

Audubon Florida: Beach Bird Identification - Shorebirds

Included are the birds most commonly seen on our beaches. Identification tips are by comparison to one another. Refer to your field guide for more species and id cues.

Plovers: round appearance, bill shorter than head width, stand still, spot their prey, then dart to catch it



Black-bellied Plover (BBPL): large, about willet size, beady eyes



Piping Plover (PIPL): small, light, yellow legs; rare



Semipalmated Plover (SEPL): small, dark brown, often in flocks in winter



Wilson's Plover (WIPL)*: slightly larger than PIPL and SPPL, medium brown, heavy bill



Snowy Plover (SNPL)*: small, light, black legs, very rare on FL East Coast

Sandpipers and oystercatchers: sewing machine motion feeding pattern; bill longer than head width



Sanderling (SAND): small, runs like a wind-up toy, light grey in winter



Willet (WILL)*: large, greyish in winter, black bars on wings in flight



Dunlin (DUNL): slightly larger than SAND, bill's tip droops down, brownish



Short-billed Dowitcher (SBDO): mid-size, long bill, white eyebrow, greenish-yellow legs, brownish



Marbled Godwit (MAGO): larger than Willet, bi-colored bill, slightly upturned, cinnamon color



Ruddy Turnstone (RUTU): slightly larger than SAND, "colorful" scalloped brown back, black bib



Red Knot (REKN): mid-size, bill mid-length, shape similar to SAND but larger



American Oystercatcher (AMOY)*: large, black and white, striking red bill

Refer to bird field guide to ID species smaller than Sanderling like Semipalmated, Western, and Least Sandpiper, species larger than Willet like Whimbrel and Long-billed Curlew, and similar size as Willet like Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, as well as rarer sandpipers

*Breeds in Florida

() Common species abbreviations provided in parentheses