

A Simple Review of Sandpipers



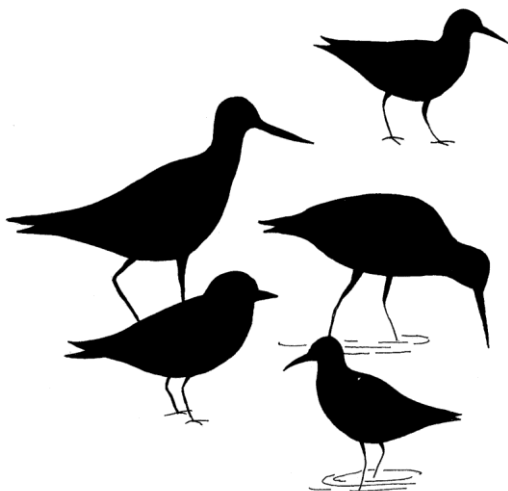
The **order of birds called charadriiformes includes some familiar shorebirds** like sandpipers and plovers. Woodcocks and snipes also belong to this order, even though some people assume those gamebirds are more closely related to birds like pheasants and turkeys.

Pennsylvania is not known for its shorelines, at least not the shorelines you associate with the ocean. But we have many large rivers in the state and our northwest corner borders Lake Erie. **Any muddy or sandy edge of a body of water can be considered a shoreline, and that's where you find most shorebirds.**

Our **most common shorebird is the spotted sandpiper.** They are easy to identify. When they walk along the water's edge **they teeter up and down**, sort of like the slow bobbing motion of a sewing machine. Even the chicks teeter soon after they hatch. The **precocial chicks** follow their mother as she feeds, quickly learning how to search for food in the muddy soil and which tiny insects and crustaceans to eat. If they are frightened, the bobbing gets faster. But if the birds stop, they stay motionless. No one seems to know why the spotted sandpiper behaves this way.

One of our sandpipers, the **upland sandpiper, is a threatened species.** They are much taller than a spotted sandpiper, which is about robin-sized. The upland sandpiper is longer-legged and stands about a foot tall. They also **prefer grassy areas and will nest in fields and meadows.**

Many other sandpipers pass through the state during spring and fall migration. Any time you are near a lake or river edge, it is worth scanning the shoreline for a glimpse of some of these attractive birds.



Different types of sandpipers practice feeding behavior known as **“resource partitioning.”** This means they can live and feed together without a lot of competition.

Some shorebirds have long legs and some have short legs; some have long bills and some have short bills. When they feed together, the long-legged, long-billed birds can wade further into the water and find small creatures deeper in the soil because of their physical features.

The short-legged, short-billed birds feed beside them, finding small creatures in the shallower water and closer to the soil's surface. Many other kinds of birds practice resource partitioning, too.