

# Shorebirds 2020



## Shorebird Identification Tips

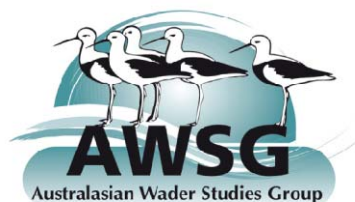
1. Small Plovers and Turnstone		<i>In flight</i>
<p>Greater Sand Plover 21cm</p>	<p>Strong tapered bill, bill length greater than distance from eye to base of bill. Uniform upperparts, white underparts with breast patches that may join. <i>Compared with Lesser:</i> has longer legs, often horizontal posture. Often flat forehead and tapered look from head to tip of bill. Upperparts paler and feathers often defined by pale fringes.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – conspicuous broad white wing bar, more white on sides of rump, and toes project beyond the end of tail.</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – Coastal beaches and mudflats. Migrant.</p>	<p>Danny Rogers</p>
<p>Lesser Sand Plover 19cm</p>	<p>Shorter blunt bill with bulge often visible toward tip, bill shorter than distance from eye to base of bill. Generally steep forehead. <i>Compared with Greater:</i> darker upperparts often with darker smudge around and below eye, generally darker legs, often stands more upright, has shorter legs and therefore plumper in appearance.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – less white visible than Greater, including less white in base of tail and finer wing-bars</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – Coastal beaches and mudflats. Migrant.</p>	<p>Peter Ericsson</p>
<p>Oriental Plover 25cm</p>	<p>Large plover with warm dark brown upperparts, long, pale legs and pale face. Stands tall. Fine head and bill compared to other large plovers.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – entire underwing is greyish brown, white belly contrasts with underwing, toes visible beyond tail, dark rump.</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – Semi-arid grasslands, claypans. Migrant.</p>	<p>Rohan Clarke</p>













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CARING  
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 <p>Breeding</p> <p>Non-breeding</p> <p><b>Double-banded Plover</b> 19cm</p>	<p>Supercilium and face are tinged buff in non-breeding plumage. Buff tinge on face fades during winter. <i>Compared with Lesser Sand Plover:</i> bill slighter and shorter, and stands more upright. <i>Compared with female or immature Red-capped Plover:</i> larger, buff tinge to face (though fades) portions of double bar still visible in non-breeding plumage.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – dark outer wing, narrow white wing-bar, sides of rump white. <b>Habitat</b> – Coastal shores, bays, estuaries. Winter migrant from NZ – not in Australia in late spring and much of summer</p>	 <p>Alan Fletcher</p>
 <p>Male</p> <p>Female</p> <p><b>Red-capped Plover</b> 15cm</p>	<p>Smallest Australian plover, with the shortest and finest bill of any Australian plover. Adult males have distinctive red cap and black bar on side of breast. Adult females are paler, more similar to immature birds. <i>Compared with Double-banded Plover:</i> Immature and female Red-capped Plovers lack buff on face, have paler upperparts, supercilium is shorter and breast is often paler.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – more white on sides of tail than Double-banded Plover <b>Habitat</b> – widespread, found in variety of habitats. Resident.</p>	 <p>Alan Fletcher</p>
 <p><b>Hooded Plover</b> 21cm</p>	<p>Adults have obvious black hood and white nape, upperparts paler and greyer than other plovers. Juveniles look like adults but hood sandy-brown instead of black. Sub-adult head is mottled and darker than on juvenile, big white band on nape separates it clearly from Double-banded Plover</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – Resident primarily on ocean beaches throughout south-eastern Australia, Also found year-round on coastal and inland salt lakes in WA, and during non-breeding season in eastern Australia. Resident.</p>	 <p>Juvenile Hooded Plover - Glenn Ehmke</p>
 <p><b>Black-fronted Dotterel</b> 17cm</p>	<p>Red bill and eye ring with black eye mask and black chest band.</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – Generally around freshwater dams, lakes, and swamps. Resident.</p>	 <p>David Hewett</p>
 <p><b>Red-kneed Dotterel</b> 18cm</p>	<p>Black hood and chest band, red flanks.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – white trailing edge to wings and tail <b>Habitat</b> – Shallow fresh or brackish inland and coastal wetlands. Resident.</p>	 <p>Rohan Clarke</p>
 <p>Non-breeding</p> <p>Breeding</p> <p><b>Ruddy Turnstone</b> 23cm</p>	<p>Bright orange legs, wedge-shaped bill, distinctive brown-black breast, warm upperparts, white underparts. "Tubby" appearance with a horizontal stance.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – white rump. <b>Habitat</b> – primarily on rocky coastlines, reefs, sand islands, beaches with accumulated dead seagrass, less commonly on mudflats. Migrant.</p>	 <p>Dean Ingwersen</p>

## 2. Large Plovers, Lapwings, Stone-curlews

*In flight*



Comb-crested Jacana 21cm

Pink-red comb, white face and neck with yellow border, green legs, extremely long toes

**Habitat** – walks on top of floating vegetation of wetlands and dams, occasionally feeds along wetland margins. Resident.



Rohan Clarke



Bush Stone-curlew 55cm

Large, streakier plumage, less obvious head pattern and smaller bill than Beach Stone-curlew. Nocturnal.

**Habitat** – open woodland, forest and pastures usually near swamp or inland water. Resident.



David Disher



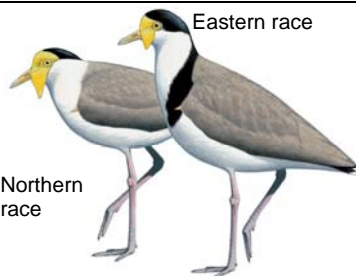
Beach Stone-curlew 55cm

Large, extremely heavy bill, less streaky plumage than Bush Stone-curlew. Primarily nocturnal but will change activity somewhat based on tides.

**Habitat** – Beaches, mangroves, and intertidal mudflats. Resident.



Rohan Clarke



Masked Lapwing 34cm

Large yellow facial wattles. Absence of black breast-band distinguishes it from Banded Lapwing. Northern race (ssp. *miles*) has larger wattle than eastern race (ssp. *novaeollandiae*). Eastern race has black bars on hindneck extending down sides of chest, lacking in northern race.

**Habitat** – A wide variety of areas, but usually at least close to water. Resident.



Dean Ingwersen



Banded Lapwing 27cm

Small bright red wattle and bold, U-shaped breast distinguishes it from Masked Lapwing.

**Habitat** – may be far from water, and usually found on drier grasslands, pastures, preferring very short grass, bare ground and recently ploughed areas. Resident.



Rohan Clarke



Breeding

Non-breeding

Pacific Golden Plover 25cm

Upperparts brown with *often* obvious golden flecks.

*Compared to Grey Plover:* has more slender and slightly shorter bill, large eye, smaller head, more upright stance, looks smaller, lankier.

**In flight** – uniformly coloured underwing, lacks white wing bar on upper-wing

**Habitat** – tidal flats, coastal salt-marshes, and rocky reefs or shores. Migrant.



Rohan Clarke



Breeding

Non-breeding

Grey Plover 29cm

Grey upperparts with white speckling, and clean white underparts. Heavily built bird with big head and stout bill. Most Grey Plovers in Australia are females.

**In flight** – black axillaries (underwing near body), white rump patch, and white wing bars distinctive

**Habitat** – tidal flats, more common on sandy beaches than Pacific Golden Plover. Migrant.



Danny Rogers

### 3. Curlews, Dowitcher and Godwits

*In flight*



Whimbrel 42cm

Noticeably smaller than Eastern Curlew, bill if turned around would only reach its middle back. Noticeable striped head and crown, dirty white eyebrow, barred flanks, pale to white upper rump. Generally short and dumpy bird.

**In flight** – rump wedge-shaped and much paler than Eastern Curlew.

**Habitat** – Coastal tidal flats and mangroves. Migrant.



Alan Fletcher



Eastern Curlew 63cm

Largest shorebird, long, curved bill that if turned around could reach rump. Streaky plumage and head.

**In flight** – barred pattern on rump visible.

**Habitat** – Tidal flats. Migrant.



Rohan Clarke



Little Curlew 29cm

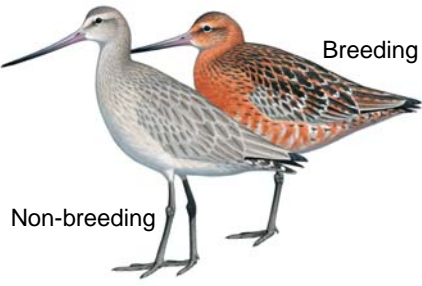

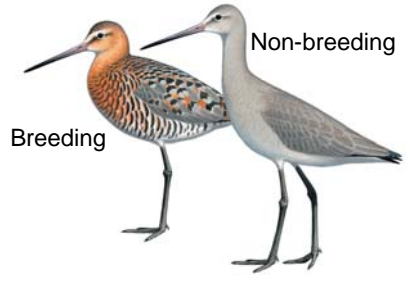

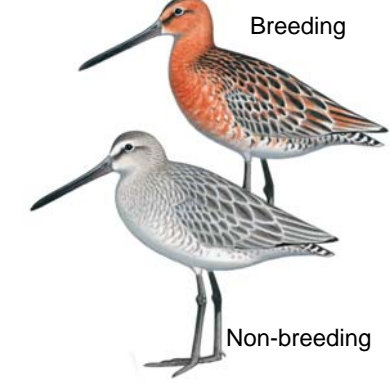

Bill not much longer than head.

*Compared with Whimbrel:* the bill is less curved, while cap and eye-stripe (shorter) are not as pronounced. More buff colouration (warmer upperparts).

**Habitat** – dry short grasslands and artificial grass areas, however will come onto beach during hot weather. Migrant.



Juanli Sun

 <p>Non-breeding</p> <p>Breeding</p> <p>Bar-tailed Godwit 42cm</p>	<p>Bill usually appears slightly upturned, bicoloured (pink and black). In non-breeding plumage upperparts and neck are streaky, striped, and scalloped. Legs black. Immature birds more heavily streaked.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – streaky appearance with barred tail, and plain belly in complete non-breeding plumage</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – Usually coastal tidal flats. Migrant.</p>	 <p>Glenn Ehmke</p>
 <p>Breeding</p> <p>Non-breeding</p> <p>Black-tailed Godwit 39cm</p>	<p>Bill generally straight and less bi-coloured compared to Bar-tailed Godwit bill. Overall size is smaller with a more delicate skinnier appearance, upper parts and neck are generally uniformly matt grey in non-breeding plumage. White spot near eye above bill will often be the only place of notable contrast on the bird.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – Black end of tail contrasts with white rump, also obvious wide wing-bars on upper wing. Legs extend further beyond tail compared to Bar-tailed Godwit</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – Fresh and brackish wetlands, some tidal flats. Migrant.</p>	 <p>Dean Ingwersen</p>
 <p>Breeding</p> <p>Non-breeding</p> <p>Asian Dowitcher 34cm</p>	<p>Black straight bulbous-tipped bill, ½ the size of Bar-tailed Godwit. Scapulars with very dark centres forming a streaky appearance in upperparts, more truncated rear end than Godwits, white underwing. Feeding behaviour distinctive, with “sewing machine like” action with repeated deep probes.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – legs extending well beyond the tail.</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – coastal tidal flats in northern Australia. Globally listed as vulnerable. Migrant.</p>	 <p>Carl-Johan Svensson</p>

## 4. Oystercatchers, Avocet, Stilts, Pratincoles, Snipe

*In flight*



Pied Oystercatcher 46cm

Distinctive black and white plumage with red bill, red legs. Stocky appearance. Could be confused with South Island Pied Oystercatcher – a rare visitor which has shorter legs, longer thinner bill and more extensive white underwings in flight.

**Habitat** – ocean beaches and tidal flats. Resident.



Alan Fletcher



Sooty Oystercatcher 46cm

Distinctive all-black plumage with red bill and pink legs. Stocky appearance.

**Habitat** – prefers rocky coastline. Resident.



Glenn Ehmke



Black-winged Stilt 37cm

Black and white, thin straight needle-like bill and very long pink, thin legs. Adults with black on back of neck, but juveniles lack this and appear similar to juvenile Banded Stilts. Juvenile Black-winged Stilts have a dirty looking head, and at rest the upper parts are scaly brown to black.

**In flight** - Juvenile Black-winged Stilts have a white rump patch extends well up the back, whereas juvenile Banded Stilts have a clean white head, and large white patch in the middle of the back that extends from the white neck.

**Habitat** – coastal and inland wetlands or tidal flats. Resident.



Sonja Ross



Juvenile - Danny Rogers



Banded Stilt 39cm

Chestnut, U-shaped band across lower breast which merges into black patch at the centre of the belly.

Non-breeding plumage varies greatly, but breast band narrower and duller, can be reduced to brown smudges on upper belly.

Juveniles lack breast band so underparts are wholly white – can be confused with juvenile Black-winged Stilt – see above.

**Habitat** – disperse widely, but breed primarily on islands within inland salt lakes, also in salt marshes, salt-works, and sewerage farms. Resident.



Glenn Ehmke



Red-necked Avocet 44cm

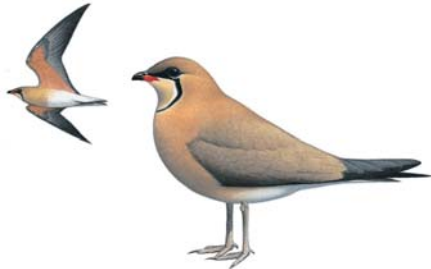
Long, slender up-turned bill and chestnut head & neck.

Feeds in shallow water rapidly sweeping bill from side to side.

**Habitat** – typically found on saline lakes and salt pans but also fresh water wetlands and tidal flats. Resident.



Chris Tzaros



Oriental Pratincole 24cm

Larger, stockier, stands more horizontal, with shorter legs than Australian Pratincole. Throat patch on juveniles not as obvious.

**In flight** –very clean white, obvious rump patch and orange/red wing. Feet don't project beyond tail.

**Habitat** – poorly known, but often roosts near water on open ground, and aggregates in response to high locust numbers. Migrant.



Rohan Clarke



Australian Pratincole 21cm

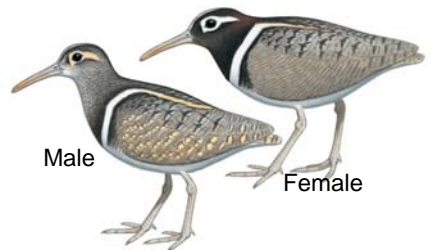
Smaller, slimmer, stand more erect, and longer legged than Oriental Pratincoles, also. At rest wing primaries extend well past end of tail.

**In flight** –feet project beyond the end of the tail in Australian Pratincole

**Habitat** – nomadic across open, sparsely grassed, inland plains. Breeds in Australia, migrates to northern Australia, PNG, Indonesia in winter.



Rohan Clarke



Australian Painted Snipe 27cm

White collar extending down to back in two cream lines, white chest. Females have dark brown neck with wings and back bronzy grey-green. Males are greyer with banded pattern of creamy spots on wings. Immature similar to male.

**Habitat** – Swamps with shallow water, exposed wet mud, dense low fringing vegetation. Resident.



Latham's Snipe 31cm

This is the only snipe species likely to occur in eastern Australia. In the west there are two other species: Pintailed and Swinhoe's Snipe, but snipe rarely give you a good look, and even the experts have trouble telling them apart. See "Shorebirds of Australia" and other texts if curious.

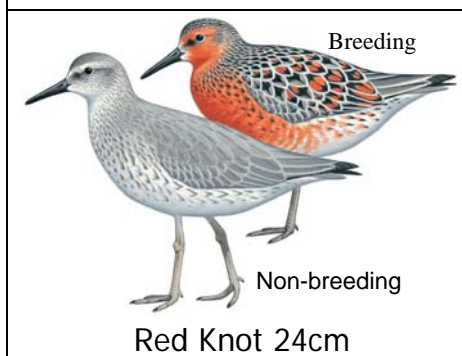
**Habitat** – found in short tussock grass, and sedge surrounding freshwater wetlands, fairly secretive, and often only seen when it flushes suddenly calling loudly "chak". Feeds mostly at night. Migrant.



Dean Ingwersen

## 5. Large Sandpipers

*In flight*



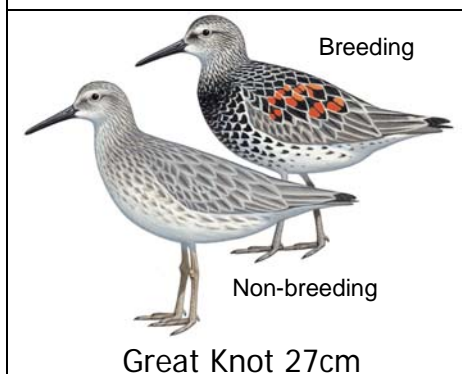
*Bill length similar to head length, chevron marks on flanks and breast, plain mantle, slight streaking on head (less streaked than Great Knot) with plain nape of neck and mantle, and relatively smooth grey back, eyebrow often the point of most obvious contrast on upperparts, generally more contrast between upperparts and belly than in Great Knot, breast can be spotted, line from bill to eye can appear more obvious. Smaller than Grey Knot and dumpy looking.*

**In flight** –rump with light barring, narrow wing bar

**Habitat** –Coastal tidal flats. Migrant.



Glenn Ehmke



*Bill longer than head and sometimes appears to droop, spotted breast (not always obvious), streaky head (more pronounced than in Red Knot), and streaky mantle, nape of neck, and upper-parts. Longer body, and heavy-chested appearance compared to Red Knot, Great Knot has large triangular smudge on lores (area between eye and bill), while Red Knot has a narrower dark marking on lores.*

**In flight** – very light wing-bar, white rump (cleaner and whiter than Red Knot – useful for checking flock proportions)

**Habitat** – coastal tidal flats. Gregarious birds that flock closely together. Migrant.



Rohan Clarke



*Horizontal stance, olive yellow legs, otherwise appears featureless, plain grey upperparts aside from white supercilium (eyebrow), also no wing or rump patches, medium-sized straight bill, long wings and tail make rear look narrowly tapered.*

*Compared with Wandering Tattler: very similar, best distinguished by call, supercilium extends past eye, wing tips don't extend much past tail, shorter nasal groove, call = 2-3 note whistle.*

**Habitat** –sheltered reefs, rocky shores or tidal flats. Migrant.



Rohan Clarke



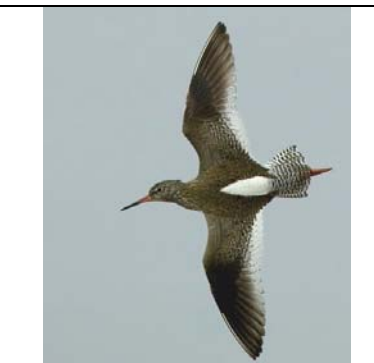
*Compared with Grey-tailed Tattler: heavier bill with longer nasal groove, darker grey upperparts, smaller white eyebrow that does not meet on forehead and rarely extends beyond eye, wing tips usually extend beyond tail. In breeding plumage underparts more heavily barred dark grey. Call = rippling trill.*

**Habitat** – coral islands and cays, rocky reefs and islands, rock platforms. Found along Queensland and northern NSW coast, also top end NT. Migrant.

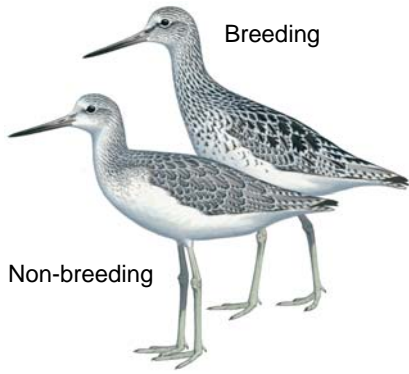


*Orange-red legs obvious, and orange-red at base of bill. Overall, looks like a cross between Greenshank and Grey-tailed Tattler, but white trailing edge of secondaries in flight only in Redshank, and white rump extends up to middle of back.*

**Habitat** – variety of coastal habitats, especially in areas of soft substrates. Migrant.



Alister Benn



Breeding

Non-breeding

Common Greenshank 33cm

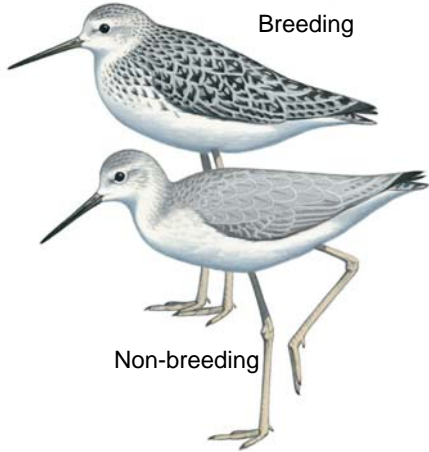
Blue-grey two-toned bill appears slightly upturned, and longer and heavier than Marsh Sandpiper. Dark grey upperparts contrasting with white belly; looks very black and white compared with many other waders. Streaky head, long greenish-grey legs (juveniles green), often submerges head completely while feeding.

**In flight** – Dark outer, upper wing obvious, and one of the more obvious calls “teu, teu, teu”.

**Habitat** – Widespread and dispersed throughout many coastal areas and inland wetlands. Migrant.



Alister Benn



Breeding

Non-breeding

Marsh Sandpiper 24cm

Legs olive grey to yellowish, often when feeding will daintily pick at water surface.

*Compared with Greenshank:* fine straight needle like bill is most distinguishing feature of Marsh Sandpiper. It is also noticeably smaller, more delicate and proportionally longer than Greenshank, head often slightly darker, otherwise paler above (plumage often hard to separate between these two).

**In flight** – feet extend well beyond tail. Greenshank feet also extend beyond tail, but not as far. Voice loud “yip”, or “pew”

**Habitat** – coastal and inland wetlands, generally avoids exposed coastal areas. Migrant.



Alister Benn



Johan Stenlund

## 6. Small Sandpipers

*In flight*



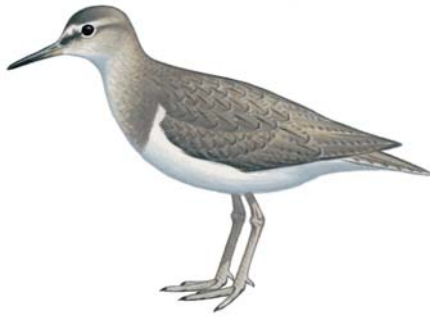
Wood Sandpiper 21cm

White spotted upperparts are the most obvious unique feature. Smallish sandpiper, with conspicuous supercilium, long greenish-yellow to olive-brown legs, squared white rump above dark barred tail, and whitish eye-ring. Lankier and taller than Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, shorter bill than Marsh Sandpiper. Breast streaking is often heavy.

**Habitat** – Mostly on freshwater wetlands. Migrant.



Dean Ingwersen



Common Sandpiper 20cm

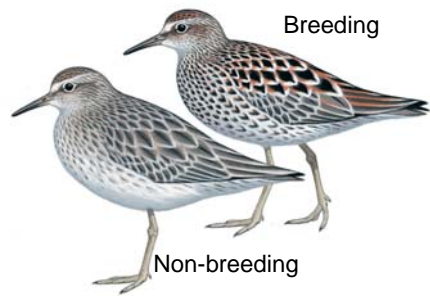
White wedge in front of folded wing is distinctive, olive/bronze upperparts. Bobs tail a lot - tattlers and Wood Sandpipers also bob but generally not as much.

**In flight** – underwing is mostly white with a brown trailing edge, and brown bars across lesser and greater coverts. White wing-bar on upper wing.

**Habitat** – prefers rocky creeks and channels, dams or mangrove lined inlets – often solitary. Migrant.



Rohan Clarke



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 20cm

Boldly streaked and mottled in shades of dark and light brown (varies widely), marked on breast and flanks. Often rusty ginger crown (more so on juveniles), green-yellow legs, and legs usually slightly bent. Streaking on under-tail coverts and breast, usually distinct eyebrow, and usually slight droop in bill.

**In flight** – less white on outer tail feathers, and finer wing-bars than Red-necked Stint.

**Habitat** – More often in freshwater or saltmarsh areas. Fairly common and abundant. Migrant.



Sonja Ross



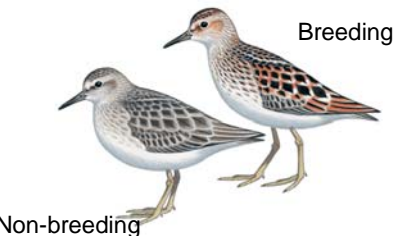
Pectoral Sandpiper 21cm

*Compared with Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.* longer bill, yellowish tinge at base of bill much more pronounced, clean white under-tail coverts, lack rusty crown (but so do many Sharpies), sharp demarcation between streaked breast and white belly (Sharpies can look a bit like this, so while it is generally much clearer in Pectoral, it is not enough to be sure of identification – breast streaking tends to extend down the sides in Sharpies). Also, supercilium is broader in front of eye.

**Habitat** – Freshwater wetlands. Rare migrant.



Glen Tepke



Long-toed Stint 14cm

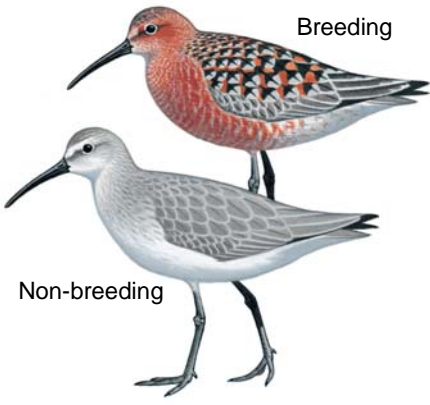

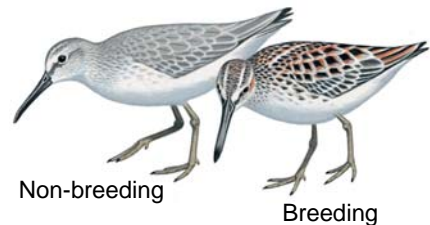


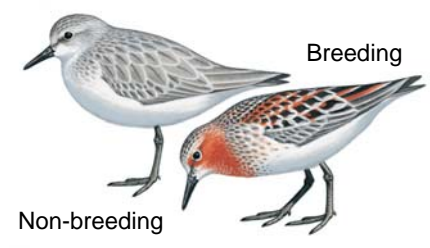

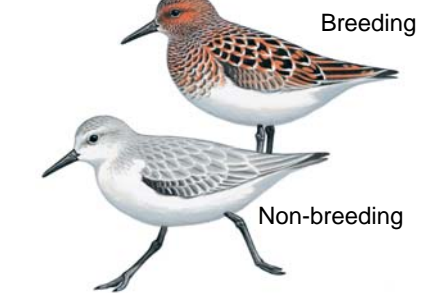



Looks very much like a Stint-sized Sharp-tailed Sandpiper with longer, yellowish legs (legs are yellowish green). Bill is finer and sharper, body is more slender, and head is smaller than a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Like Pectoral Sandpiper it has clean white under tail coverts. May adopt a hunched crane-like posture, or a very tall posture with long neck especially when alarmed.

**In flight** – thinner wing bar than other stints, and toes extend beyond tail.

**Habitat** – More common inland, often hides in grassy tussocks, or similar cover. Migrant.



Rohan Clarke

 <p>Breeding</p> <p>Non-breeding</p> <p>Curlew Sandpiper 20cm</p>	<p>Long down-curved bill. In non-breeding plumage upperparts fairly uniform grey to greyish-brown, with slight supercilium the most obvious area of contrast. Pale whitish underparts, appear very light face-on, plumage varies throughout moulting. Feet and legs black. Often roost with knot spp., Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint. Uppers similar to Red Knot if sleeping, though a more slender bird.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – white rump patch distinctive, with dark tip of tail, white wing bar.</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – Tidal flats and some inland wetlands. Often feed belly deep in shallow water. Common and widespread, but declining significantly throughout much of southern Australia over last 25 years. Migrant.</p>	 <p>Rohan Clarke</p>
 <p>Non-breeding</p> <p>Breeding</p> <p>Broad-billed Sandpiper 17cm</p>	<p>Longish bill that droops right at the end, bigger and browner than a Red-necked Stint. Split supercilium good characteristic but not always obvious, also legs might show a yellowish tinge which if seen would not occur in Red-necked Stint or Curlew Sandpiper (both have black legs). Compact rear-end.</p> <p><b>Habitat</b>—estuaries, bays and mangrove lined inlets. Migrant.</p>	
 <p>Terek Sandpiper 23cm</p>	<p>Distinctive upturned bill with orange base, and orange to yellow orange legs obvious, generally brighter than Tattler. Very steep forehead, upperparts plain grey but with black streaks on scapulars (never seen on Tattlers), contrast between wings and belly strong, and usually dark primaries and tail make rear contrast with the rest of upper parts.</p> <p><b>Habitat</b>—mudflats, mangroves, sea-grass beds. Migrant.</p>	 <p>Rohan Clarke</p>
 <p>Breeding</p> <p>Non-breeding</p> <p>Red-necked Stint 15cm</p>	<p>Smallest, most common shorebird in Australia; dumpy with short legs and bill (both black), streaked head, grey to greyish brown upperparts, white below, back streaky looking as feathers often have dark centres.</p> <p><i>Compared to Sanderling:</i> upperparts darker and Sanderling generally lack slight dark line from bill through eye.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – white wing bar across primaries, black centre to rump and tail with white outer tail.</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> –Wide range of coastal areas and inland wetlands. Migrant.</p>	 <p>Alan Fletcher</p>
 <p>Breeding</p> <p>Non-breeding</p> <p>Sanderling 21cm</p>	<p>Bright white underparts, very grey upperparts, often notable white about the head, only three toes. Very active feeders, run after retreating waves.</p> <p><i>Compared to Red-necked Stint:</i> feathers on upperparts have more white fringing, lack hind tail, heavier and longer bill; Stint have darker upper parts and are 25% smaller. Sanderling generally lacks the somewhat pronounced slight dark line from bill through eye.</p> <p><b>In flight</b> – wide white wing bar.</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – Ocean beaches. Migrant.</p>	 <p>Rohan Clarke</p>
 <p>Dean Ingwersen</p> <p>Ruff 28cm male, 22cm female</p>	<p>Plain faced appearance with pale feathering around bill, a very heavy bill, at times close to chisel like, and at times with slight droop. Upperparts brown-grey with pale fringed feathers giving streaked or mottled appearance. Large size especially of male, diagnostic in mixed flock. Legs pinkish-red to orangish-red</p> <p><b>Habitat</b> – freshwater and brackish swamps preferred. Migrant.</p>	 <p>Glen Tepke</p>