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PETRELS (PROCELLARIIDAE; 8+ SPECIES) Worldwide family of mostly medium-size, superficially gull-like seabirds with long narrow wings, webbed feet, hook-tipped bills with nostrils encased in a tube at top. Ages/sexes similar. Mostly silent at sea. No species breeds in Costa Rica.



WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER *Ardenna pacifica* 43–47cm, WS 99–109cm. Commonest large shearwater off Pacific coast, but rarely seen from land. Locally in flocks of 100s that mix in feeding and rafting flocks with boobies, terns, other shearwaters. In calm, flight typically unhurried with wings pressed forward slightly and crooked; wingbeats shallow and easy, interspersed with glides on slightly arched wings; wheels higher in strong winds but usually not steeply. Most birds white-bodied but small numbers of dark morphs occur. Note light build with small head, relatively broad crooked wings, long tapered tail, grayish bill (small numbers of both morphs have pinkish bill with darker tip); cf. bigger and bulkier Pink-footed Shearwater. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common nonbr. migrant, mainly Nov–Apr, smaller numbers May–Oct. (Tropical Pacific and Indian Oceans.)



PINK-FOOTED SHEARWATER *Ardenna creatopus* 45–48cm, WS 110–118cm. Pacific, offshore. Singles or small groups passing by, or mixed with flocks of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. Typically flies with languid wingbeats and easy glides; can wheel high and steeply when windy. Larger and bulkier than Wedge-tailed with bigger head, broader wings held less crooked in flight, shorter and broader, less tapered tail; note pink bill with black tip. Underparts and underwings white overall with variable dusky markings, rarely mostly dusky. **STATUS:** Uncommon to rare nonbr. migrant, mainly Apr–May, Sep–Nov. (Breeds Dec–May in Chile, migrant to NE Pacific.)



PARKINSON'S PETREL *Procellaria parkinsoni* 41–46cm, WS 112–123cm. Pacific, offshore. Large dark petrel that scavenges at fishing boats; likely to be found as singles or small groups, not usually with rafts of shearwaters. Flies with easy smooth wingbeats and buoyant glides in calm to light winds, with wheeling glides and bouts of loose flapping in moderate winds. Distinctive, with very dark plumage, pale creamy bill with dusky to blackish tip, black legs and feet. **STATUS:** Scarce to seasonally uncommon nonbr. migrant, mainly Mar–Oct, usually well offshore. (Breeds Nov–May in New Zealand, migrant to tropical E Pacific.)



GALAPAGOS PETREL *Pterodroma phaeopygia* 39–42cm, WS 99–110cm. Pacific, offshore. Distinctive, medium-large petrel with long narrow wings, tapered tail, variable dark hood, and boldly patterned underwings. In light winds, flies with languid wingbeats and long shearing glides on slightly bowed wings; in stronger winds, wheels and banks but not steeply, with little flapping. Sometimes associates with feeding flocks of boobies, terns, shearwaters. **STATUS:** Scarce nonbr. migrant, possible year-round, usually well offshore. (Breeds year-round in Galapagos, ranges in tropical E Pacific.)



TAHITI PETREL *Pseudobulweria rostrata* 38–42cm, WS 101–108cm. Pacific, offshore. Distinctive, fairly large petrel with very long narrow wings, tapered tail, very stout black bill; note white body contrasting with dark underwings (sometimes showing paler median stripe). In light winds, flies with languid wingbeats and long shearing glides on wings held out rather straight from body; in stronger winds, wheels and banks but not steeply, with little flapping. Feeds by scavenging, thus not usually with feeding flocks. **STATUS:** Scarce to uncommon nonbr. migrant, mainly Mar–Nov, usually well offshore. (Tropical Pacific.)



light morphs

WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER

dark morph



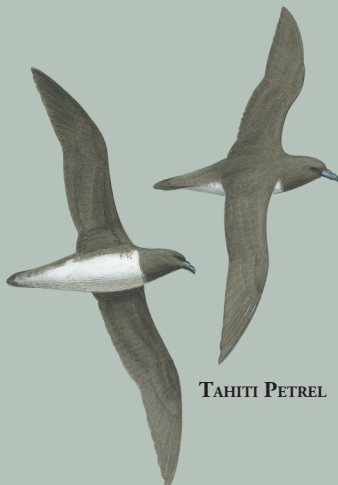
PINK-FOOTED SHEARWATER



PARKINSON'S PETREL



GALAPAGOS PETREL



TAHITI PETREL





AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER *Puffinus lherminieri* 30–33cm, WS 65–74cm. Caribbean, offshore. Only small black-and-white shearwater to be expected off Caribbean coast. Likely to be seen as singles, on occasion in small groups; may associate with feeding flocks of boobies and terns. In light winds, flies low to water with quick stiff wingbeats and short glides; in stronger winds can wheel for longer periods but not steeply. Note relatively long tail, dark undertail coverts. **STATUS:** Scarce nonbr. migrant, seasonal status poorly known. (Breeds Caribbean region, ranges in tropical w. Atlantic.)



GALAPAGOS SHEARWATER *Puffinus subalaris* 28–31cm, WS 63–70cm. Pacific, offshore. Only small black-and-white shearwater regular off Pacific coast, where can occur in sizeable rafts and feeding flocks with Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, terns, boobies. Flight quick and low to water with fluttery wingbeats, brief glides; often raises head in flight. Note cleanly demarcated dark/white border to face and neck sides, narrow whitish spectacles, dark undertail coverts. Underwing coverts whitish on most birds but dark overall on others (these may represent cryptic species; study needed). Cf. vagrant Black-vented Shearwater (Appendix B). **STATUS:** Irregularly fairly common to common nonbr. migrant, year-round. (Breeds year-round in Galapagos, ranges in tropical E Pacific.)



CHRISTMAS SHEARWATER *Puffinus nativitatis* 33–38cm, WS 83–92cm. Pacific, offshore. Usually found as singles, sometimes with feeding and rafting flocks of Wedge-tailed and Galapagos Shearwaters. Flight usually rather low with quick stiff wingbeats, short glides, but can wheel higher in strong winds. Note small size, overall rather uniform, dark chocolate-brown plumage, slender bill, ample tail; cf. larger but more lightly built dark-morph Wedge-tailed Shearwater; vagrant Sooty Shearwater (Appendix B). **STATUS:** Scarce nonbr. migrant, mainly Mar–Oct. (Tropical Pacific.)

NORTHERN STORM PETRELS (HYDROBATIDAE; 3+ SPECIES) Widespread family of very small oceanic birds rarely seen from mainland; mostly silent away from breeding grounds. In Costa Rica, known only from Pacific waters. Ages/sexes similar. Several other species occur farther offshore (Appendices A–B) but not likely to be found regularly on day trips.



BLACK STORM PETREL *Halocyptena (Hydrobates) melania* 21.5–23cm; WS 50–55cm. Very large dark storm petrel with deeply forked tail; often feeds and rafts with Least Storm Petrel. Flight typically strong and unhurried, with deep languid wingbeats and easy sailing glides; in strong winds can bank in low arcs. Note deeply forked tail, big feet (which often dangle), blackish plumage. Farther offshore, cf. Markham's and dark-rumped Leach's Storm Petrels (Appendix B). **STATUS:** Fairly common to common nonbr. migrant, most numerous Oct–May; rarely may be seen from shore. (E Pacific.)

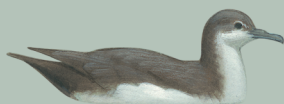


LEAST STORM PETREL *Halocyptena (Hydrobates) microsoma* 13.5–15cm; WS 32–36cm. Distinctive, tiny dark storm petrel with rather short, tapered tail; often feeds and rafts with much larger Black Storm Petrel. Flight typically quick, with little or no gliding and deep, slightly clipped wingbeats that can suggest a mini Black Storm Petrel. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common nonbr. migrant, most numerous Nov–May; rarely may be seen from shore. (E Pacific.)



PERUVIAN [WEDGE-RUMPED] STORM PETREL *Halocyptena (Hydrobates) [tethys] kelsalli* 14.5–15.5cm; WS 33–37cm. No other white-rumped storm petrel regular over warmer nearshore waters, but cf. Galapagos, Leach's, and Wilson's Storm Petrels (Appendix B): note big white rump patch (at rest, white can be all but hidden), flight manner. Often associates with Least and Black Storm Petrels; flies with deep wingbeats and only brief glides, much like Least. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common nonbr. migrant, most numerous May–Nov. (Tropical E Pacific.)

AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER



GALAPAGOS SHEARWATER



dark-winged



white-winged

CHRISTMAS SHEARWATER



BLACK STORM PETREL



LEAST STORM PETREL



PERUVIAN STORM PETREL



FRIGATEBIRDS (FREGATIDAE; 1+ SPECIES) Very large but lightweight, mostly black seabirds with long crooked wings, deeply forked tails that can be held closed in a point. Ages/sexes differ; adult male has inflatable red throat pouch in display; adult appearance attained in about 5–6 years.



MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD *Fregata magnificens* 90–110cm, WS 200–240cm. Pacific and Caribbean coastal and inshore waters; often around fishing harbors, roosting on ship rigging, in mangroves at river mouths; does not alight on water; ranges inland a short distance to drink fresh water and splash-bathe at small lakes, rivers. Flight easy and buoyant with slow deep wingbeats, frequent effortless soaring, often in kettles high overhead; plucks food from sea surface with long hooked bill and also pirates terns, boobies, other seabirds. No similar species occur in coastal Costa Rica (Great Frigatebird breeds far offshore on Cocos I.). Adult male wholly glossy black with distensible red throat balloon

inflated mainly in display; female has black head, white chest; juv./1st-cycle has white head and body with pointed black patches at breast sides. Complex age/sex plumage progression to adult plumage: 2nd-cycle has mostly white head and body; 3rd-cycle starts to fill in with black on head and belly; 4th-cycle like adult with variable whitish mottling in black areas; 5th-cycle ostensibly like adult. **SOUNDS:** Soft wheezy warbling and bill rattling, mostly in display. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common along both coasts; breeds very locally on islands off Pacific coast; very rare wanderer well inland, mainly in stormy weather. (Tropical Americas and Galapagos.)

PELICANS (PELECANIDAE; 2 SPECIES) Small worldwide family of very large, heavy-bodied aquatic birds with long bills and distensible throat pouches. Difficult to misidentify. Ages differ, sexes similar; attain adult appearance in about 3 years. Some seasonal change in adult appearance. Adults mostly silent, rarely uttering grunts and hisses; begging nestlings can be noisy.



BROWN PELICAN *Pelecanus occidentalis* 112–137cm, WS 190–255cm. Essentially unmistakable large dark waterbird of coastal and inshore waters, river mouths, adjacent lagoons, mangroves; nests on inshore islands. Often rests on sandbars and beaches with gulls, terns, cormorants, other waterbirds, also perches on pilings, boats, in mangroves. Singles and lines fly low over the waves, gliding easily between bouts of measured flapping; at times sails and soars high overhead. Feeds by plunge-diving, twisting abruptly on entry into the water. Adult silvery gray above, dark below; nonbr. plumage has white head and neck, dull eyes; breeding plumage has dark brown hindneck, eye becomes white;

post-breeding adult has white crown spotted dusky. Juv./1st-year dark brown overall with white belly, broad white median stripe on dark underwing; 2nd-year like messy adult. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common along both coasts and over inshore waters, especially Pacific where breeds locally; rare and irregular inland. (Americas.)

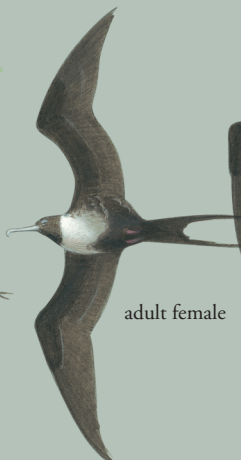
AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* 145–165cm, WS 240–290cm. Very rare winter migrant. Huge, mostly white waterbird that could occur at lakes, wetlands, coastal lagoons. Essentially unmistakable, but at long range in flight, cf. Wood Stork. Singles or groups feed while swimming and submerging bill, not by diving. Soars readily, at times in kettles with other waterbirds and vultures. 1st-year has paler, more pinkish face, bill, and legs than adult, extensive black on inner secondaries and greater coverts, faint dusky wash to upperwing coverts. 2nd/3rd-year has brighter, more orangey face, bill, legs, less black on upperwings than 1st-year, often develops dark mottling on upperwing coverts. **STATUS:** Very rare and irregular nonbr. migrant to both slopes, mainly nw. lowlands, Dec–Apr. (Breeds N America to Mexico, winters to Cen America.)



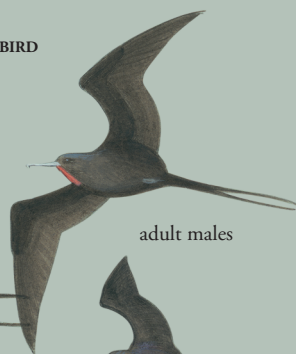
MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD



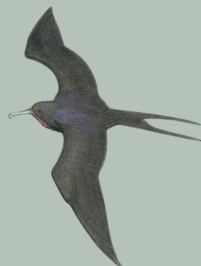
1st-year



adult female



adult males



BROWN PELICAN

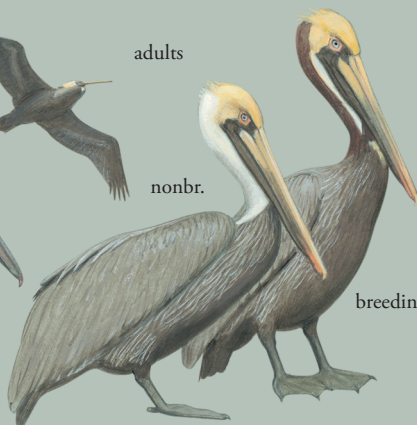


1st-years



adults

nonbr.



breeding

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN



nonbr.



BOOBIES (SULIDAE; 6 SPECIES) Small worldwide family of large, streamlined, plunge-diving oceanic birds. Ages differ, sexes similar or differ in face and bill colors, voice; attain adult appearance in 2–4 years. Vocal mostly on breeding grounds but can be heard in feeding interactions.



BREWSTER'S BROWN BOOBY *Sula [leucogaster] brewsteri* 68–75cm, WS 135–153cm. Pacific inshore waters. Commonest and most frequently seen coastal booby, sometimes enters harbors, perches on boats, pilings; nests colonially and roosts on inshore rocks and islands. Often joins feeding flocks with terns, shearwaters. Adult distinctive, with sharply demarcated clean white belly, solidly brown upperparts; male crown pale milky, at times extending to most of neck, face slaty bluish; female face pale yellow, bill pale pinkish. Juv. has ghosting of adult pattern, whitish underwing coverts contrast with darker body. Older imm. has body variably mottled whitish and brown. **SOUNDS:** Male gives

high wheezy whistles, female gruff brays. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common off and along Pacific coast, breeding locally, including Cocos I. (Tropical E Pacific.)



BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY *Sula nebouxii* 71–79cm, WS 148–166cm. Pacific inshore waters; often seen from shore; regularly roosts with Brewster's Brown Booby on inshore rocks. Often circles high and feeds by steep plunge dives, unlike lower, shallower-angle dives typical of Brewster's Brown. Relatively large with fairly slender grayish bill, distinctive white hindneck and rump patches, white center and tip of tail; also note white back scalloping. Bright blue feet develop in 2nd year; feet grayish on juv. Cf. Brewster's Brown Booby, imm. Nazca and Masked Boobies. **STATUS:** Irregular, rare to uncommon nonbr. migrant year-round to Pacific coast, including Gulf of Nicoya. (E Pacific.)



MASKED BOOBY *Sula dactylatra* 73–81cm, WS 150–170cm. Pacific and Caribbean offshore waters, unlikely to be seen from land. Mostly well offshore, alone or with feeding flocks of other boobies, terns, shearwaters. All ages have stout yellowish bill (rich yellow on some Pacific adults, cf. Nazca Booby), dark face, extensively white underwings, black tail (rarely some white at base on adults). Imms. variable, most have broad white neck collar, often some white on back and rump; however, some Pacific imms. are wholly dark above, not safely told from juv. Nazca; adult bill colors start to show in 2nd or 3rd year. Also cf. Blue-footed Booby, white morph Red-footed Booby. **STATUS:** Uncommon

nonbr. migrant year-round to Pacific offshore waters, rare in nearshore waters; rarely reported off Caribbean coast. (Tropical oceans worldwide.)



NAZCA [MASKED] BOOBY *Sula [dactylatra] granti* 73–81cm, WS 150–170cm. Pacific, offshore waters, unlikely to be seen from land. Habits much like Masked Booby but tends to favor shelf waters vs. deeper offshore waters of Masked, and thus more likely to be encountered on day trips. Adult has diagnostic pinkish-orange bill (beware, apparent orange vs. yellow bill colors can be affected greatly by lighting), usually some white on base of central tail feathers; imm. not safely told from darker imm. Masked until white in central tail or adult bill colors start to show, but averages thicker black underwing margins; older imm. more often has dark shawl on neck sides vs. clean white

neck of Masked. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common nonbr. migrant year-round in Pacific waters. (E Pacific, breeds mainly on Galapagos.)

**BREWSTER'S
BROWN BOOBY**



**BLUE-FOOTED
BOOBY**

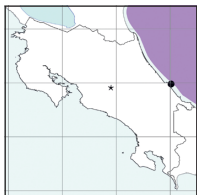


MASKED BOOBY

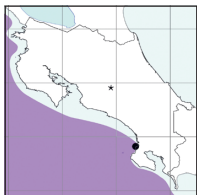


NAZCA BOOBY





ATLANTIC BROWN BOOBY *Sula leucogaster* 68–75cm, WS 135–153cm. Caribbean; mainly offshore but may be seen from land near Limón. Usually singles or small groups, feeding or rafting on water. Slightly larger and bulkier than Red-footed Booby, with heavier flight, less crooked wings; imm. body darker than whitish underwing coverts (reverse of imm. and brown morph Red-footed) and upperparts solidly brown, lacking white tail tip often shown by imm. Red-footed. Cf. imm. Masked Booby. Adult male has yellow face, ivory to pale greenish bill; female has pale yellow face, pinkish bill. **SOUNDS:** Male gives high wheezy whistles, female gruff brays. **STATUS:** Uncommon in Caribbean waters; small colony on islets near Uvita I. (Tropical Atlantic.)



RED-FOOTED BOOBY *Sula sula* 66–76cm, WS 130–150cm. Pacific and Caribbean, offshore; only exceptionally seen from land. Mostly alone or with feeding flocks of other boobies, terns, shearwaters; often curious around boats and ships, roosts on rigging. Smallest, most lightly built booby with highly variable plumage. Diagnostic bright red feet develop in 2nd year, pinkish on juv. (rarely pinkish on juv. brown boobies). Note crooked wings, long tail, maneuverable flight. Imm. and brown morph told from brown boobies by structure, paler body contrasting with dark underwings; imm. bill often pinkish with dark tip, tail usually has white tip. On all adults note pale bluish bill, pink

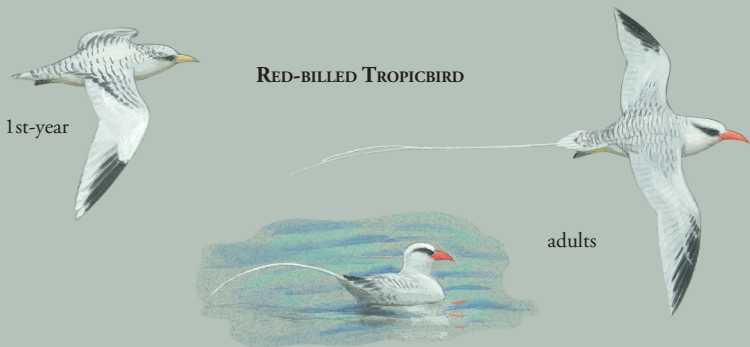
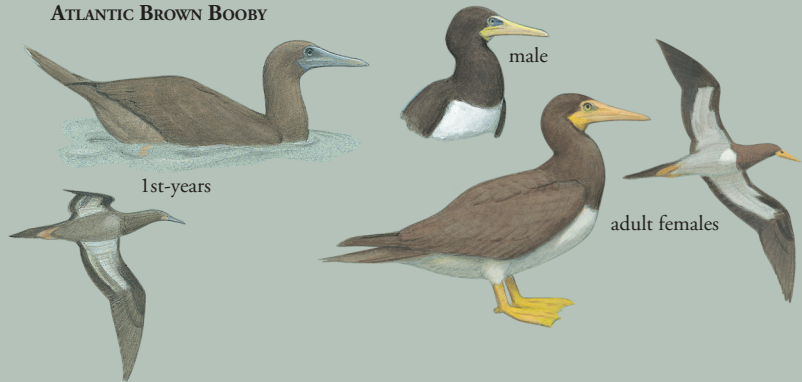
throat patch. White-tailed morphs occur in Caribbean, dark-tailed morphs in Pacific; Cocos I. population almost all brown morphs. Cf. adult Masked and Nazca Boobies. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common year-round in Pacific waters, usually well offshore; birds over nearer shore waters mainly immes; small colony found in 2000s on inshore islet near mouth of Sierpe River (and breeds commonly on Cocos I.). Very rare on Caribbean coast (mainly storm-blown). (Tropical oceans worldwide.)

TROPICBIRDS (PHAETHONTIDAE; 1+ SPECIES) Small family of spectacular plunge-diving seabirds found worldwide in tropical oceans. Ages differ, sexes similar; adult appearance attained in about 2 years.



RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD *Phaethon aethereus* 43–50cm (+ streamers), WS 97–110cm. Pacific, offshore. Spectacular, heavy-bodied oceanic bird, overall gleaming white with black leading wedge to outer wing, narrow dark barring on back. Cf. Royal Tern (p. 54). Flies with hurried, ungraceful wingbeats and plunge-dives from high up, causing a ‘whale-blow splash’ of water. Often rests on water, tail streamers curved up like a rooster; at times attracted to boats and ships, when appears magically overhead then disappears. Adult has red bill, long tail streamers; juv. has yellowish bill, short tail tipped black. 2nd-year like adult with orange-red bill, shorter tail streamers. Mostly silent at sea.

STATUS: Uncommon nonbr. visitor year-round to Pacific waters, usually well offshore; may also occur rarely off Caribbean coast. (Tropical Americas and Atlantic.)



JAEGER (STERCORARIIDAE; 3+ SPECIES) Small family of rather gull-like oceanic birds that feed mainly by pirating other birds, especially gulls, terns, shearwaters. Ages differ, sexes similar with females averaging larger. Adult plumage attained in about 3 years. ID of imms. can be very difficult, best to focus on structure and a few key plumage features, especially shape of any tail projections, extent and pattern of white wing flashes. Known as skuas in Old World.



POMARINE JAEGER (SKUA) *Stercorarius pomarinus* 44–51cm (+ 6–11cm adult tail projections). Pacific and Caribbean, offshore. Largest jaeger, chases mainly large shearwaters and gulls, less often terns. Direct flight rather heavy and steady, with powerful wingbeats; chases rarely prolonged and aerobic. Sometimes scavenges at fishing boats; can be found with rafting flocks of shearwaters. Note relatively big head and bill, broad wings, and broad, blunt-tipped tail projections. All ages can be dark overall with reduced white wing flashes; adult dark morph uncommon. 1st-year has heavily barred underwings, 2nd-year has reduced barring on underwing coverts, 3rd-year and older typically have solidly dark underwing coverts. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common nonbr. migrant to Pacific waters, mainly Aug–Apr; usually well offshore. Probably uncommon Sep–Apr in Caribbean, but few records. (Breeds n. Eurasia and N America, winters widely at sea.)



PARASITIC JAEGER (ARCTIC SKUA) *Stercorarius parasiticus* 40–44cm (+ 6–10cm adult tail projections). Pacific and Caribbean, mainly offshore; unlike other jaegers, regularly seen from shore. Chases mainly terns, smaller gulls. Flight strong and direct, suggesting a falcon; chases often persistent and aerobic. Note relatively small head, slender bill, sharply pointed tail projections, crescent of white primary shafts on upperwing. All ages can be dark overall with reduced white wing flashes; adult dark morph fairly common. Juv. often relatively rusty-toned, unlike colder-toned juv. Pomarine and Long-tailed. Ageing as in Pomarine Jaeger. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common nonbr.

migrant to Pacific waters, mainly Aug–Oct, Mar–Apr, small numbers in winter; scarce off Caribbean coast. (Breeds n. Eurasia and N America, winters widely at sea.)



LONG-TAILED JAEGER (SKUA) *Stercorarius longicaudus* 37–41cm (+ 14–21cm adult tail projections). Pacific, offshore. Smallest, most lightly built jaeger; chases mainly terns, small gulls, phalaropes, storm petrels. Flight strong but graceful, with buoyant wingbeats, suggests a smaller tern. Note relatively short neck, small bill, only 2–3 white primary shafts on upperwing, finely pointed tail projections of older imm. and adult; juv. has relatively long but bluntly-tipped tail points. Juv./1st-year can be dark overall, but adult only has light morph. Ageing as in Pomarine Jaeger. **STATUS:** Scarce nonbr. migrant, usually well offshore, mainly Aug–Nov, Mar–May. (Breeds n. Eurasia and N America,

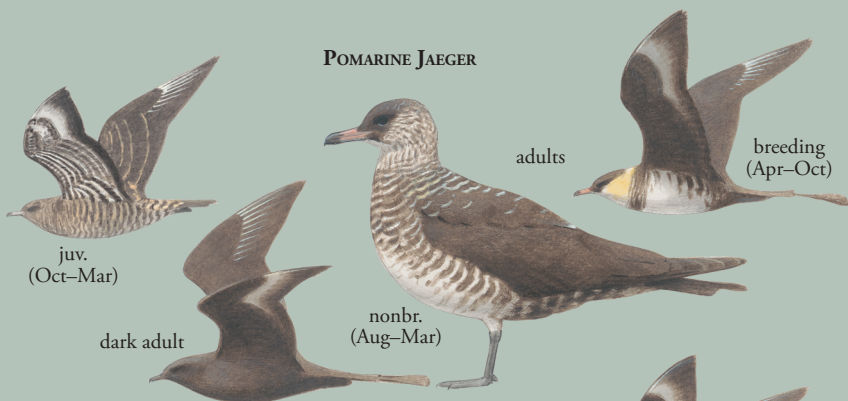
winters at sea mainly in S Hemisphere.)

GULLS (LARIDAE; 5+ SPECIES) Worldwide family of familiar web-footed birds often found near water. Ages differ, sexes similar but males average larger, bigger-billed. Adult appearance attained in 2 years for smaller species (hence, 2-year gulls), up to 4 years or longer in large species (4-year gulls); 2nd- and 3rd-year plumages highly variable, intermediate between 1st-year and adult. Seasonal variation mainly in head pattern, bill color and pattern. Few species regular in Costa Rica, but several species occur as vagrants or rare migrants (Appendix B). Varied crowing and mewing calls mainly in interactions, mentioned only when obviously useful for ID.



SABINE'S GULL *Xema sabini* 32–35cm. Pacific, offshore. Small, boldly marked 2-year gull rarely seen from land. Singles or small groups, sometimes in association with feeding groups of terns, other gulls, shearwaters. Flight direct and buoyant, rather tern-like. Distinctive and striking in flight with gleaming white triangles on upperwings; also note forked tail. Adult attains dark slaty hood in late winter; juv. molts over 1st winter into adult-like plumage with partial dark hood or hindneck patch. **STATUS:** Uncommon nonbr. migrant offshore, mainly Aug–Nov, Mar–May. (Breeds n. Eurasia and N America, winters mainly S Hemisphere.)

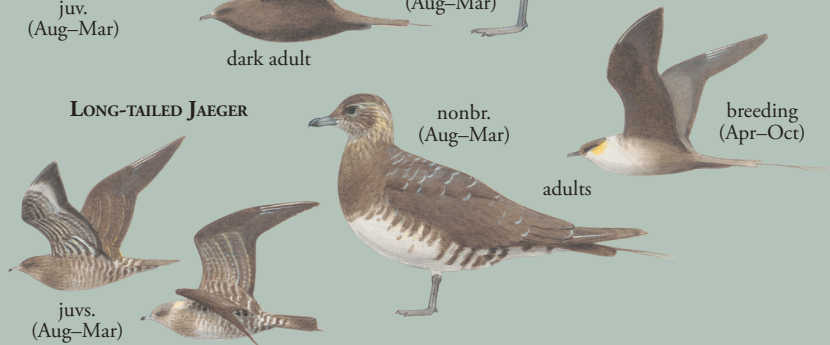
POMARINE JAEGER



PARASITIC JAEGER



LONG-TAILED JAEGER



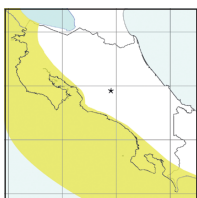
SABINE'S GULL





LAUGHING GULL *Leucophaeus atricilla* 38–43cm. Medium-size, long-winged 3-year gull with dark bill and legs. Commonest gull in Costa Rica, found on beaches, at river mouths, coastal lagoons, harbors, dumps, over inshore waters; rarely inland along rivers, at lakes; locally in flocks of 100s, even low 1000s. Often with flocks of terns, other gulls. Fairly distinctive, but cf. smaller, more compact, and smaller-billed Franklin's Gull. Adult has slaty-gray upperparts, blackish hood with narrow white eye-arcs in breeding plumage, when bill and legs become reddish. Nonbr. and imm. have smudged dusky mask through eyes, blackish to dark red legs and bill. Juv. dark brown overall with scaly pale

edgings above, solidly black tail band; soon attains gray back, whiter head and underparts. 2nd-year like dull adult with more black in wing-tip, sometimes black in tail. **SOUNDS:** Varied, nasal laughing and yelping cries; 1st-year has high-pitched whistles. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common nonbr. migrant to both coasts; main numbers Sep–Apr, smaller numbers through summer; rare and irregular inland, mainly fall–winter. (Breeds N America to Caribbean, winters to S America.)



FRANKLIN'S GULL *Leucophaeus pipixcan* 35–38cm. Medium-small 3-year gull with dark bill and legs. Mainly coastal, but also ranges inland and over inshore waters; spring migrant flocks can number 100s, streaming into lines of 1000s as they pass by; otherwise, singles or flocks occur at river mouths, harbors, coastal lagoons, inland at lakes and flooded fields. Associates readily with Laughing Gulls, terns, other waterbirds. Slightly smaller, more lightly built than Laughing Gull, with smaller bill, more rounded wing-tips, thicker white eye-arcs; spring adults often have strong pink blush to underparts (Laughing can have pale blush). Adult wing-tip boldly patterned black-and-

white, unlike Laughing; imm./nonbr. plumages have distinctive blackish half-hood. Black tail band of 1st-winter Franklin's does not reach to tail sides, but 1st-year Laughing often attains some white tail feathers. **SOUNDS:** Yelping and laughing calls higher, more mewling than crowing calls of Laughing Gull. **STATUS:** Common to fairly common Mar–May along and off Pacific coast, uncommon to fairly common Oct–Nov; scarce and irregular in winter. Rare at any season on Caribbean coast. (Breeds N America, winters S America.)



RING-BILLED GULL *Larus delawarensis* 44–52cm. Rare medium-size 3-year gull with pale gray back. Mainly coastal, at river mouths, beaches, coastal lagoons. Usually single imms. in association with flocks of other gulls, terns. Adult distinctive (but very rare in Costa Rica), with yellow legs, pale eyes, neat black bill ring (no red on bill). 1st-year rather pale overall, with pinkish legs, whitish underwings, clean-cut black/white tail pattern, pale gray inner primaries; cf. 2nd-year Smithsonian Gull. 2nd-year resembles duller adult with more black in wing-tip, often some black on tail, greenish-yellow legs. **STATUS:** Rare and irregular nonbr. migrant to both coasts, mainly Nov–Apr. (Breeds N America, winters to Cen America.)



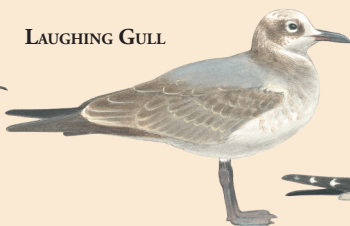
***SMITHSONIAN (AMERICAN HERRING) GULL** *Larus [argentatus] smithsonianus* 56–67cm. Large 4-year gull with pink legs, pale gray back; male appreciably larger and bigger-billed than female. Usually single imms. or small numbers with flocks of other waterbirds at harbors, river mouths, lagoons, beaches. Adult distinctive (but very rare in Costa Rica), with pink legs, black wing-tips, pale eyes, variable dusky streaking on head and neck in nonbr. 1st-year mottled brownish overall, often with paler head, paler panel on inner primaries in flight, variable pinkish at base of bill. The only regularly occurring large gull in Costa Rica, but cf. Appendix B. 2nd- and 3rd-years highly variable;

2nd-year pattern resembles smaller 1st-year Ring-billed Gull but messier, lacks clean black/white tail pattern of Ring-billed. **STATUS:** Rare to uncommon nonbr. migrant to both coasts, mainly Nov–Apr. (Breeds N America, winters to Cen America.)



1st-years

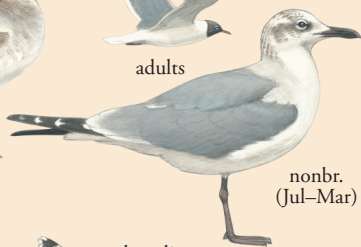
LAUGHING GULL



breeding
(Jan–Aug)



adults



nonbr.
(Jul–Mar)



1st-years

FRANKLIN'S GULL



breeding
(Mar–Aug)



adults

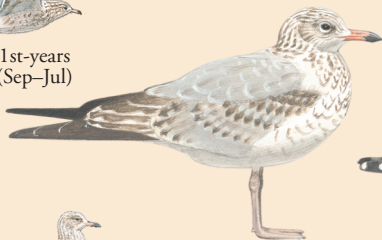


nonbr.
(Aug–Mar)



1st-years
(Sep–Jul)

RING-BILLED GULL



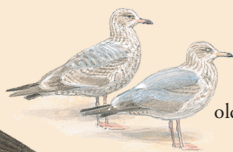
breeding
(Feb–Aug)



adults



nonbr.
(Aug–Mar)



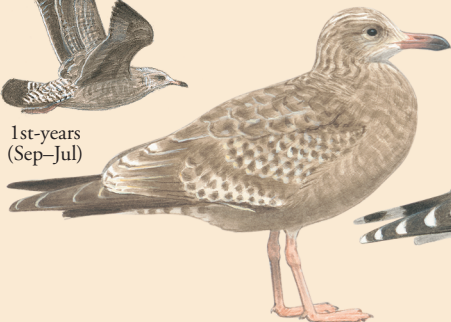
older imms.

breeding
(Feb–Aug)

SMITHSONIAN GULL



1st-years
(Sep–Jul)



adults



nonbr.
(Aug–Mar)

TERNs (LARIDAE; 13+ SPECIES) Worldwide group of waterbirds that resemble gulls but have pointed bills, shorter legs, and typically are smaller, more graceful, with forked tails. Unlike gulls, rarely alight on water, mostly feed by plunge-diving for small fish. Ages differ, sexes similar but males average larger, bigger-billed. Adult appearance attained in 2–3 years; imm. plumages typically resemble nonbr. adults. Seasonal variation mainly in head pattern.



***SANDWICH TERN** *Thalasseus sandvicensis* 34–36cm (+ 2.5cm adult tail streamers). Pacific and Caribbean coasts, at beaches, river mouths, coastal lagoons, over inshore waters. Often in flocks with other terns, gulls, skimmers. Distinctive, medium-size tern with shaggy crest, white body, slender black bill tipped yellow on adult, black legs. 1st-year bill black with little or no pale tip; dark spots and chevrons on juv. back soon replaced with plain pale gray. Cf. Gull-billed Tern. **SOUNDS:** Grating, screechy and rasping calls, such as *krriik* and *krrek*, distinct from smaller *Sterna* terns but much like Elegant Tern; 1st-year has high piping whistles. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common nonbr.

migrant on both coasts, mainly Sep–May; smaller numbers of imms. occur through summer. (Breeds N Atlantic, winters to S Atlantic.)



ELEGANT TERN *Thalasseus elegans* 35–37cm (+ 4–5cm adult tail streamers). Pacific. Fairly large tern of marine waters, rocky and sandy coastlines, river mouths. Often found with other terns, gulls, skimmers, when groups of Elegants can bunch up tightly and be lost easily among much taller Royal Terns. Appreciably smaller and more lightly built than Royal Tern but size can be difficult to judge on lone birds; note much finer bill of Elegant, variable in color (orange-red to yellow) but often paler at tip (vs. uniform orange on Royal); longer and shaggier crest, which joins with eye in nonbr./imm. plumages (vs. eye often surrounded by white on Royal). Often has pink blush to underparts,

unlike Royal and Sandwich Terns; legs rarely orange, mainly on imms. **SOUNDS:** Grating, screechy, and rasping calls much like Sandwich Tern, generally higher, scratchier than Royal Tern; 1st-year has high piping whistles. **STATUS:** Scarce to uncommon nonbr. migrant along and off Pacific coast, mainly Sep–Nov, Feb–Apr; rare at other seasons. (Breeds Mexico and s. California, winters S America.)



ROYAL TERN *Thalasseus maximus* 43–48cm (+ 5cm adult tail streamers). Large, orange-billed tern of varied coastal habitats, from rocky headlands and sandy beaches to river mouths, inshore waters, coastal lagoons. Often in feeding and roosting flocks with other terns, gulls, skimmers. Slightly smaller and more lightly built than Caspian Tern, with narrower, more angled wings, and longer tail, shaggier cap, uniform orange bill (rarely orange-red); lacks solidly dark underside to wing-tip of Caspian; imm./nonbr. plumages have large ‘bald’ white forehead, unlike Caspian. Cf. smaller, finer-billed Elegant Tern. Legs rarely orange, mainly on imms. **SOUNDS:** Adult has clucking *krbhk* and laughing

kewb-eh; also grating and screechy calls similar to Elegant Tern; 1st-year has high piping whistles. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common nonbr. migrant on both coasts, mainly Sep–May; smaller numbers of imms. occur through summer. (Americas.)



CASPIAN TERN *Hydroprogne caspia* 51–57cm. Largest tern in the world, a nonbr. migrant to coastal lagoons, tidal flats, river mouths, rarely over open ocean. Often rests with groups of gulls, other terns, mainly as singles. Bulky and broad-winged, lacks long tail streamers. Wingbeats relatively shallow and gull-like. Note overall size and bulk, very stout red bill with black ring near tip, dark underside to primaries; juv. has orange bill with dark near tip. Imm./nonbr. have densely black-streaked crown, lacking large ‘bald’ white crown patch of other terns. Cf. Royal Tern. **SOUNDS:** Adult has deep throaty *rahrr*, quite distinct from other terns and may suggest a heron; 1st-year has high lipping whistles.

STATUS: Uncommon to rare and local nonbr. migrant on Pacific coast, mainly Sep–Apr in Gulf of Nicoya; a few imms. may occur through summer; very rare on Caribbean coast. (Worldwide except S America.)

SANDWICH TERN



breeding
(Mar–Jul)



1st-year



nonbr.
(Jul–Mar)



breeding
(Jan–Aug)

ELEGANT TERN



nonbr.
(Aug–Feb)



breeding
(Jan–Jul)

ROYAL TERN



1st-year

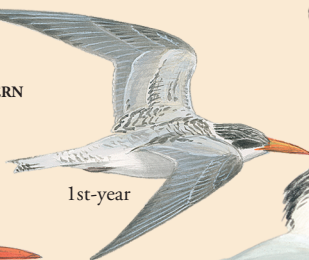


nonbr.
(Jul–Feb)

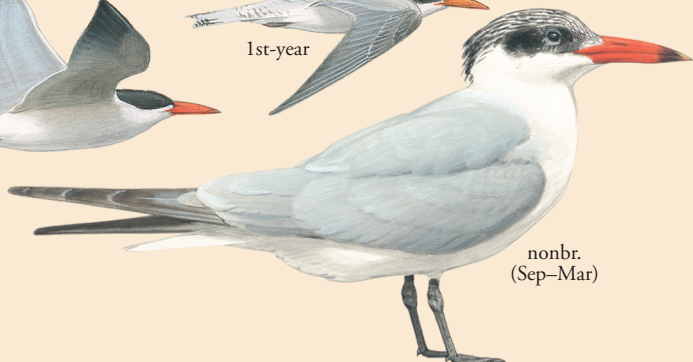


breeding
(Mar–Sep)

CASPIAN TERN



1st-year



nonbr.
(Sep–Mar)



LEAST TERN *Sternula antillarum* 21–23cm. Tiny tern of inshore marine waters, beaches, river mouths. Feeds mainly over inshore waters; often rests on beaches with other terns, smaller gulls, shorebirds. Flies with hurried deep wingbeats and plunge-dives steeply from moderate heights. Tiny size distinctive—barely larger than a Sanderling. **SOUNDS:** Varied, slightly sneezy and squeaky calls, typically 2-syllable, *chirit* and *kree-it*. **STATUS:** Uncommon to seasonally fairly common nonbr. migrant over inshore Pacific waters, especially Gulf of Nicoya, mainly Sep–Apr; a few imms. may occur through summer. Rare and irregular on Caribbean coast. (Breeds N America to Mexico, winters w. Mexico and s. Caribbean to n. S America.)



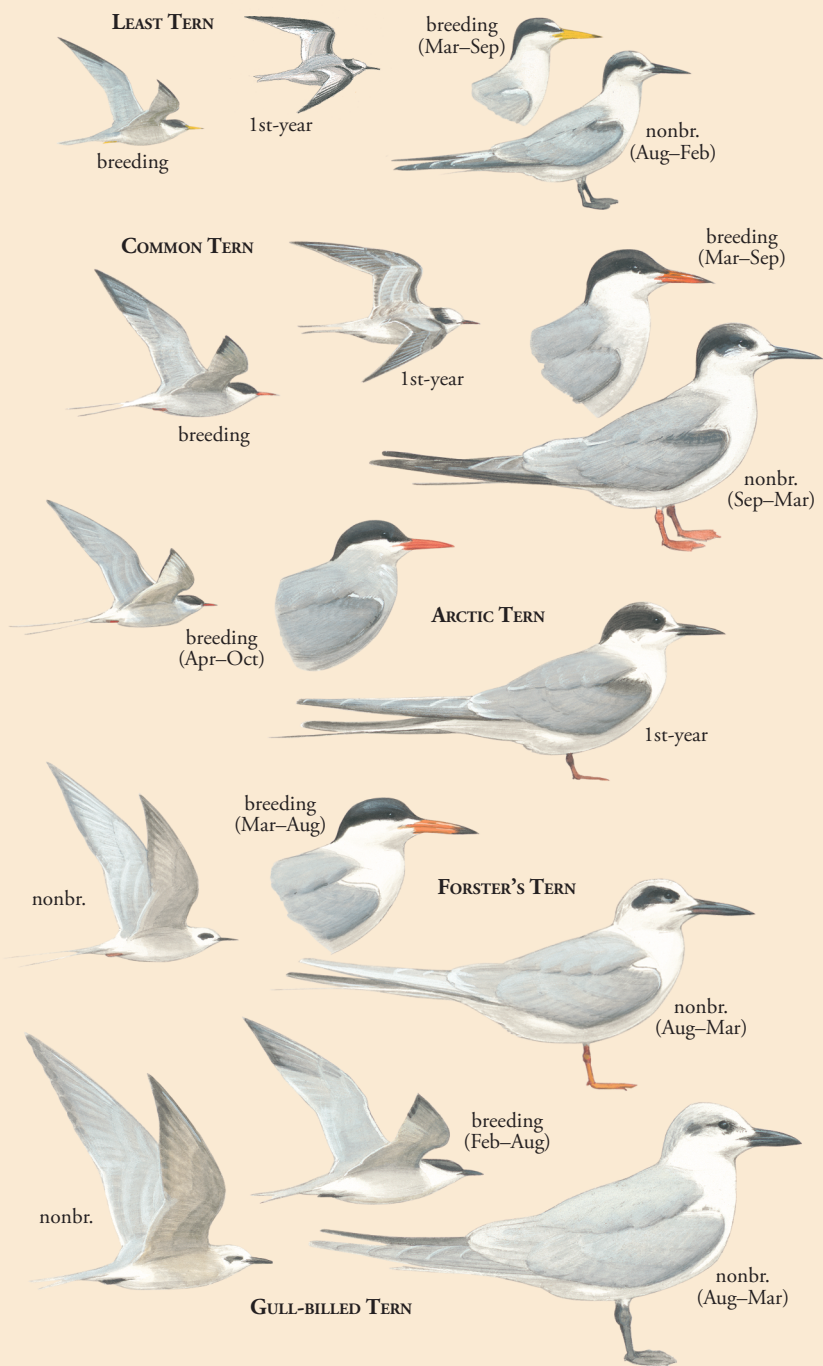
COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo* 29–32cm (+ 2.5cm adult tail streamers). Coastal and offshore winter migrant, often resting at beaches, river mouths, coastal lagoons, harbors; feeds mainly over inshore marine waters. Singles to locally in flocks of 100s off Pacific coast, often mixed with other terns (especially American Black Tern). On nonbr./imm. note partial black cap with white forehead, blackish leading edge to wing (shows at rest as dark shoulder bar). Breeding adult has red bill with small dark tip, pale smoky wash to body. Post-juv. plumages often have dark wedge on trailing edge of primaries (can be indistinct in spring, and also shown by 2nd-year Forster's). Wing molt occurs fall–winter, in Costa Rica. **SOUNDS:** High sharp *kiik*, suggesting Long-billed Dowitcher. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common Aug–May along and off Pacific coast, smaller numbers of imms. occur locally in summer. Uncommon spring and fall on Caribbean coast, scarce in winter. (Breeds n. Eurasia and N America, winters to S Hemisphere.)

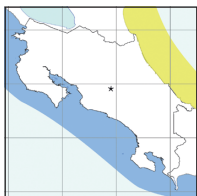
ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea* 30–33cm (+ 3–5cm adult tail streamers). Pacific, offshore transient migrant. Singles rarely found resting on beaches with other terns, when note very short legs of Arctic. Stockier than Common Tern, with shorter neck, longer wings, and often stronger, more clipped wingbeats. On adult, note uniform translucent primaries with narrow black trailing edge, smoky-gray body; bill slightly shorter than Common (can have black tip on 2nd-summer and fall adult). Juv. has whitish secondaries (dark on Common) contrasting with darker leading edge of wing, but lacks contrasting black shoulder bar. Wing molt in S Hemisphere, not in Costa Rica. **STATUS:** Probably a regular migrant Aug–Nov, Apr–May far off Pacific coast, rarely wandering to within range of day trips; scattered coastal records mainly Oct–Nov. (Breeds n. Eurasia and N America, winters S Hemisphere.)

FORSTER'S TERN *Sterna forsteri* 32–36cm (+ 6–7.5cm adult tail streamers). Scarce winter migrant to estuaries, coastal lagoons, harbors, beaches, wetlands; not usually offshore. Likely to be found as single birds, often resting with other terns, gulls, shorebirds. Slightly larger and bigger-billed than Common Tern; nonbr./imm. plumages have distinctive broad black mask on white head, orange-red legs; cf. Gull-billed Tern. Breeding adult has silvery upperwings, whitish body, orange-red bill with extensive black tip, long tail streamers; wing molt in fall, completes before winter. Cf. Common Tern. **SOUNDS:** Hard clipped *kik!* **STATUS:** Rare and irregular nonbr. migrant to n. Pacific coast, mainly Nov–Feb in Gulf of Nicoya; very rare on Caribbean coast. (Breeds N America, winters to Cen America.)



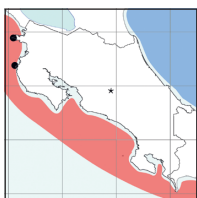
GULL-BILLED TERN *Gelochelidon nilotica* 33–36cm. Medium-size, rather stocky tern of coastal lagoons, salt ponds, beaches, flooded fields, lakes; not over open ocean. Feeds by swooping down to snatch prey (crabs and such) from ground, not by diving into water. Associates readily with resting groups of other terns, gulls, skimners. Distinctive: note habits, thick black bill, relatively long legs, short tail, very pale gray upperparts (no white rump), tapered and swept-back wings. Cf. nonbr./imm. Forster's Tern, Sandwich Tern. **SOUNDS:** Nasal laughing and mellow barking calls, mainly in flight, *ku-wek* and *ket-e-wek*, etc. **STATUS:** Uncommon and local nonbr. migrant on both coasts, mainly Sep–May, a few imms. may occur in summer. (Worldwide.)





***AMERICAN BLACK TERN** *Chlidonias [niger] surinamensis* 23–25cm. Small tern of inshore marine waters, adjacent beaches, river mouths, coastal lagoons. Flocks of 100s occur off Pacific coast, often associating with other terns (especially Common). Flight buoyant and slightly floppy, swooping to pick food from near water surface; often rests on flotsam, sea turtles. Very small size, dusky gray upperparts, dark spur on sides of breast, and habits distinctive; birds in full breeding plumage rare in Costa Rica. **SOUNDS:** Quiet piping whistles; quacking *kek* in alarm. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common Sep–May off Pacific inshore and shelf waters, small numbers of imms. may occur in summer.

Uncommon to fairly common spring and fall off and along Caribbean coast. (Breeds N America, winters Mexico to S America.)



WESTERN BRIDLED TERN *Onychoprion [anaethetus] melanopterus* 33–36cm (+ 5–6.5cm adult tail streamers). Marine waters, rarely seen from shore. Nests on inshore rocky islets. Singles or small groups occur with feeding flocks of boobies, shearwaters, other terns. Flight buoyant and graceful, swooping to pick from surface; often rests on flotsam. Adult has dark gray-brown upperparts, extensively white tail and underwings, long white brow, cf. Sooty Tern. **SOUNDS:** Varied braying and clucking calls. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common off Pacific coast, breeding locally Mar–Aug in northwest. Scarce off Caribbean coast, mainly fall. (Tropical Americas and Atlantic.)

SOOTY TERN *Onychoprion fuscatus* 36–39cm (+ 6.5–7.5cm adult tail streamers). Offshore waters; very unlikely to be seen from land. Feeds over schooling tuna or dolphins with shearwaters, boobies, noddies. Adult clean black-and-white with extensive dark on underside of primaries, cf. Western Bridled Tern. Juv. distinctive: note whitish underwing coverts; cf. Common Brown Noddy. **SOUNDS:** Clucking *wed-a-wek*; juv. gives high lisping whistles. **STATUS:** Scarce year-round off Pacific coast, mainly well offshore; exceptional on Caribbean coast (storm-blown). (Pantropical.)



COMMON BROWN NODDY *Anous stolidus* 36–42cm. Marine waters, unlikely to be seen from shore. Often with feeding flocks of boobies, other terns, shearwaters. Flight typically low to the water, swooping to pick from the surface; transiting flight low and direct, when can suggest small jaeger. Rests on flotsam, sea turtles. Habits and uniform dark brown plumage distinctive; adult has variable whitish forecrown. Rarely vocal away from breeding grounds. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common Apr–Nov over Pacific waters, mainly offshore (breeds Cocos I.); may nest locally on rocky inshore islets; rare in winter. Rare on Caribbean coast (mainly storm-blown). (Pantropical.)

SKIMMERS (LARIDAE; 1 SPECIES) Small pantropical group, sometimes treated as a distinct family. Resemble large angular terns with deep bills that have the elongated mandible adapted to aerial foraging by ‘skimming’ it through the water surface. Ages differ, attaining adult appearance in 1st year; sexes similar but male has appreciably larger bill.



BLACK SKIMMER *Rynchops niger* 43–45.5cm, WS 115–123cm. Distinctive, angular, and boldly patterned waterbird of river mouths, tidal flats, salt ponds, coastal lagoons, beaches. Often rests with gulls and terns, usually in closely spaced groups. Flocks typically fly in rather compact, wheeling formation. Feeds in flight, mainly at night, by slicing elongated mandible through water surface and snapping shut on contact with food. Breeding plumage has solidly black hindneck; juv. has pale edgings to upperparts. Comprises 2 groups that may represent species: **American Black Skimmer** *R. [n.] niger* with extensive white on tail and wings, white underwing coverts; **Amazonian Black Skimmer**

R. [n.] cinerascens with mostly dark tail, narrow white trailing edge to wings, dusky underwings. **SOUNDS:** Nasal laughing and barking clucks, mainly in flight, including at night. **STATUS:** **American** is fairly common but very local nonbr. migrant Sep–May on Pacific coast (mainly Gulf of Nicoya), scarce inland in nw. lowlands and on Caribbean coast; a few birds oversummer locally. **Amazonian** is scarce and irregular nonbr. migrant May–Oct on s. Pacific coast. (Americas.)

AMERICAN BLACK TERN

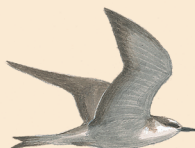


nonbr.
(Jul–Mar)



breeding
(Apr–Aug)

WESTERN BRIDLED TERN



juvs.
(Jun–Oct)

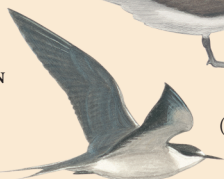


breeding
(Feb–Sep)

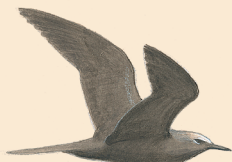
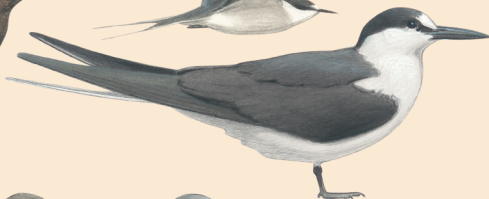


juvs.
(Jun–Nov)

SOOTY TERN



breeding
(year-round)



adult



1st-year

adult

COMMON BROWN NODDY



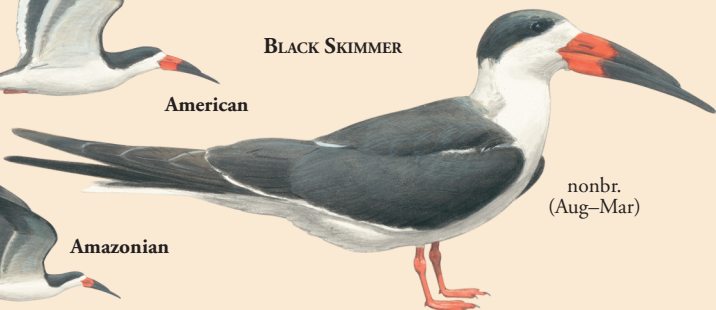
breeding
(Mar–Aug)

BLACK SKIMMER

American



Amazonian



nonbr.
(Aug–Mar)

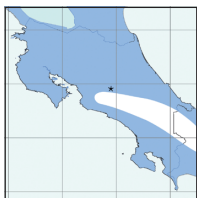
THICK-KNEES (BURHINIDAE; 1 SPECIES) Small family of large terrestrial 'shorebirds' found worldwide in warmer climates. Ages differ slightly, sexes similar; like adult in 1st year; despite the name, 'knees' not especially thick.



DOUBLE-STRIPED THICK-KNEE *Burhinus bistriatus* 45–50cm. Large, cryptic, long-legged nocturnal bird of grassland, savanna, ranchland with scattered trees and bushes; usually not close to human habitation. Usually in pairs or small groups; spends the day standing or sitting quietly, often in the shade of bushes, fence posts. Runs well and fast, in preference to flying. No truly similar species in Costa Rica, but at night cf. imm. Yellow-crowned Night Heron (p. 82), which can be well away from water. Juv. has subtly different head pattern without pronounced double stripes, soon like adult. **SOUNDS:** Heard mainly at night, sometimes in day when alarmed. Far-carrying, clipped barks

and clucks, often in persistent, fairly rapid series, *kyeh-kyeh...*; at a distance might suggest frogs. **STATUS:** Fairly common but often local on n. Pacific slope; smaller numbers spreading e. into n. Caribbean lowlands and w. Central Valley, also s. along Pacific slope; rarely to 1000m. (Mexico to S America.)

STILTS AND AVOCETS (RECURVIROSTRIDAE; 2 SPECIES) Small worldwide family of elegant, long-legged shorebirds found in warmer climates. Ages/sexes differ slightly; adult appearance attained in 1st year; avocet has seasonal plumage changes.



BLACK-NECKED STILT *Himantopus mexicanus* 36–41cm. Essentially unmistakable, visually elegant but vocally irritating large shorebird with improbably long, hot-pink legs. Breeds at salt ponds, shallow lagoons; ranges to varied wetland habitats, less frequent in freshwater and on open coasts. Often in flocks, associating readily with other shorebirds, and breeds colonially. Male has glossy black back and wings, breast often flushes pink on breeding birds; female and imm. have brownish back; juv. has weaker dark head and neck pattern, whitish trailing edge to secondaries; like adult in 1st year. **SOUNDS:** Varied, often persistent yapping and clucking calls, especially when nesting, have earned the nickname 'Marsh Poodle.' Also high piping *piik*, reminiscent of Long-billed Dowitcher. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common nonbr. migrant on both slopes and locally inland, mainly Aug–Apr; breeds locally, mainly in nw. lowlands; to 1500m. (Americas.)

AMERICAN AVOCET *Recurvirostra americana* 40–43cm. Elegant and essentially unmistakable migrant shorebird with fine upcurved bill, boldly pied plumage. Feeds by sweeping bill side-to-side through water. Usually singles, rarely small groups, at shallow lakes, salt ponds, other wetland habitats, associating readily with other large shorebirds, especially stilts. Sexes similar, but male has straighter bill than female; breeding plumage attained Feb–Apr. Juv. (Aug–Oct) has rusty tinge to head and hindneck, like nonbr. adult by early winter. **SOUNDS:** Overslurred piping *kleéb*, singly or in series, at times persistently repeated. **STATUS:** Rare and irregular nonbr. migrant to nw. lowlands, mainly Aug–Apr. (Breeds N America to Mexico, winters to Cen America.)

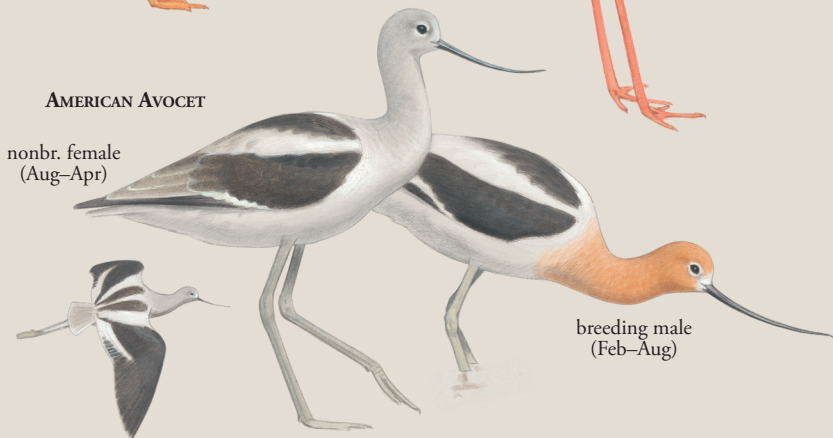
DOUBLE-STRIPED THICK-KNEE



BLACK-NECKED STILT



AMERICAN AVOCET

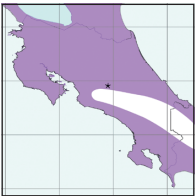


OYSTERCATCHERS (HAEMATOPODIDAE; 1 SPECIES) Small worldwide family of large stocky shorebirds with laterally compressed, bright orange-red bills, thick pink legs. Ages differ slightly, sexes similar; adult appearance attained in 2nd year.



AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus palliatus* 40.5–45.5cm. Distinctive, large, boldly patterned shorebird of sandy beaches, coastal lagoons, rocky coasts, mudflats. Found as singles, pairs, occasionally small flocks at high-tide roosts. Juv. has duller eyes and legs, black-tipped bill, faint pale buff edgings to upperparts; often retains dark on bill tip through 1st year. **SOUNDS:** Loud piping and screaming calls, *Wheeh* and *h'wbeek*, often run into shrill, at times prolonged piping chatters; sharp *keek* in alarm near nest. **STATUS:** Uncommon but local breeder on Pacific coast; more widespread Aug–May when also scarce locally on Caribbean coast. (Americas.)

PLOVERS (CHARADRIIDAE; 8+ SPECIES) Worldwide family of small to large shorebirds. Big eyes and short bills attest to visual hunting strategy, unlike probing and picking of sandpipers. Most migrants show seasonal variation; residents similar year-round. Ages usually differ, with juv. resembling nonbr.; attain adult appearance in 1st year. Sexes usually differ slightly, at least in breeding plumage, with males having more extensive black on face and underparts.



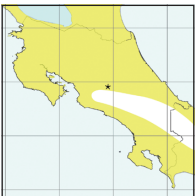
***CAYENNE [SOUTHERN] LAPWING** *Vanellus [chilensis] cayennensis* 34–36cm. Large, spectacular shorebird of open areas, from ranchland with scattered ponds to soccer fields in rural towns; wetlands, riverbanks, lakeshores. Flies with unhurried bowed wingbeats suggesting a heron. No similar species in Costa Rica: note wispy crest, black chest shield, big white wing panels in flight. Juv. has duller eyes and legs, shorter crest, pale scaly edgings to upperparts; like adult in 1–2 months. **SOUNDS:** Can be noisy, including at night (cf. Double-striped Thick-knee): varied strident barks, yaps, and shrieking cries, mainly when disturbed and in display. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common, mainly

below 1800m but with records to 3000m or higher. First recorded Costa Rica in mid-1990s and still expanding its range. (S America, spreading to Cen America.)



BLACK-BELLIED (GRAY) PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola* 26.5–28cm. Large bulky migrant plover of varied coastal habitats, from sandy beaches to mudflats, coastal lagoons, rocky areas; also inland to nearby fields; rarely inland lakeshores. Locally in flocks, associating readily with other shorebirds. Note large bulk, stout bill; in flight note white rump, white wingstripe, black 'armpits,' cf. American Golden Plover. Attains breeding plumage Feb–Apr. Juv. (Sep–Jan) resembles neat version of nonbr. plumage, with streaked breast, finely spangled upperparts. **SOUNDS:** Melancholy slurred whistles, *hééueeh* and *chweééé*; typically lower, more drawn-out than American Golden Plover. **STATUS:** Fairly common

to common Aug–May on both coasts, scarce inland in nw. lowlands; small numbers oversummer locally. (Breeds n. Eurasia and N America, winters almost worldwide.)



AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis dominica* 24–25.5cm. Medium-size, long-winged transient migrant plover found in grassland, farmland, at lakeshores, less often open beaches, rarely mudflats and rocky shorelines. Singles and small groups, often with Black-bellied Plovers. Smaller and slimmer than Black-bellied, with slender bill, mostly dark upperparts (narrow whitish wingstripe), dusky underwings; lacks small hind toe of Black-bellied. Juv. and nonbr. plumages rather dull above, not golden, with contrasting dark cap and whitish eyebrow. Attains breeding plumage Apr–May, at staging areas mainly n. of Costa Rica. **SOUNDS:** Varied plaintive whistles including fairly mellow *ch'weít*

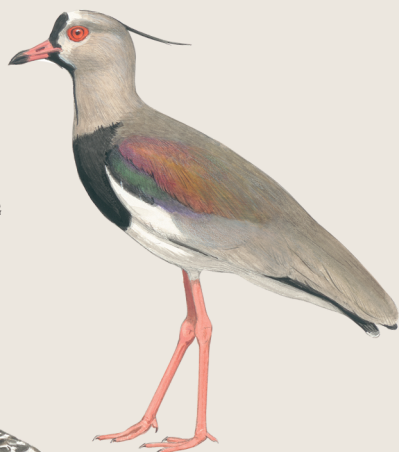
and flutier, more rolled *chweél*. **STATUS:** Uncommon Mar–early May, scarce Sep–early Dec, in coastal lowlands on both slopes, locally inland to 1500m, exceptionally in highlands; most numerous on Pacific slope. (Breeds N America, winters S America.)



AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER



CAYENNE LAPWING

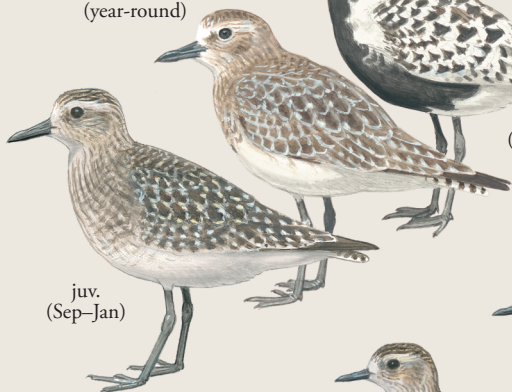


BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER

nonbr.
(year-round)



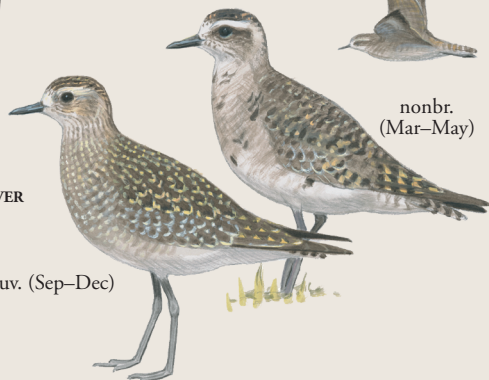
breeding.
(Mar-Aug)



juv.
(Sep-Jan)

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER

juv. (Sep-Dec)



nonbr.
(Mar-May)



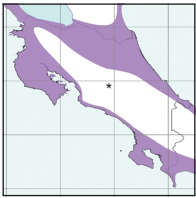


SEMI PALMATED PLOVER *Charadrius semipalmatus* 16.5–17.5cm. Small migrant plover of varied coastal habitats from beaches and tidal mudflats to flooded fields, mangroves, salt ponds. Often in flocks, feeding in well-spaced arrays but roosting more tightly, often with other shorebirds. Note orange legs, wet-sand tone to upperparts, stubby, orange-based bill. Breeding plumage has black mask and breast band. Nonbr. resembles juv. **SOUNDS:** Upslurred, slightly plaintive *ch'wieh* and sharper *ch'wiet!* Nasal bickering chatters in feeding interactions. **STATUS:** Fairly common to locally common Aug–May on both coasts, especially Pacific, where small numbers oversummer; uncommon to

fairly common locally inland, where more widespread in migration, to 1500m. (Breeds N America, winters to S America.)



WILSON'S PLOVER *Charadrius wilsonia* 18–19cm. Small but big-billed plover of coastal habitats, from sandy beaches to lagoon shores, salt ponds, mangrove mudflats, rocky coasts; often breeds in areas with gravel. Mainly feeds by running down small crabs. Often in groups. Note heavy black bill, pinkish legs. Male has black head and breast markings, female dark brown. Pacific coast birds average darker above; Caribbean coast birds often distinctly paler than Semipalmated Plover. **SOUNDS:** Sharp high *piik!* and clipped *pri-dik*; dry, buzzy, bickering chatters in interactions. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common locally on both coasts, breeding on Pacific coast mainly around Gulf of Nicoya; more widespread in fall–winter. (Americas.)



COLLARED PLOVER *Charadrius collaris* 14–15cm. Dainty plover of varied coastal habitats from beaches and river mouths to lagoons, salt flats; also inland on gravel and sand bars in rivers, lakeshores. Note neat, narrow black collar, rusty cheeks, fine dark bill, pinkish legs; lacks whitish hindneck collar of other small ringed plovers. Pairs or small groups often keep apart from flocks of other small plovers. Juv. plumage held briefly; no distinct seasonal change in adult appearance. **SOUNDS:** Clipped sharp *pik*, suggesting Wilson's Plover; mellow rolled *krip* that can run into chatters. **STATUS:** Uncommon and local on both slopes, mainly in coastal lowlands but locally to 500m; rare and irregular visitor

to Central Valley. (Mexico to S America.)

SNOWY PLOVER *Charadrius nivosus* 15–16cm. Small, pale migrant plover of sandy beaches, coastal lagoons, salt ponds. Singles or a few birds, often associating with other small plovers. Feeds mainly by chasing down sandflies. Note partial breast band, dull pinkish-gray legs, slender dark bill. Pacific coast birds pale sandy brown above, Caribbean coast birds average paler, more silvery. Male has bolder black head and breast markings than female. **SOUNDS:** Quiet rolled *prrit* in flight. **STATUS:** Rare and irregular Sep–early Apr on n. Pacific coast, very rare elsewhere on both coasts. (Americas.)

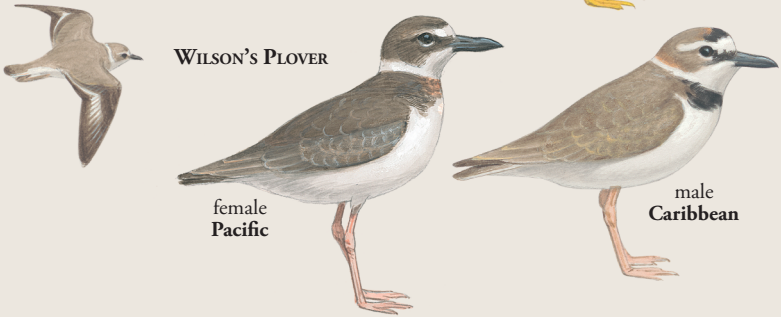


KILLDEER *Charadrius vociferus* 24–25.5cm. Relatively large, long-tailed, and often noisy ringed plover, with distinctive double black breast band, bright rusty rump and long, dark-tipped tail. Often away from water, in plowed fields, grassland, other open habitats; rarely open beaches or tidal mudflats. Regularly in flocks, separate from other ringed plovers. Slight age/sex/seasonal variation; chick has single black breast band, soon attains adult-like plumage. **SOUNDS:** Varied wailing and screaming cries, singly or in series; in display flight a repeated, onomatopoeic *kill-deeu...* **STATUS:** Uncommon nonbr. migrant on both slopes, especially Pacific, mainly Sep–Mar, to 1500m; local breeding resident, mainly in and around Central Valley. (Americas.)

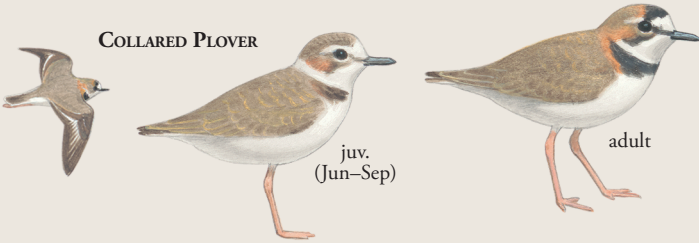
SEMPALMATED PLOVER



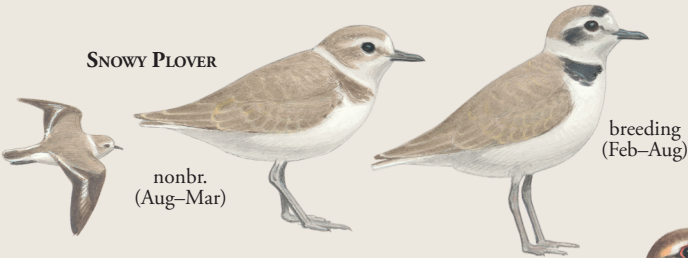
WILSON'S PLOVER



COLLARED PLOVER



SNOWY PLOVER



KILLDEER



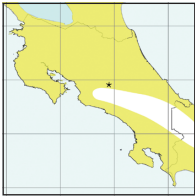
SANDPIPERS (SCOLOPACIDAE; 29+ SPECIES) Fairly large, worldwide family of shorebirds. Mainly tactile feeders, picking and probing as they walk. Ages differ, sexes similar or may differ in breeding plumage; adult appearance usually attained in 1st year, but may not breed till 2 or 3 years; immes. of many species remain on nonbr. grounds through 1st summer. ID can be challenging, but species often associate together, which can help greatly—compare size, shape, bill shape, and behavior of an unfamiliar species with other species you know; voice also useful.



***WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus* 35.5–43cm. Large brown migrant sandpiper with long decurved bill, found on beaches, rocky coasts, at river mouths, salt ponds, estuaries; also nearby fields. Singly or in small loose groups, larger flocks locally in migration; feeds by probing. Cf. rare Long-billed Curlew. Ages/sexes similar, bill becomes mostly to wholly black on breeding adults. **SOUNDS:** In flight, fairly rapid series of overslurred piping whistles, *pee-pee-pee...*, 6–9 notes/sec. Quavering fluty whistles in territorial interactions. **STATUS:** Fairly common to uncommon Sep–Apr on both coasts, especially Pacific; more widespread and numerous in migration, Aug–Oct, Mar–early

May, when scarce inland in north. Small numbers oversummer locally, mainly Pacific coast. (Breeds n. N America, winters to S America.)

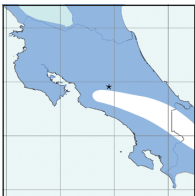
LONG-BILLED CURLEW *Numenius americanus* 45.5–58.5cm. Rare migrant. Very large, buffy-brown sandpiper with very long decurved bill (appreciably shorter on 1st-year). Occurs on tidal mudflats, beaches, at river mouths, salt ponds; feeds by probing. Appreciably larger than Whimbrel (obvious in direct comparison) with warmer plumage tones, cinnamon underwings, plainer face, longer bill. When sleeping, cf. slightly smaller Marbled Godwit. Ages/sexes similar, but female distinctly longer-billed than male. **SOUNDS:** Slightly shrieky hoarse *reeip* and slurred rising *hoorietp* in flight; plaintive quavering whistles and bubbling choruses. **STATUS:** Rare and local late Aug–Apr on Pacific coast, mainly Gulf of Nicoya; exceptional elsewhere, including Caribbean coast. (Breeds w. N America, winters to Cen America.)



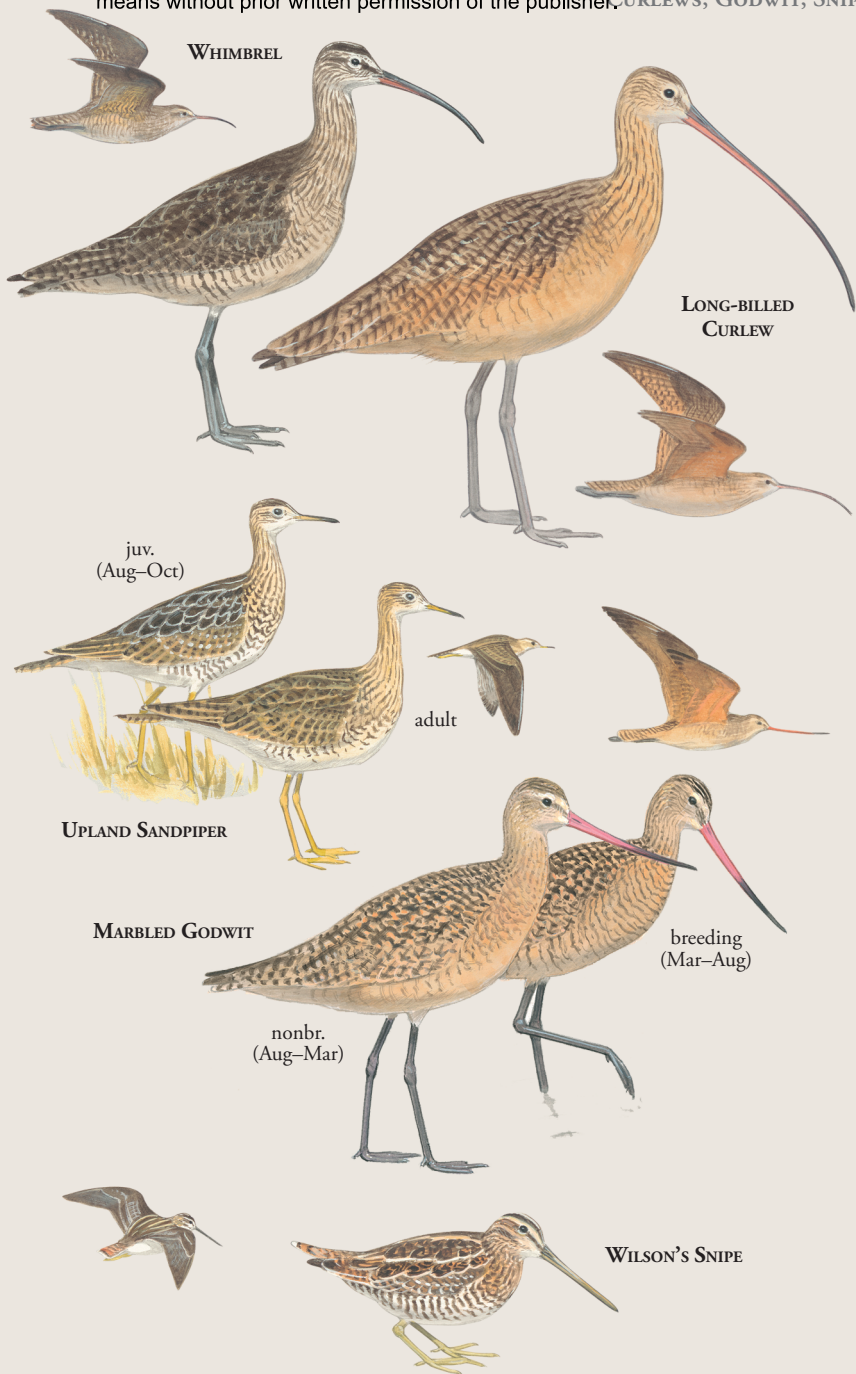
UPLAND SANDPIPER *Bartramia longicauda* 28–30.5cm. Medium-size transient migrant sandpiper of grassy habitats, fields, airports, usually not around water. Singly or in small groups, at times associating loosely with other grassland shorebirds. Note cryptic plumage, long tail, slender straight bill, yellowish legs; nothing really similar, but cf. plain-breasted Buff-breasted Sandpiper of similar habitats. Ages/sexes similar. **SOUNDS:** Mainly in flight, including at night, a liquid whistled *wh-whit* and rippling *whi-whi-whuit*. **STATUS:** Uncommon Aug–Oct, Mar–May in Central Valley and on Pacific slope, scarce on Caribbean Slope. (Breeds N America, winters S America.)



MARbled GODWIT *Limosa fedoa* 38–46cm. Large buffy-brown migrant sandpiper with long pinkish bill tipped dark. Mainly found at estuaries, salt marshes, coastal lagoons, sandy beaches; feeds by probing, often while wading in fairly deep water. Cf. rare Long-billed Curlew, especially when sleeping. Breeding plumage has variable barring on underparts. **SOUNDS:** Nasal, slightly crowing or laughing calls, *ah-ha* and *abk*. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common Aug–May on Pacific coast, more widespread and numerous in migration; a few oversummer locally; very rare on Caribbean coast. (Breeds N America, winters to Cen America.)



WILSON'S SNIPE *Gallinago delicata* 25–26.5cm. Cryptic, medium-size, long-billed migrant sandpiper of grassy marshes, lakeshores, other vegetated wetlands; not in open situations. Mostly seen feeding at marsh edges early and late in day or when flushed from vegetation, usually as singles or loose aggregations. Flushed flight strong and erratic, often towering before dropping back to cover. All plumages similar, with striped face, bold buffy back stripes. **SOUNDS:** Usually utters low rasping *zzhek* when flushed. **STATUS:** Uncommon to scarce Oct–Apr on both slopes, to 1500m; rarely to 3000m during migration. (Breeds N America, winters to n. S America.)



GENUS TRINGA

(5 species). Medium-size to large sandpipers with fairly long, often colorful legs and overall straight bills; upperparts typically have fine pale spotting or spangling in nonbr. plumages, vs. paler edging and scaly look typical of *Calidris* sandpipers. Often bob head or whole body when alarmed and tend to be fairly wary, flying off with whistled or yelping calls.



SOLITARY SANDPIPER *Tringa solitaria* 20.5–21.5cm. Medium-size migrant sandpiper of freshwater ponds, lake edges, wetlands, not on open mudflats or beaches. Singles occur at small bodies of water, also small flocks during migration; does not associate strongly with other shorebirds. Often towers when flushed; wingbeats deep, quick, and swallow-like. Note dark upperparts, fairly long greenish legs, dark underwings in flight; cf. Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper. **SOUNDS:** Slightly plaintive piping whistles in short series, *t-swee sweet* and *teet t-weet t-weet*; brighter and flutier than Spotted Sandpiper. **STATUS:** Uncommon to fairly common late Jul–early May on both slopes, to 1500m; locally to 3000m, mainly during migration. (Breeds N America, winters Mexico to S America.)



LESSER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa flavipes* 24–25.5cm. Medium-size, long-legged migrant sandpiper of freshwater and brackish habitats, from lakes and marshes to salt ponds, coastal lagoons; rarely on open mudflats and beaches. Locally in flocks. Feeds while walking and wading actively, picking at water surface; rarely swims. Greater Yellowlegs is larger and stouter-billed, about willet-size, vs. Lesser, which is about dowitcher-size; Greater also has louder, 'shouted' calls vs. mellower calls of Lesser. Cf. Solitary and Stilt Sandpipers. **SOUNDS:** Mellow whistled *tew* or *kyew*, often in short series suggesting Short-billed Dowitcher. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common Jul–May on Pacific

slope, smaller numbers on Caribbean slope and inland to 1500m; more widespread in migration; a few oversummer locally. (Breeds N America, winters to S America.)



GREATER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa melanoleuca* 29.5–31.5cm. Large, long-legged migrant sandpiper of varied wetland habitats, from lakes and marshes to river mouths, salt ponds, coastal lagoons. Usually singles and small groups. Feeds while walking and wading, often actively dashing after prey and sweeping bill side-to-side, vs. more sedate picking of Lesser Yellowlegs; rarely swims. Cf. Willet, Lesser Yellowlegs. **SOUNDS:** Loud ringing whistle, usually trebled, *tchoo-tchoo-tchoo*; repeated sharp *tew* when agitated. **STATUS:** Fairly common to common Jul–May on both slopes, especially Pacific, locally inland to 1500m; more widespread in migration; a few oversummer locally. (Breeds N America, winters to S America.)

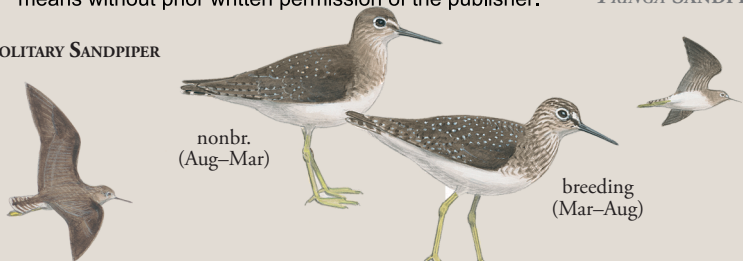


***WESTERN WILLET** *Tringa [semipalmata] inornata* 33–35.5cm. Large, rather stocky migrant sandpiper of varied coastal habitats, from mudflats, beaches, and rocky coasts to salt ponds, river mouths, mangroves. Singles and groups associate readily with other shorebirds; feeds by picking and probing, often in shallow water. Willets as such are distinctive, but distinguishing the two species can be challenging (see below, under Eastern): note stout straight bill, whitish spectacles, gray legs; diagnostic wing pattern striking in flight. Juv. (Aug–Oct) like nonbr. with narrow, pale-dotted edgings to upperparts. **SOUNDS:** Noisy. Varied, mainly 3- or 4-note mellow to loud shrieking whistles, *kri-wih-wih* and

krri-WI-WI-wihr; nasal inflected *kyeh'eh* and short series, *kyeh-yeh-yeh*; alarm a sharp yapping *kyih!* at times repeated steadily. **STATUS:** Fairly common Aug–May on Pacific coast, uncommon on Caribbean coast; small numbers oversummer locally. (Breeds w. N America, winters to S America.)

***EASTERN WILLET** *Tringa semipalmata* 32–34.5cm. Very similar to Western Willet, but slightly smaller and stockier overall, with deeper, blunter bill, shorter legs; breeding plumage averages darker and browner, with pinkish tinge to bill and legs. **SOUNDS:** Calls similar to Western, but average higher, less husky. **STATUS:** Scarce (overlooked?) late Jan–Mar on both coasts, probably also Aug–Oct. (Breeds e. N America to Caribbean, winters S America.)

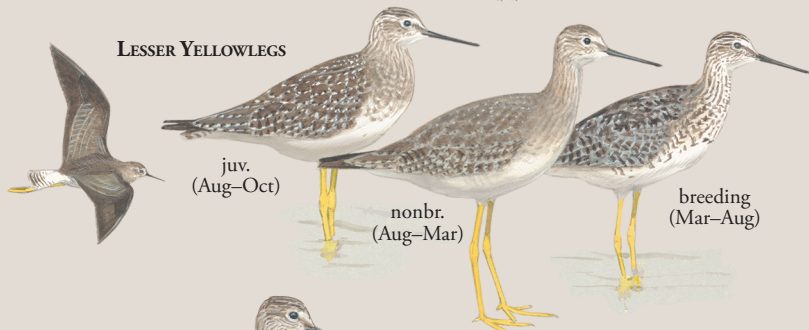
SOLITARY SANDPIPER



nonbr.
(Aug–Mar)

breeding
(Mar–Aug)

LESSER YELLOWLEGS

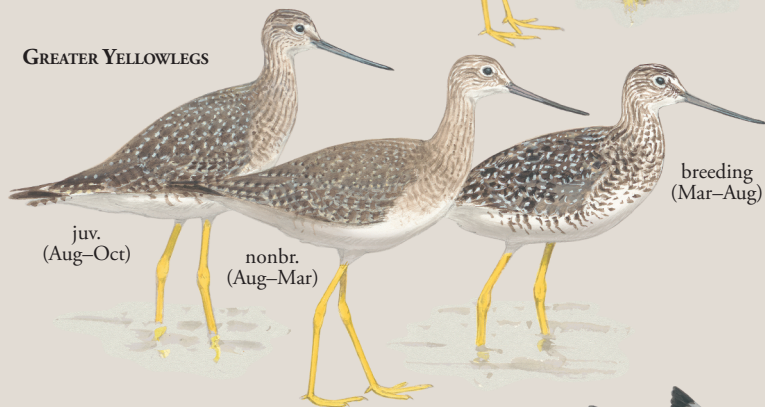


juv.
(Aug–Oct)

nonbr.
(Aug–Mar)

breeding
(Mar–Aug)

GREATER YELLOWLEGS

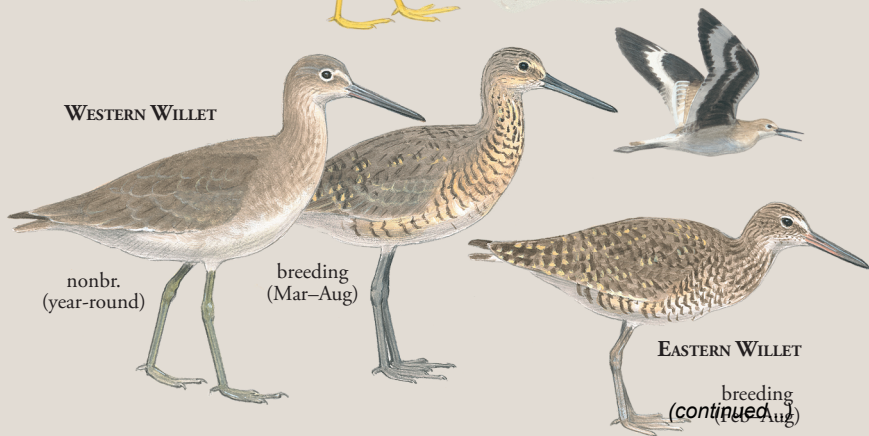


juv.
(Aug–Oct)

nonbr.
(Aug–Mar)

breeding
(Mar–Aug)

WESTERN WILLET



nonbr.
(year-round)

breeding
(Mar–Aug)

EASTERN WILLET

breeding
(continued Aug)

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