infrequent in the montane parks, but known to nest in several of them.

Habitats and Ecology: Found in essentially the same marshy habitats as the Virginia rail, and apparently having very similar niche adaptations, but perhaps somewhat more vegetarian in its diet. More surface-feeding and less probing for food is also done by soras than Virginia rails.

Seasonality: In Montana and Wyoming these birds usually arrive in April and leave in late October or November, with probable migration peaks in May and September. Egg records in Wyoming extend from May 14 to June 7; nest records for Montana and Rocky Mountain N.P. are for the latter half of June.

Comments: Sora rails are highly aggressive, and tend to evict Virginia rails from their territories as well as males of their own species. As in Virginia rails, the birds construct several extra nests that may be used by the broods for resting after hatching. The birds fledge in about five weeks, and in some areas the birds may possibly rear two broods in a single season.

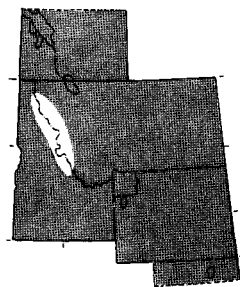
Suggested Reading: Sanderson, 1977; Horak, 1970; Pospichal & Marshall, 1954; Tanner & Hendrickson, 1956.

LATILONG STATUS

s	S	S	?
	S	s	S
S	S	S	S

S	s	s	S
S	S	M	S
S	S	S	S

S	s	S	M
	s	S	S
S	S	S	S



Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Identification: This marsh-dweller is rather elusive, but if seen its bright red and yellow bill is distinctive (immatures have duller yellow-tipped bills), and it shows a triangular patch of white below the tail. The birds swim in a coot-like manner, and also walk through the marshes somewhat like rails. Their calls are also coot-like, but higher pitched.

LATILONG STATUS

		V	

			V

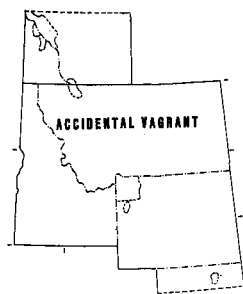
Status: An accidental vagrant in the region, with few records. Recorded in Rocky Mountain N.P. on two occasions.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species is associated with fresh waters, ranging in size from lakes to small ponds, and with small and slowly flowing streams to large rivers. It forages primarily on the seeds and fruits of weeds and grasses, and to some degree on various invertebrate foods.

Seasonality: The few Colorado records are inadequate to estimate seasonal occurrence; they extend from May to August. In Kansas, eggs are laid in May and June, which represents the nearest regular breeding area.

Comments: This species, previously known as the "common gallinule," is coot-like in that the birds are highly territorial, and both sexes vigorously defend their territories. In this species two broods are sometimes raised in a single season; in such cases the young of the first brood often help feed the chicks of the second brood.

Suggested Reading: Sanderson, 1977; Frederickson, 1971; Wood, 1974.



American Coot (*Fulica americana*)

Identification: This duck-like species of the rail family is mostly dull gray except for a white, chicken-like bill, and a triangular white patch under the tail similar to that of a common moorhen. The two species' behavior and calls are also similar, but coots are more often seen swimming in open water, and their calls tend to be lower and more grating.

Status: Widespread and a summer resident on wetlands throughout the region, especially at lower elevations. Present and probably breeding in all the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: Associated with ponds and marshes having a combination of open water and emergent reedbeds, in which nesting occurs. Besides foraging on aquatic plants, the birds sometimes also graze on nearby shorelines and meadows.

Seasonality: In Montana the birds are present from late March to late November, with migration peaks in late April and late September. Wyoming nest records extend from May 11 to August 8, and Montana nest records are from May 27 to July 8, with hatched young observed as early as June 28.

Comments: Coots are highly successful members of the rail family, which have adopted a quasi-ducklike niche, and more often mingle with ducks than with other species of rails. They are monogamous, and like the other rails are highly territorial, often fighting fiercely for territorial space. The young are cared for by both parents, and fledge at about 75 days of age.

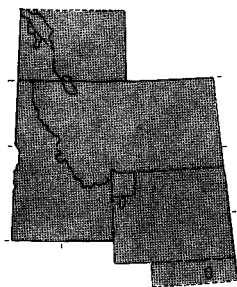
Suggested Reading: Sanderson, 1977; Fredrickson, 1970; Gullion, 1954.

LATILONG STATUS

S	R	s	S
s	R	R	S
R	R	S	s

S	R	s	R
S	S	S	S
R	S	S	S

S	S	S	S
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	R



Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)

Identification: Sandhill cranes are hard to mistake for any other species except perhaps the larger herons; their grayish to rust-brown plumages and bare red crowns are distinctive, as are their loud, penetrating and rattling calls, and their goose-like manner of flying with the neck fully stretched out.

LATILONG STATUS

M	s	S	
	M	M	M
V	s	S	s

S	s	S	M
S	S	M	M
S	S	S	S

S	M	M	M
M	S	M	M
M	S	S	M

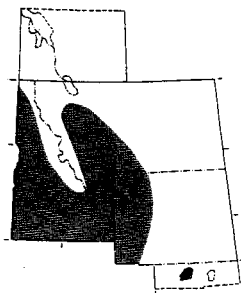
Status: A local summer resident in the more remote wetlands of the region, north almost to Glacier N.P. The range is probably now expanding, and may soon include the Glacier area, where the last reported breeding occurred in 1899.

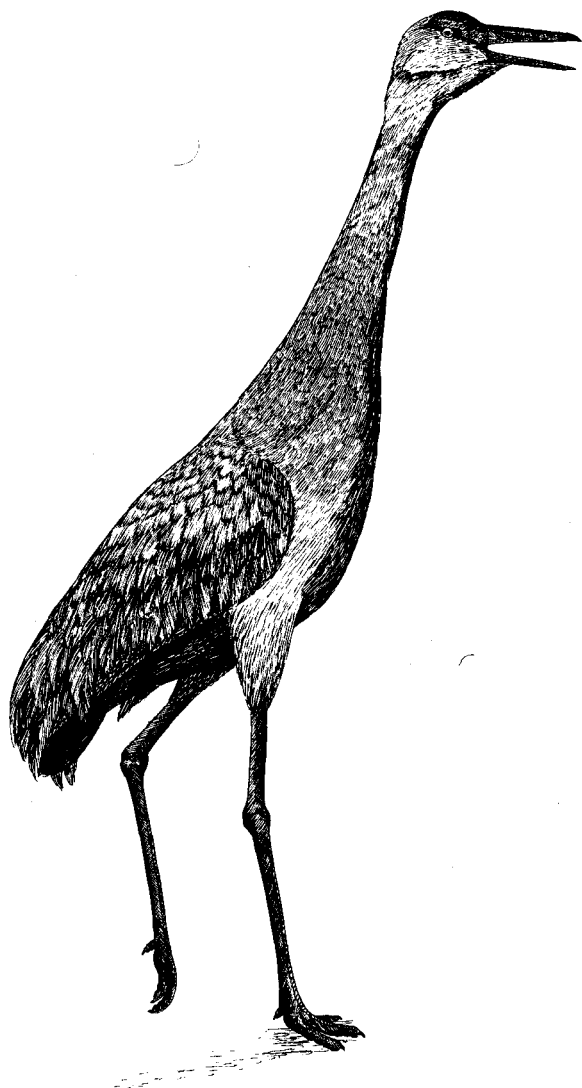
Habitats and Ecology: In the Rockies, sandhill cranes are especially associated with beaver impoundments, where the birds nest along shorelines or sometimes on beaver lodges, often in dense willow thickets. The birds are highly territorial and usually are well scattered. Their loud calls serve to advertise territories and communicate over long distances.

Seasonality: Records in Montana and Wyoming are mostly from mid-April to mid-October, with migration peaks in late April and late September. Nests in both states are from mid-May to late June.

Comments: After a prolonged period of range retraction, this species began to recover under full protection, and now the Rocky Mountain population of this species is thriving. The densest breeding population occurs at Gray's Lake N.W.R. in southern Idaho, but perhaps a half-dozen pairs nest yearly in the Jackson Hole region as well. Coyotes and human disturbance represent the major sources of losses during nesting; incubating cranes should never be disturbed from their nests.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1983c; Drewein & Bizeau, 1974; Sanderson, 1977.





Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*)

Identification: This is the largest marsh bird in North America; its white plumage and black wingtips are unmistakable. Immatures are more rust-colored, but not as brown as young sandhill cranes. The loud, resonant calls of adults may be heard for up to a mile or so.

LATILONG STATUS

V			V
	V	V	
	V	V	

V			
	V		V

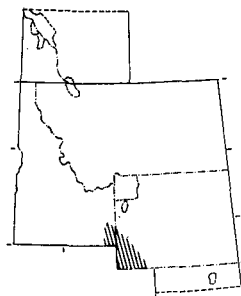
Status: Still a rare and local migrant, mainly in southern Idaho, where a flock of whooping cranes is being established by rearing young under sandhill crane foster parents.

Habitats and Ecology: Once widespread in central North America, the whooping crane currently breeds only in a limited area of northwestern Canada. It nests in remote wetlands there, in a muskeg wilderness area. On migration the birds utilize a variety of wetland types, but they are usually shallow and broad, with safe roosting sites and nearby foraging opportunities.

Seasonality: There are still few regional records, but probably migration times are similar to those of sandhill cranes. There are still no nesting records for this population.

Comments: The "cross-fostering" of whooping crane eggs under sandhill crane parents represents a daring attempt to establish a new flock of this endangered species that began in 1976. The new flock is slowly growing (about 30 birds in 1983), and the results should soon be apparent as to whether the young birds will be able to breed successfully in their new habitats.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1983c.



Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

Identification: In spring, this large plover is easily identified by its pale white and marbled upperparts, contrasting with the black underparts. Immature and winter-plumaged birds are much more difficult to identify, but in flight they exhibit a patch of black feathers in the "armpit" area, as do breeding adults. Flying birds also often utter a plaintive whistled *pee-a-wee* note.

Status: A rare migrant or vagrant throughout the region, more prevalent on the plains than in montane regions.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrant birds are likely to be found along lakes or reservoir areas, but sometimes also are seen on plowed fields or forage on short meadows or pasturelands. The birds breed on high arctic tundra areas of northern Canada and Alaska.

Seasonality: Wyoming migration records are from May 11 to 21, and from August 21 to November 9. Montana records are also for May and from August through October. In Colorado the records extend from April 11 to December 28.

Comments: This species, called the "grey plover" in Great Britain, is adapted to breeding on dry stony tundra, usually on rocky slopes, where its pale dorsal plumage is hard to detect. On their wintering grounds the birds occupy tidal flats and ocean shorelines, and sometimes also inland habitats.

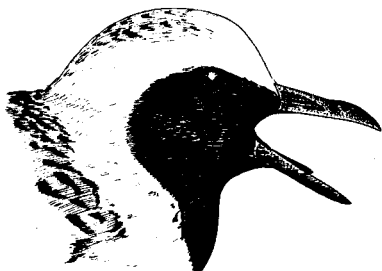
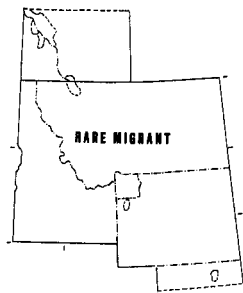
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	M	
	M		M
	M		

M		M	?
M	M	M	M
M	M		M

		M	M
	M	M	M
V		M	M



Lesser Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*)

Identification: A smaller plover than the black-bellied, this species in spring has a dorsal plumage beautifully dappled with golden spots, and black underparts like those of the black-bellied plover. In flight, it lacks black "armpits," and this fieldmark is useful in recognizing winter-plumage and immature birds, which closely resemble those of the black-bellied plover. The flight call is shorter and harsher than that of the black-bellied plover.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	
	M	M
	M	

M		
	V	V

		V
		V
	M	M

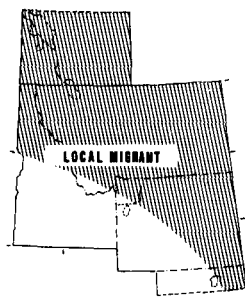
Status: A local migrant in the region, especially on the plains and prairie areas, but only a vagrant in the montane parks. The nearest breeding area is along the western coast of Hudson Bay in northern Manitoba.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrant birds are usually found along lakes or reservoirs, or on agricultural lands, during migration. They often occur on plowed or recently burned fields on migration, where surface-foraging opportunities are available.

Seasonality: The records for Montana are mainly for the fall period, from August through September. Similarly, in Colorado, the birds are most often seen in summer and fall, although the spread of records is from March 30 to November 5.

Comments: Like the black-bellied plover, this is an arctic tundra breeder, but the birds nest on both dry upland tundra and on knolls of lowland tundra, especially those having many boulders with golden lichens, which closely match the dorsal coloration of the breeding plumage. Most adults migrate south in the fall along the Atlantic coast, leaving immatures to move south through the Great Plains region.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.



Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

Identification: This small "ringed" plover has a broad breastband and a black-tipped orange bill in breeding plumage, as well as orange legs and a narrow orange eye-ring. Immatures and winter adults are less colorful, but the general patterning remains the same. A clear, rising whistle is often uttered in flight.

Status: A local migrant throughout the region, mainly on the plains, and a rare migrant or vagrant in the montane parks. The nearest breeding areas are in northern Saskatchewan, or possibly extreme northeastern Alberta.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrating birds are usually observed on open sandy or gravelly habitats along rivers or beaches, where they feed by running about and picking up morsels from the surface, rather than probing for foods.

Seasonality: In Montana these birds are primarily fall migrants, from July to October. Wyoming records are mainly for May and August, and in Colorado they have been reported between April 21 and December 7, but mainly occur during spring and fall. In Alberta they are most common in mid- to late-May, and again from mid-August to late September.

Comments: This small tundra-breeding plover is widely distributed in North America, and is replaced by the very similar ringed plover in the Old World. The semipalmated plover winters from the southern United States all the way south to Argentina.

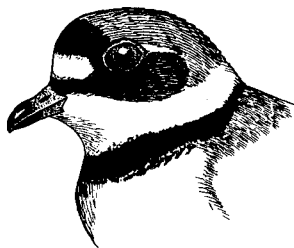
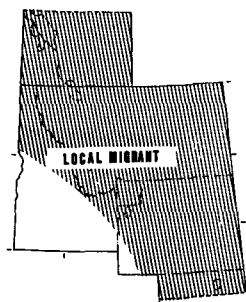
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	
M	M	M
	M	M

M		M
M		M
	M	M

	M	M
M	M	M
	M	M



Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Identification: The most widespread and common of the North American plovers, the killdeer is easily recognized by its rusty brown tail and its double breast band, together with its incessant *kill-dee* calling, especially during the breeding season. Often found well away from water.

LATILONG STATUS

R	R	S	S
S	S	S	S
R	R	S	R

R	R	S	R
S	R	S	S
S	S	S	S

S	S	S	s
S	S	S	S
R	R	S	R

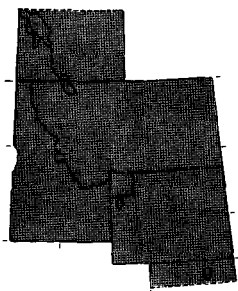
Status: A common summer or permanent resident throughout the region, both on the plains and montane areas, but more common at lower elevations and not reaching alpine areas.

Habitats and Ecology: Widely distributed in open-land habitats, including pastures, roadsides, gravel pits, golf courses, airports, and sometimes suburban lawns. Gravelly areas are favored, and gravelled rooftops are sometimes used for nesting in urban areas. Migrating and wintering birds are more closely associated with water, but also use mud flats and open fields.

Seasonality: Locally resident in much of the area, but in Montana most records are from late March to October, with stragglers remaining until December. In Colorado most migrants arrive in April and leave by mid-November, but many birds overwinter. Nesting records for Montana are from March 15 to June 30, and in Banff and Jasper young have been observed from May 29 to July 23.

Comments: This familiar shorebird is able to exploit a wide variety of human-associated habitats, and is highly protective of its nest and young, performing elaborate injury-feigning or "broken-wing" displays when they are threatened by humans or other mammals. The birds are insectivorous, feeding on surface-dwelling insects such as beetles for the most part.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Phillips, 1972; Bunni, 1959.



Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*)

Identification: This species has the shape and size of a killdeer, but lacks breast banding and is rather uniformly brownish dorsally, with (in adults) a black forehead patch. Its calls include a variety of whistled notes, and the birds are almost invariably found on grassland habitats.

Status: A local summer resident on the plains east of the mountains; a rare migrant or vagrant in the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: This species breeds exclusively in April on arid grasslands, where grasses are usually no more than three inches in height, and sometimes in semidesert areas with cacti and scattered shrubs, often far from water. During the nonbreeding seasons they also are found in relatively dry habitats.

Seasonality: Wyoming records are from March 25 to September 13, and Montana records are from late April to September. In Colorado the records extend from March 25 to October 5. Egg records in Wyoming are from May 22 to July 9, and in Montana from late May to late July.

Comments: This shorebird is one of the distinctive breeding species of the short-grass plains of interior North America, and its range is gradually retracting as these areas have come under irrigation or otherwise have been eliminated as suitable breeding habitat.

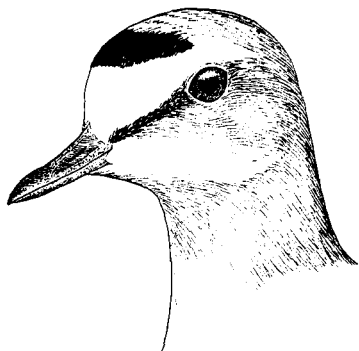
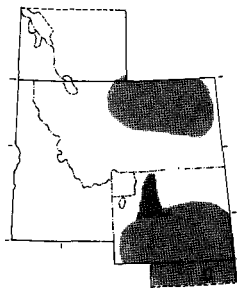
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Graul, 1974, 1975; Laun, 1957.

LATILONG STATUS

	M		
V			

M			?
?	M	M	S
	M	M	S

s	S	S	S
s	S	S	S
s		M	M



Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

Identification: This distinctive shorebird is unique in having long red legs and a strongly bicolored plumage, with black above and white below. The bill is black and needle-like, and the birds are usually found wading in shallow waters.

LATILONG STATUS

		M	S
	M		

M		s	M
	M	M	M

M	M	S	
M	M	M	M
M	M	S	M

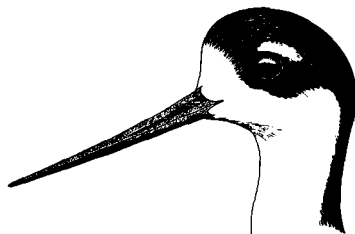
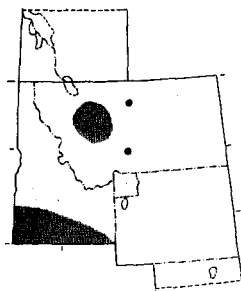
Status: A local migrant or vagrant through much of the area, except for southern Idaho, where breeding occurs. Absent or accidental in the montane parks. Breeding occurred in the Choteau latilong of Montana in 1977, and the only Wyoming breeding has been in the Casper latilong (*American Birds* 30:983).

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding in this species usually occurs in the grassy shoreline areas of shallow freshwater or brackish pools of wetlands having extensive mudflats, or sometimes along the shorelines of salt lakes where vegetation is essentially lacking. Often found in company with American avocets, which use similar habitats.

Seasonality: The few regional records are from April 14 to September 12.

Comments: This species is part of a nearly worldwide complex of stilts that vary greatly in plumage, but probably all represent variations of the same species. Although rather different in appearance from avocets, the two groups are quite closely related and have rather similar behavior patterns.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Hamilton, 1975; Stout, 1967.



Black-necked Stilt

American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*)

Identification: The recurved and long bill makes this species easy to identify; additionally, it has very long legs and a strong black and white wing pattern that flashes in flight. Usually observed wading in shallow waters.

Status: A local summer resident over much of the region, mainly on shallow marshes of the plains. Rare in the montane parks, with breeding reported only for Yellowstone (no recent records).

Habitats and Ecology: During breeding this species favors ponds or shallow lakes with exposed and sparsely vegetated shorelines, and somewhat saline waters that have large populations of aquatic invertebrates, which are gathered by making scythelike movements of the curved bill through the water.

Seasonality: Reported in Wyoming and Montana from mid- or late April through September, rarely as late as early November. Colorado records extend from March 15 to November 30. In Alberta the birds usually do not arrive until early May, and are rarely seen after the end of August. Wyoming egg records are from May 15 to July 15.

Comments: This large and attractive shorebird is a frequent feature of the shallow, alkaline marshes of the arid plains and prairie areas, north to the Alberta parklands. In Alberta many of the prairie marshes support these birds, which often nest in loose colonies, and collectively defend their breeding areas from intruders by loud calling and diving attacks.

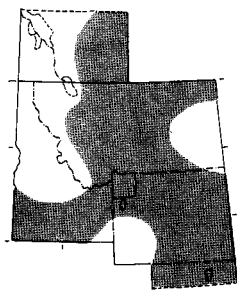
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Gibson, 1971; Hamilton, 1975.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	M	M
M	S		S
V	M	s	M

S	M	S	s
S	S	S	M
S	M	M	M

M	S	S	M
S	S	M	S
S	s	S	S



Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*)

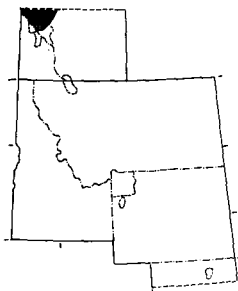
Identification: This medium-sized shorebird has rather bright yellow legs, and a long black bill that is nearly straight. The dorsal plumage is dark and finely spotted, and the undersides are white to slightly flecked with spotting. In flight, the birds usually utter three to five sharp, clear whistled notes.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	M	M
M	M	?	M
V	M	M	M

M		M	M
M	M	M	M
M	M	M	M

M		M	M
	M	M	M
M	M	M	M



Status: A migrant over most of the region, but a summer resident in the mountains of Alberta, occasionally breeding south to Banff Park. Breeds rather commonly in Jasper Park (Miette and Athabasca valleys, Willow and Blue creeks, etc.).

Habitats and Ecology: In migration these birds occupy the edges of marshes and slow-moving rivers, foraging along the shorelines and sometimes wading out belly-deep to probe in the mud or skim the surface for invertebrates. On the breeding grounds the birds favor muskeg areas, with a mix of ponds, trees, and clearings, and sometimes extend into subalpine scrub near timberline. In Alberta a favored nesting habitat consists of muskeg with spruce and tamarack.

Seasonality: Wyoming and Montana records extend from April to late May, and from August to October 24, with peaks in early May and early September. Colorado records are from March 26 to November 12. In Alberta the birds begin nesting in early May, and have usually left by late September.

Comments: This species and the lesser yellowlegs are very close relatives, and their niches overlap considerably, both on breeding and nonbreeding areas. In the Old World the closely related greenshank and spotted redshank replace them ecologically.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgad, 1981; Stout, 1967.

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*)

Identification: Like the previous species, this one has conspicuous yellow legs, but it is generally smaller, with a bill that is only about as long as its head, and it usually utters only one or two whistled notes when alarmed. In flight both species exhibit whitish rumps and tails.

Status: A migrant nearly throughout the entire region, but breeding locally in central Alberta, south to about 53°N. latitude, but not known to breed in either Jasper or Banff parks, where it is a rare migrant or vagrant.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding typically occurs in habitats that have a combination of rather open and tall woodlands, with low and sparse brushy undergrowth, and fairly close to grassy or marshy ponds. Broken hills, covered with burned or fallen timber, and low poplar second growth, are a favored Alberta nesting habitat. Outside the breeding season the birds occur along mud flats and shallow ponds, often with vegetated shorelines, and sometimes visit flooded fields.

Seasonality: In Montana and Wyoming these birds arrive in late April or early May, leaving by the end of that month, and again occur from mid-July to middle or late October, peaking in September. Colorado records are from April 5 to November 8. Few birds are seen after September in Alberta.

Comments: Breeding areas of these species are often well away from water, on sandy ridges covered by jackpines, or on dried burned-over areas with fallen timber present. The nest is often at the base of a tree or log, and the bird blends well with the browns of the bark or branches of the fallen trees. Usually one bird stands watch, often from the top of a small tree, while the other incubates.

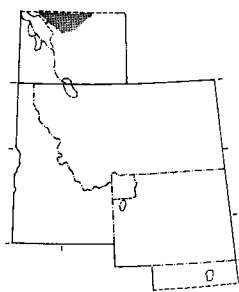
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	M	
	M	M	M
V	M	M	M

M	M	M	M
M	M	M	M
	M	M	M

M	M	M	M
M	M	M	M
M		M	M



Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*)

Identification: This small sandpiper is about the size of a lesser yellow-legs, but with darker legs and a strongly barred tail (evident in flight), as well as a conspicuous white eye-ring. A sharp alarm whistle is often uttered when flushed.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	M	M
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	M	M	M
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M	M	M	M
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M	M	M	M
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M	M	M	M
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M	M	M	M
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M	M	M	M
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M	M	M	M
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M	M	M	M
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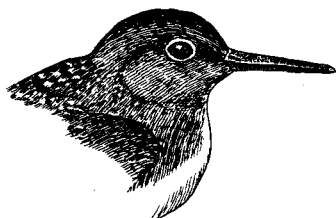
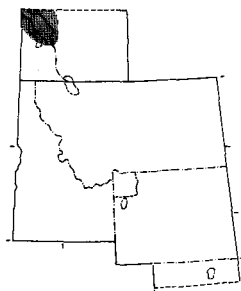
Status: A migrant throughout the region, breeding along the northern edge of this book's boundaries, in central and northern Alberta (south to about the North Saskatchewan River and, in the montane parks, to Kootenay N.P. In Jasper N.P. known breeding areas include Willow, Blue, and Isaac creeks, Topaz and Southesk lakes, and Rocky Forks.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding is done around muskeg ponds, along woodland lakes, and near forest ponds, where the old nests of tree-nesting birds such as American robins are utilized.

Seasonality: Montana and Wyoming records are from April 20 to May, and from late July to October 4. Colorado records are from April 20 to September 23. In Alberta there are egg records for early June, and observations of young during the latter half of July.

Comments: This is the only North American shorebird that nests in the abandoned nests of various passerine birds, such as blackbirds and robins, usually in rather wet and open terrain, where rusty blackbirds also often breed and provide nesting sites. Old nests of waxwings, kingbirds, and jays have at times also been used.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.



Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*)

Identification: This is a fairly large sandpiper with a straight, blackish bill and a brown to grayish dorsal coloration. The best fieldmark is provided by the wings, which when opened show a broad white wing stripe, bordered in front and behind with black. Loud *willet* calls are often uttered by disturbed birds.

Status: A migrant or summer resident over much of the area, breeding mainly in grassland marshes; generally rare or lacking in the montane parks. Although a reported nester in Yellowstone N.P., current evidence indicates that it is only a spring and fall migrant.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding habitats of this species consist of prairie marshes, usually brackish to semialkaline, seasonal ponds, and sometimes also intermittent streams in grassland areas. The birds are effective probers, and spend much of their time feeding in this way, but also peck at objects on the water surface.

Seasonality: Montana and Wyoming records extend from April 25 to October 1, and Colorado records are from April 14 to October 24. They are usually present in Alberta from late April to early September. Nesting in Montana is from mid-May to mid-June, and in the Cypress Hills downy young have been seen from June 13 to 26.

Comments: The willet is a species that breeds both on coastal shorelines and in the continental interior, in rather different habitat types. They often share their breeding habitats with marbled godwits, American avocets, and Wilson's phalaropes. Wintering occurs from the southern states to central South America.

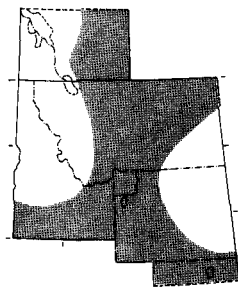
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Tompkins, 1965; Stout, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	M	s
M	M		S
V	M	M	

S	M		M
S	s	s	M
S	S	M	M

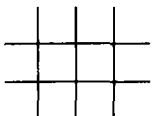
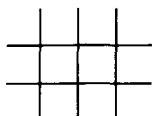
S	s	S	M
S	S	M	M
s	s	S	s



Wandering Tattler (*Heteroscelus incanus*)

Identification: This rarity resembles a solitary sandpiper, but is unspotted dorsally, much grayer throughout, and has yellowish legs. Its call is a distinctive series of rapid whistles, all uttered on the same pitch. Its yellow legs might cause confusion with yellowlegs, but the birds are much grayer throughout, and have no noticeable dorsal spotting with buffy white.

LATILONG STATUS



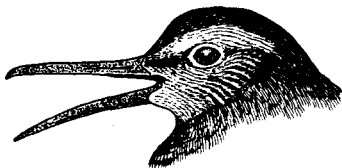
Status: An accidental vagrant in the area, with records for Jasper and Watertown Lakes parks, a few other Alberta records, and few if any other regional records. The nearest known breeding areas are in northwestern British Columbia and the mountains of Yukon Territory.

Habitats and Ecology: Associated with rocky shorelines in wintering areas and on migration, and with mountain streams in breeding areas, usually in the alpine zone. Nesting occurs on gravelly or rocky bars and islands of arctic streams.

Seasonality: The few Alberta records are from May 30 to September 2.

Comments: Very few nests of this elusive species have been found, and little is known of its reproductive biology. Its common name "tattler" derives from the fact that the birds are highly vocal on their breeding grounds whenever any danger threatens, thus alerting all the locally nesting birds to such danger.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.



Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitus macularia*)

Identification: This common small sandpiper is usually best identified by its behavior, a teetering motion that is almost constantly used. In flight the birds have a distinctive vibrating flight and appear to fly with strongly downcurved wings. Breeding-plumage birds have spotted underparts, but these are lacking in immature and non-breeding individuals.

Status: A common summer resident throughout the region, breeding in all the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: Associated with forest streams, pools, and rivers, usually at lower elevations, but extending locally to alpine timberline and utilizing a wide array of open terrains with water present, and rarely even in the absence of nearby water. Shaded watercourses are favored, and sometimes the birds are found along rapidly flowing mountain torrents.

Seasonality: Reported in Wyoming from April 26 to October 5, but mostly present between early May and late August. Colorado records are from April 28 to October 12, and in Alberta the birds are usually present from late April to early September. Egg records in Wyoming are from May 23 to August 7, and in Alberta eggs have been reported from June 14 to July 15, with young reported between July 9 and 25.

Comments: The distinctive bobbing motion of this species may make visual recognition easier in its sometimes noisy environment, such as along ocean surfs or on the edges of mountain streams. Similar behavior is performed by American dippers, which are often found in the same habitats.

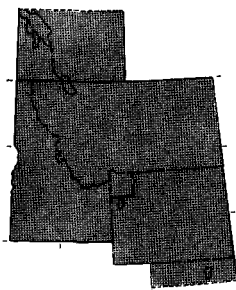
Suggested Reading: Hays, 1973; Oring & Knudson, 1973; Nelson, 1939; Miller & Miller, 1948.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	S	s
?	S	s	S
s	M	s	

S	s	s	s
?	S	S	S
S	S	S	M

S	s	S	M
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	S



Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)

Identification: This prairie-adapted sandpiper is usually seen perched on fenceposts in grassland habitats or flying above the prairies, often calling loudly and showing a bowed-wing flight similar to that of the spotted sandpiper, which is much smaller. The head is small relative to the body, and the bill and legs are yellowish to pale orange in color.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	S	S
?	S	s	S
V	M	s	

S	s	s	s
?			M
	M		M

		s	
		M	M

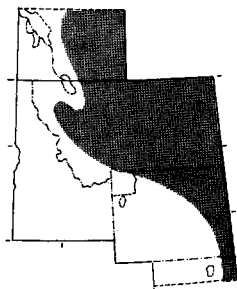
Status: A summer resident in native grassland areas east of the Rockies; a rare migrant or vagrant in the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: Generally associated with wet meadows, hayfields, mowed prairies, or mid-length prairies, avoiding shortgrass steppe areas and extremely tall grasses. Often found far from water, and rarely if ever wading for its foods.

Seasonality: Reported in Montana and Wyoming from April 27 to September 16, with probable migration peaks in May and August. Colorado records extend from April 14 to September 2, and eggs have been found from May 20 to June 28. In Montana eggs have been noted from May 25 to mid-July.

Comments: This is an indicator species of native prairie, and as such is one that has been declining in range and abundance. On its breeding grounds it utters a flight song of great beauty while fluttering above the territory like a giant butterfly. On landing, it momentarily holds its wings above the body like a graceful ballet dancer.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Higgins & Kirsch, 1975; Stout, 1967.



Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*)

Identification: This very large shorebird is easily identified by its extremely long (at least 5 inches), decurved bill. In flight the birds exhibit cinnamon wing linings underneath (also present on marbled godwits), and frequently utter loud *cur-lee* calls when alarmed. Often seen far from water, in native grasslands.

Status: A summer resident in grassland areas over much of the region, but rare to absent in the montane parks except Grand Teton (where not yet known to breed) and rare but recorded as breeding in Yellowstone.

Habitats and Ecology: On the breeding grounds this species occurs in shortgrass areas, grazed taller grasslands, and overgrazed grasslands with scattered shrubs or cacti. Hilly or rolling areas seem favored over flatlands, and the birds often nest rather far from standing water. However, migrating birds usually are found on beaches or other shoreline habitats.

Seasonality: Montana records are from April 9 to mid-September; peak migration records for Montana and Wyoming are in April and August. Colorado records are from April 10 to October 24, and in Alberta the birds are present from late April until late August. Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming egg records are from April 20 to July 4; in Colorado eggs have been found from May 4 until June.

Comments: This is one of the finest shorebirds of the world, and one whose range continues to decline. In Alberta it still nests north to about Elnora and Castor, but in the western U.S. it has generally lost much of its original breeding range, especially at the eastern edges of its nesting range.

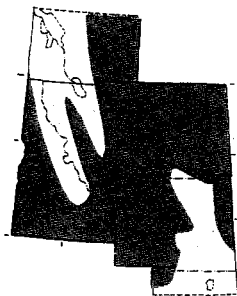
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Bicak, 1977; Fitzner, 1978.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	s	s
	S	s	S
S	s	S	s

S	s	s	S
S	S	M	S
S	S	S	s

S	M	S	M
s	M	M	M
s	M	s	s



Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*)

Identification: Adults in breeding plumage have barred rusty red breasts and underparts, and a black-tipped orange bill, as well as broad white wing stripes (visible in flight). Immatures and non-breeding birds are much more grayish throughout, with less colorful bills, but the white wing stripe still provides an excellent fieldmark.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	
		M

		M
		M

		M

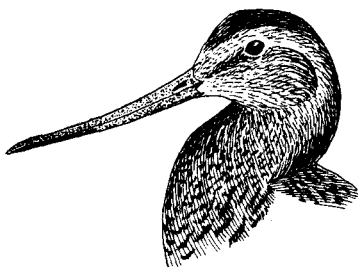
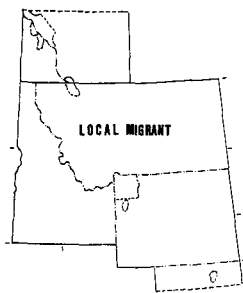
Status: A rare to occasional local migrant in the region, mostly in the plains area, and rare or accidental in montane areas.

Habitats and Ecology: On migration this species is likely to be found along shorelines of prairie marshes, singly or in small numbers, and usually probing dowitcher-like for food. They breed in subarctic areas where woods and scrub tundra intermix, and where wet meadows or ponds are close by. The nearest breeding grounds are along western Hudson Bay, in northeastern Manitoba.

Seasonality: There are not many records, but in southern Alberta the birds are typically present in late April or early May, and again in August and September.

Comments: This beautiful tundra nester becomes, on the breeding grounds, a perching bird, with the non-incubating member of the pair resting on low trees and watching for danger. Its loud cries of alarm warn not only its mate but other nesting birds in the vicinity. Because of this effective alarm system, the species' nests are among the hardest of arctic shorebirds to locate.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.



Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)

Identification: This species is about the size of a long-billed curlew, and like it exhibits cinnamon-colored underwing linings, but also has a nearly straight, black-tipped orange bill. It is usually seen on native grasslands, or foraging along the shorelines of prairie ponds and marshes.

Status: A local migrant and summer resident in northern parts of the region, including eastern Alberta and northern Montana. In Alberta it breeds from the foothills north to St. Paul and Athabasca, but is absent from the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: On the breeding grounds this species occupies wetlands associated with prairies, including intermittent streams, ponds, and shallow lakes ranging from fresh to strongly alkaline. Semipermanent ponds and lakes are especially preferred, with nesting occurring in grassy flats nearby.

Seasonality: Wyoming records are from April 25 to September 17; peak migration in Wyoming and Montana seems to be in May and early September. Colorado records extend from April 11 to November 25, and in Alberta the birds are usually present from late April to the end of August or early September. There are few regional nest dates, but in North Dakota eggs have been found from April 17 to June 22.

Comments: This species and the long-billed curlew are often seen together in breeding areas, but the curlew tends to be an upland nester, while the godwit remains much closer to water. Both species defend their nests strongly from humans, screaming loudly and diving at the intruder.

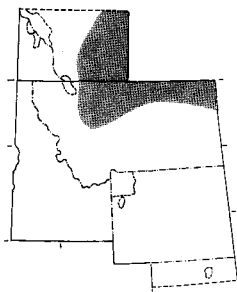
Suggested Reading: Nowicki, 1973; Johnsgard, 1981.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	M	s
M	M		S
V	M	M	

s	M	M	s
M	M	M	
	M	M	M

	M	M	M
M	M	M	M
M		M	M



Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)

Identification: In breeding plumage the bright rusty and black dorsal plumage, and a black-and-white head pattern, is easily recognized, but immatures and birds in winter plumage have a much more subdued pattern. The legs are always orange-red, and the bill is short and sharply pointed. Often found in gravelly or rocky shoreline areas, where it pokes about for food and flips small rocks over to expose the invertebrates below.

LATILONG STATUS

	V	V

V		
	V	
		V

		V
	V	
V		V

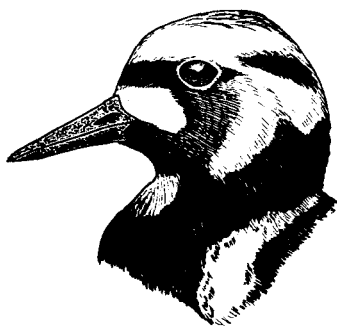
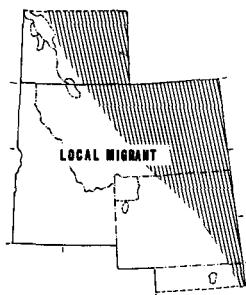
Status: A local migrant east of the mountains; an accidental vagrant in the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: On migration, these birds are likely to be found foraging on stubble fields where they sometimes forage with other species of shorebirds such as plovers, or on sandy shorelines of lakes or reservoirs. They are high-arctic breeders, nesting along the shorelines of the Arctic Ocean of northern Canada.

Seasonality: There are few regional records, but in spring they usually are seen during the second half of May. Colorado records are from April 26 to September 28.

Comments: The turnstones are highly specialized shorebirds in that their bills are adapted for probing and flipping over rocks or similar objects. Partly for this reason, their relationships to other shorebirds are rather obscure.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.



Black Turnstone (*Arenaria melanocephala*)

Identification: Very similar to the ruddy turnstone in shape and size, but lacking rusty color at all seasons, and without orange-colored legs.

Status: An accidental vagrant in the area; there is a single Montana sighting for Glacier National Park (Condor 60:337), but no other apparent record.

Habitats and Ecology: This species is similar in its behavior and ecology to the ruddy turnstone, but is more westerly in distribution, breeding in Alaska.

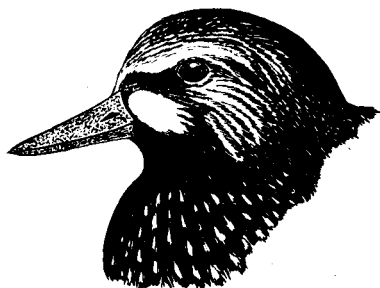
Seasonality: The only regional record is of a bird reported on August 28, 1957.

Comments: Very little is known of the biology of this species, which breeds in remote areas of western and southwestern Alaska, in lowland and coastal tundra. During the winter the birds inhabit rocky coastlines, foraging in the manner of ruddy turnstones just above the limits of the surf, probing in sand and turning over rocks or patches of seaweed with the bill, sometimes running toward the heavier objects and using their heads as battering rams.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

		V	



Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

Identification: This small sandpiper is one of the palest of the regional shorebirds; a black bill, black legs, and blackish shoulder areas contrast with an otherwise mostly white to grayish body. The birds feed at the waterline, often following retreating waves to find exposed foods.

LATILONG STATUS

	M		
	M		M
V	M		

M			
M	M	M	M
	M		M

		M	M
M	M	M	M
M			M

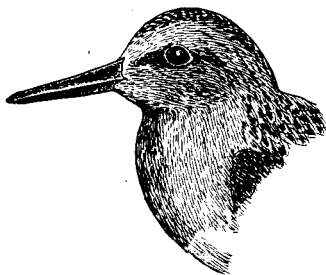
Status: A rare migrant or vagrant in the region, more common on the plains, and rare or accidental in the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrating birds are usually seen around the larger lakes, especially those with wave-swept sandy beaches. The birds are high-arctic nesters, and the nearest breeding areas are extreme northern Canada.

Seasonality: Wyoming records are from May 3 to 26, and from August 26 to October 30. Most Montana records are for fall, from late August through September. In Alberta the birds arrive rather late in spring, mostly passing through in late May and early June, and occur again in August and September, with stragglers remaining until early November.

Comments: This is one of the most widespread of all shorebirds, and one with one of the longest of all migration routes, with North American birds wintering in extreme southern South America and probably migrating close to 20,000 miles a year.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.



Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*)

Identification: A small nondescript sandpiper, with a medium-long bill that is straight and tapers gradually. Both the bill and legs are black. Several other small and very similar sandpipers occur regionally, and require very careful identification.

Status: A migrant throughout the region, fairly common in the plains, but only a vagrant or rare migrant in the montane parks. The nearest breeding areas are in northern and northeastern Manitoba, in tundra areas near Hudson Bay.

Habitats and Ecology: A very close relative of the western sandpiper, this species is more prone to occur on wet and dry mud, where it often picks up surface organisms, while the western sandpiper is more often found standing in water or in wet mud, where it probes for food. The semipalmated sandpiper is also less prone to move out into grassy flats to forage than is the Baird's sandpiper.

Seasonality: Wyoming records are for mid- to late May, and for the latter half of August. In Alberta the birds pass through in May, peaking near the end of the month, and appear again in early July, peaking in August, with some remaining until late September. Colorado records are from April 15 to October 1.

Comments: This species has a somewhat elliptical migratory pattern, moving north through the Great Plains, but with at least many adults moving south along the Atlantic Coast, in a similar manner as lesser golden plovers. However, some adults move south through Alberta in August, followed by immatures, so perhaps these represent unsuccessful breeders leaving the nesting grounds early.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M		
M	M		M
V	M	M	M

M	M	M	M
M		M	
	M	M	M

	M	M	
	M	M	M
			M



Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)

Identification: Another small nondescript sandpiper, or "peep." In spring it is rather more rusty brown dorsally than is the semipalmated, and in any plumage its slightly longer and very slightly drooping bill aids in identification. Like the semipalmated, both the legs and the feet are blackish.

LATILONG STATUS

	M		
M	M	M	
M	M		M

M			?
M			
	M	M	M

		M	M
M	M	M	M
M	M	M	M

Status: A migrant nearly throughout the region, mainly in the plains, and rare or accidental in the montane parks. The nearest breeding areas are in western Alaska.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrants are likely to be seen in the same areas as semipalmated and least sandpipers, and frequently mingle with both these species, allowing for each comparison. Their breeding areas are farther to the west than those of the other two species, and thus they are more likely to be seen west of the Rockies than to the east.

Seasonality: There are few regional migration records, but they appear to be about the same as for the semipalmated sandpiper. Confusion with that species makes the status of the western sandpiper difficult to determine. Colorado records are from March 23 to October 17, and more northerly records fall within these limits.

Comments: The slightly longer bill of the western sandpiper helps to reduce competition from least and semipalmated sandpipers, and allows it to forage in very slightly deeper waters. Like the semipalmated, its feet have slight webbing, perhaps facilitating swimming. However, they are less adapted to deep probing than such sandpipers as dunlins, with which they also overlap in wintering areas.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.



Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*)

Identification: Very slightly the smallest of the common "peep" sandpipers, and having the shortest bill. The legs and feet are olive-yellow rather than black, and at least in breeding plumage the upperparts are somewhat sooty-toned, without rufous patterning.

Status: A migrant throughout the region; more common on the plains, where it is generally among the commonest of the "peeps," but rare to accidental in the montane parks. The nearest breeding areas are the coastal tundra of north-eastern Manitoba.

Habitats and Ecology: While on migration these sandpipers are found on a variety of moist habitats, often in company with semipalmated, Baird's, or western sandpipers, and probably feeding on much the same foods as these species.

Seasonality: Wyoming and Montana records are from late April to June 1, and from July 8 to October 21. In Alberta they are present from May to early June, and again from early August to September. Colorado records range from April 14 to November 7.

Comments: Least sandpipers breed widely through the North American subarctic, and extend somewhat farther south as breeders than do semipalmateds and the other small *Calidris* species. They tend to forage by making pecking rather than probing movements with their short bills, and forage along shorelines or in very shallow water areas.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M		
M	M		M
V	M		

M	M	M	?
M	M	M	M
	M	M	M

M		M	M
M	M	M	M
M	M	M	M



White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*)

Identification: A "peep" sandpiper that differs from the others in having a white rump that is very conspicuous in flight, but otherwise is not easily seen. On the ground, the birds exhibit distinctly spotted breasts and flank feathers in spring, setting them apart from the other small *Calidris* forms.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	

M		
		M

		M
M	M	M

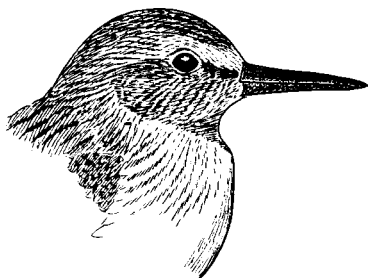
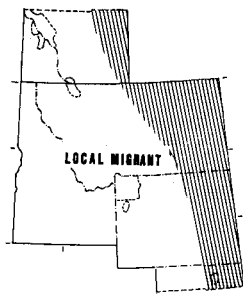
Status: A local migrant through the eastern portions of the region, east of the Rockies; absent from the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrants utilize the same kinds of prairie ponds as do the other "peeps," but on the breeding grounds the birds seek out wet tundra around the edges of ponds or lakes. It breeds in very similar habitats as does the least sandpiper, but occurs farther north than that species.

Seasonality: Wyoming spring records are from May 15 to mid-June, with a peak in late May; fall records are lacking. In Colorado the records extend from May 7 to October 21, but are primarily for May and early June. Most Alberta records are for early June.

Comments: The white-rumped sandpiper is notable for its unusual swollen-neck display performed by males on the breeding grounds, which seems related to its non-monogamous mating system, approaching that of the pectoral sandpiper.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.



Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Identification: Another "peep" sandpiper; this one has a distinctly buff cast to its plumage, with pale and broad feather edgings, a buffy wash on the breast, and relatively long wings that extend beyond the tip of the tail. Both the bill and the feet are black.

Status: A migrant throughout the region; more common on the plains and rare in the montane parks. A high-arctic nester, breeding in extreme northern Canada.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrants are associated with wet meadows and shallow ponds, often feeding in grassy areas somewhat away from water, but also along muddy shorelines, where they tend to peck at food sources rather than to probe for them. On the breeding grounds they seek out dry tundra areas rather than wet coastal habitats.

Seasonality: Wyoming records are from March 22 to June 3, and from July until October 21, with peaks in mid-May and late August. In Alberta the birds occur from mid-May to early June, and again from late July onward, with stragglers reported as late as November. Colorado records are from March 14 to January 2.

Comments: This rather drab species of "peep" is rather inconspicuous but often very common among the migrants using prairie ponds and shallow lakes, perhaps because they often forage somewhat back from the water's edge. They often seem to use somewhat alkaline ponds, to which their rather pale plumage seems appropriately colored.

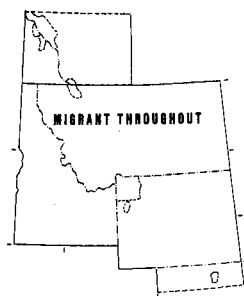
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	M	M
	M	M	M
V	M		M

M	M	M	M
M	M	M	M
	M		M

		M	M
M	M	M	M
M		M	M



Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*)

Identification: The largest of the "peep" sandpipers, and the one with the most distinctive chest bib, which is sharply separated from the white belly. The bill is black, and the legs and feet are yellowish. Often feeds with the smaller species of "peeps," when its larger size is easily evident.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	M	
	M	M	M
V	M		

M			M
M	M	M	M
	M		M

		M	M
	M	M	M
		M	M



Status: A migrant throughout the region, more common on the plains; rare or accidental in the montane parks. A high arctic nester, with the nearest breeding grounds in extreme northern Canada.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrants are commonly seen along prairie marshes or potholes, where they wade in shallow water and probe or peck for food. Often found near grassy cover rather than on open mud flats, and on the breeding areas they also select rather wet and grassy tundra. This is the most polygynous of the *Calidris* sandpipers, and males perform display flights above their territories to attract females to them, while swelling their chests and expanding their "bibs" greatly.

Seasonality: Montana and Wyoming records are from late February to April, and from mid-August to late October. Fall records in Alberta are from early August to late October; spring records are fewer and concentrated in May. In Colorado the records range from April 2 to November 17. The birds tend to arrive somewhat earlier in spring than the smaller "peeps," and stay somewhat later in the fall.

Comments: The remarkable male territorial display of this species, with inflated chest and throat area while the bird flies about making a grunting noise, is quite striking, and one of the memorable sights of the high arctic tundra. A close Asian relative, the sharp-tailed sandpiper, has a similar aerial display, and the white-rumped sandpiper seems to represent a rudimentary evolutionary development toward this condition.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Identification: This small but long-billed sandpiper is easily recognized in spring plumage, when it exhibits a unique black belly and a whitish breast. Juveniles and winter-plumaged birds are much more difficult; but at all times the very long, black bill, which droops slightly, is an excellent fieldmark. Rusty back feathers are also conspicuous in spring-plumaged birds, and aid in identification.

Status: A rare migrant in the region, with few records, and none for the montane parks. The nearest breeding areas are in Manitoba, along the west coast of Hudson Bay.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrant birds are likely to be seen with other small sandpipers such as the "peeps," and usually occur on mud flats or sandy beaches, where they probe for food. In breeding areas they seek out wet coastal tundra for nesting, and sometimes extend into areas of low foothills.

Seasonality: There are few migration records for the area. Alberta records extend from May 1, but most are for the latter part of May. It has also been recorded there in late October. In Colorado it has been seen from April 20 to May 9, and again on December 30,

Comments: Most dunlins migrate to and from their tundra breeding areas along the coasts, with only a small number migrating throughout the Great Plains, in spite of a rather extensive breeding area on the west coast of Hudson Bay.

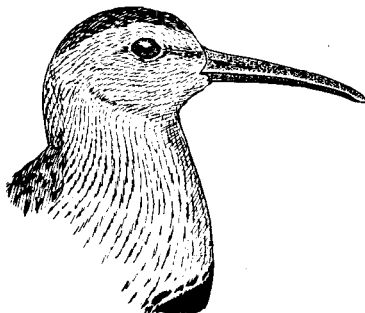
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

	M		
			M
M	M		

M			M
M			
	M		

	M	M	
			M
			V



Stilt Sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*)

Identification: This long-legged relative of the typical "peeps" has a longer black bill than any of these, and considerably longer legs. In breeding plumage it shows a bright patch of chestnut feathers in the ear region, and pale "eyebrows"; nonbreeding birds and immatures lack the ear-patch but have more conspicuous eyebrow lines.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	M	
	M		
V	M		

M			?
	M		

	M	M	M
	M	M	M
	M		M

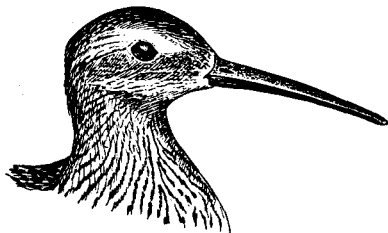
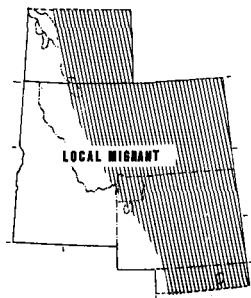
Status: A local migrant, mainly east of the mountains; very rare to absent from the montane parks. The nearest breeding areas are in northeastern Manitoba, along the coast of Hudson Bay.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrants are usually found in company with the typical "peeps," but usually are wading in belly-deep water, and thrusting their bills at organisms or probing the bottom with their rather long bills. They are fairly gregarious on migration, and often occur in moderately large flocks. On breeding areas they seek out well drained tundra areas or sedge meadows.

Seasonality: Wyoming records are from May 15 to 25, and from July to September 11. Colorado records are from April 20 to October 8.

Comments: Stilt sandpipers are among the most attractive of the small North American sandpipers; their dainty feeding behavior, trim profiles, and elegant chestnut cheek patches in spring make them a delight to watch. Their foraging at times resembles the somewhat similar dowitcher, which are relatively more bulky birds and which, when they flush, show distinctive white rump markings.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.



Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*)

Identification: Both species of dowitchers are very similar, but this one is rarer in the region, and has less heavy spotting on the underparts in spring plumage, less heavily barred flanks, and generally less reddish color of the underparts to help identify it. The bill is only slightly shorter in this species, and thus immature and winter-plumaged birds are extremely difficult to identify to species. This species tends to utter three-noted whistles, rather than single notes or a long series of notes, which may help to identify it.

Status: Apparently less common on migration than the long-billed, although in Alberta it is likely that the reverse is true. Breeding occurs in northern Alberta, south to about Edmonton.

Habitats and Ecology: On migrations, dowitchers are found in grassy marshes, where they feed by probing their long bills in belly-deep water. The breeding habitat consists of marshy, boggy, and muskeg areas, with the nests often placed on hummocky sites, and well hidden from above by overhanging grasses.

Seasonality: There are few good migration dates, but Colorado records are for July and August only. There is one August record for Wyoming, and the few Montana records are not definite as to date. The birds arrive in Alberta in May, and dowitchers are seen there well into October, although species identification is uncertain.

Comments: The nesting range of dowitchers in Alberta has retracted in recent years, and they apparently no longer nest near Edmonton, as was the case in the 1950s.

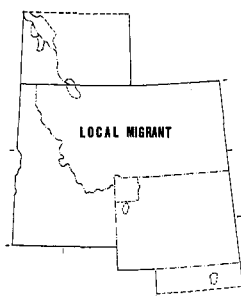
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

	M		
	M		
	M		

M			

			M



Long-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*)

Identification: In spring plumage, this species is rather brighter red than the short-billed, and tends more toward barring than spotting on the flanks. Its bill length is slightly greater, and its calls tend not to be three-noted. However, the species are extremely similar and very difficult to separate under most field conditions.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	M	
	M	M	M
M	M		

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M		M	M
M	M		M

M		M	M
M	M	M	M
M		M	M

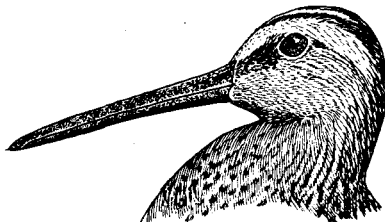
Status: A migrant throughout the region, rarer in montane areas and virtually absent from the montane parks. The nearest breeding areas are in Alaska.

Habitats and Ecology: Migrating birds probably use the same habitats as do short-billed dowitchers. Likewise, their breeding habitats seem to be very similar muskeg and wet tundra habitats.

Seasonality: Migration records for Wyoming are from April 8 to May 18, and from July to November 11. In Montana the spring migration is in May and the fall records are from mid-August to late October, with a peak in early October. Possibly some of these records apply to the preceding species, but both appear to migrate at about the same time.

Comments: Dowitchers of both species are distinctly gregarious, foraging in small groups and flying in compact flocks. In many ways they appear to be intermediate between typical sandpipers and the snipes, and their downy young also have some snipe-like features.

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967.



Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Identification: The very long bill of this species, and the stout body shape, help to identify it and separate it from dowitchers, the only other shore-bird with nearly this beak-length and body size. Snipes often utter a grating, scraping call when flushing, and while on territory the eerie "winnowing" sound made by vibration of tail feathers while in flight is a very easily recognized fieldmark.

Status: A summer or year-round resident nearly throughout the region, both in mountains and plains wetlands; probably breeding in all of the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: Common snipes nest in marshy areas, often beaver ponds in the Rocky Mountains, and in muskeg ponds or other heavily vegetated marshes elsewhere in their extensive range. Peatland habitats are especially favored, but the birds may also occur along slow-moving rivers, marshy shorelines of lakes, or sometimes even wet hayfields.

Seasonality: Locally resident in Wyoming and Montana, with some migrations evident in April and again in September. In Alberta the birds also occasionally overwinter. Locally resident in Colorado, but with a migration peak in September. Montana and Wyoming egg records are from May 14 to June 26, and in Colorado young have been seen as early as May 8. Alberta egg records are from May 16 to July 20.

Comments: The spectacular aerial displays of territorial common snipes are an unforgettable aspect of the Rocky Mountains and the other northern breeding grounds. The sounds of the snipe are entirely mechanically produced by the narrow outer tail feathers which are held at right angles to the body in flight, and allowed to intercept the periodically interrupted airflow from the wings, producing a wavering sound.

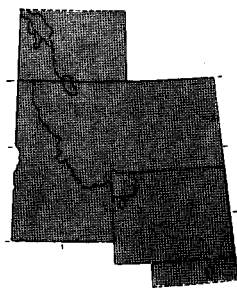
Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Sanderson, 1977; Mason & Macdonald, 1976; Tuck, 1972.

LATILONG STATUS

r	R	S	s
s	R	s	S
R	R	S	r

S	R	R	S
S	R	s	S
R	R	S	S

S	s	s	s
s	s	S	S
S	S	S	R



Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)

Identification: This phalarope resembles the previous species, but has a bill about the same length as the head, and (in breeding plumage) a mostly grayish black head with a white throat patch and chestnut on the foreneck. Males are less colorful, but have a similar general appearance. Juvenile and non-breeding plumages of phalaropes are quite different, and are much paler throughout. The swimming behavior helps identify the birds as phalaropes, and the relative bill length should assist in determining the species under these conditions.

Status: An uncommon to rare migrant throughout the region, mainly in the plains, with most montane records in the Alberta parks. The nearest breeding region is in northern Saskatchewan or possibly extreme northern Alberta.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding habitats of these species are subarctic ponds, marshes, and lagoons having adjacent grassy or sedge vegetation, where nesting occurs. Proximity to lakes or other fairly permanent bodies of water may also be a part of the habitat characteristics. On migration the birds are found in the same areas as Wilson's phalaropes, and often are seen in company with them.

Seasonality: Wyoming records are from May 13 to 29, and from August 29 to October 26. Montana records are for late May and June, and from August 5 to October 4, with peaks in late May and mid-September.

Comments: This is one of two species of phalaropes for which sequential multiple matings by females with males has been observed, although it is by no means common behavior, judging from available data. At times the female will remate with her original mate for a second clutch, if the first one was unsuccessful. Apparently no more than two clutches are laid by females of this species. This species is frequently referred to as the "northern phalarope."

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967; Hohn, 1971.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	M	M
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V	M		M

M	M		?
M	M	M	
M	M		M

M		M	M
M	M	M	M
M		M	M



Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

Identification: This phalarope has the shortest and stoutest bill of the three species, and in breeding plumage is the only one that is mostly reddish on the breast, flanks, and underparts. Immature and winter-plumaged birds are very whitish, but the typical phalarope swimming behavior and short bill (shorter than the head) should help to identify the species.

LATILONG STATUS

	?	

		V

		?
V		



Status: A rare migrant to accidental vagrant in the area, most likely to be seen toward the north; a single record for Banff N.P.

Habitats and Ecology: A high-arctic breeder, nesting in wet tundra areas of extreme northern Canada. The nearest breeding areas are in Yukon Territory. On migration similar habitats to those used by the other two phalarope species are utilized.

Seasonality: There are very few regional records, but in Alberta the species has been observed during June, July, and September.

Comments: Sequential polyandrous breeding has been observed in this species; in one study four of eleven females were found to form second pair bonds, while in another study there were three suspected cases of polyandry among a population of about 100 birds. In Britain this species is generally known as the "grey phalarope."

Suggested Reading: Johnsgard, 1981; Stout, 1967; Hohn, 1971.

