



Len's Lens – Volume 2

SHOREBIRDS

In memory of Rich Stallcup 1944 - 2012

“Damn the winds, let’s go birding...”

Copyright Len Blumin – March 2018

Front cover: Marbled Godwit – May – Bodega Bay, CA

Len's Lens – Volume 2

The SHOREBIRDS

Shorebirds are a group of specialized bird families that seen mostly along our coasts and at interior wetlands. A few have evolved to forage in upland areas. They number 210+ species worldwide, with about 50 species breeding regularly in North America (O'Brien, et. al., 2006).

Current taxonomic schemes place shorebird families in the order ***Charadriiformes***, along with the Gulls, Terns, and Auks (Alcids).

Shorebirds families featured here are birds photographed on trips during the past 18 years:

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Photography and technical notes

All photos were taken by the author, using an adapter to mount a small digital camera closely to the eyepiece of a Swarovski HD spotting telescope, a technique called “digi-scoping”. Over the years a number of cameras were used, starting with a Nikon twist-body CoolPix (CP) 4500, and progressing to the CP 8400, and the CP 6000. The newer Nikon 1 series cameras offered a larger sensor. The Nikon 1 V1 with the Nikkor 18.5mm lens has been a mainstay for the past 4-5 years. The quality of the scope is more important than the camera, and a steady tripod helps a lot.

Taking photos through a spotting scope allows one to photograph birds from a distance, which in turn permits observing them with minimal disturbance. For producing the current volume the digital photos were reduced in size to 1 MB JPEGs, then imported to an MS Word document landscape template from the publisher (MagCloud). The final “book” file was saved as a PDF, in a size that allowed uploading to MagCloud for printing or viewing. A reduced PDF file of the book is then made available to send with an email or to view with a computer or portable device.

Species are presented roughly in the order used by the American Ornithological Society (AOS), formed in 2016 by a merger of the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU) and the Cooper Ornithological Society (COS). Favorite sites for shorebird photography included California’s coast and wetlands (many), Florida’s Gulf Coast, Texas’ Gulf Coast, and Connecticut’s shores, plus a few from Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, and Costa Rica.

Some “soft” photos are included. It seemed better to have a record shot than none at all. And of course there are numbers of shorebird species the author has yet to photograph.

Black-necked Stilt – *Himantopus mexicanus*



(Left) – A male Black-necked Stilt rests in a field of Brass Button flowers on an island. The male stilt is jet black above, while the female is brown-black on her upperparts. There is little seasonal change in the plumage. Shorebird Marsh, Corte Madera, CA, May.

(Right) – An adult Black-necked Stilt stays close to a brown-backed juvenile as they forage. The coverts and scapulars show faint buffy margins. The pink color on the legs deepens with age. Bothin Marsh, Mill Valley, CA, January.



Black-necked Stilt – *Himantopus mexicanus*



(Above) - The young stilt has paler pink legs, a gray neck and gray-brown back. Shorebird Marsh, Corte Madera, CA, November.



(Above) – Foraging adult Black-necked Stilt. The dark red iris is difficult to photograph. Shorebird Marsh, Corte Madera, CA, November.



(Left) – Juvenile stilt, sitting on its ankles. Note the fringes on the scapulars and coverts. Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, July.

(Right) – A female stilt with her spotted egg. Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, May,



American Avocet – *Recurvirostra americana*



Breeding plumage avocets. Female on the left has a more sharply upcurved bill. Las Gallinas ponds, San Rafael, CA, April

American Avocet – *Recurvirostra americana*



(Above) – Adult male in winter (basic) plumage. They forage in bays and are quite tolerant of saline waters, even hypersaline sites such as Mono Lake, CA and Great Salt Lake, UT. Shorebird Marsh, Corte Madera, CA, December.



(Above) – A days-old avocet is able to forage for itself. Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, July.



(Above) – Adult American Avocet in breeding plumage. The long legs with partially webbed toes help when foraging in muddy substrates. Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, June.

Black Oystercatcher – *Haematopus bachmani*



(Above) – Oystercatcher pair on the rocky shore of Strawberry Point, Mill Valley, CA, November. The female is on the left, as explained below.

(Right) – A pair of Black Oystercatchers rest just above the high tide line. Note the laterally compressed bills that allow them open mussels that are found on rocky outcrops, such as here just below the viewing area at Bodega Head, Bodega Bay, CA, October. Despite the name, they rarely eat oysters.



(Right) – The female's pupil usually looks out of round, due to the presence of a black fleck on the yellow iris at the 7:30 o'clock position. A smaller fleck may be seen there in some males. (See page 61, Guzzetti, 2008.)k

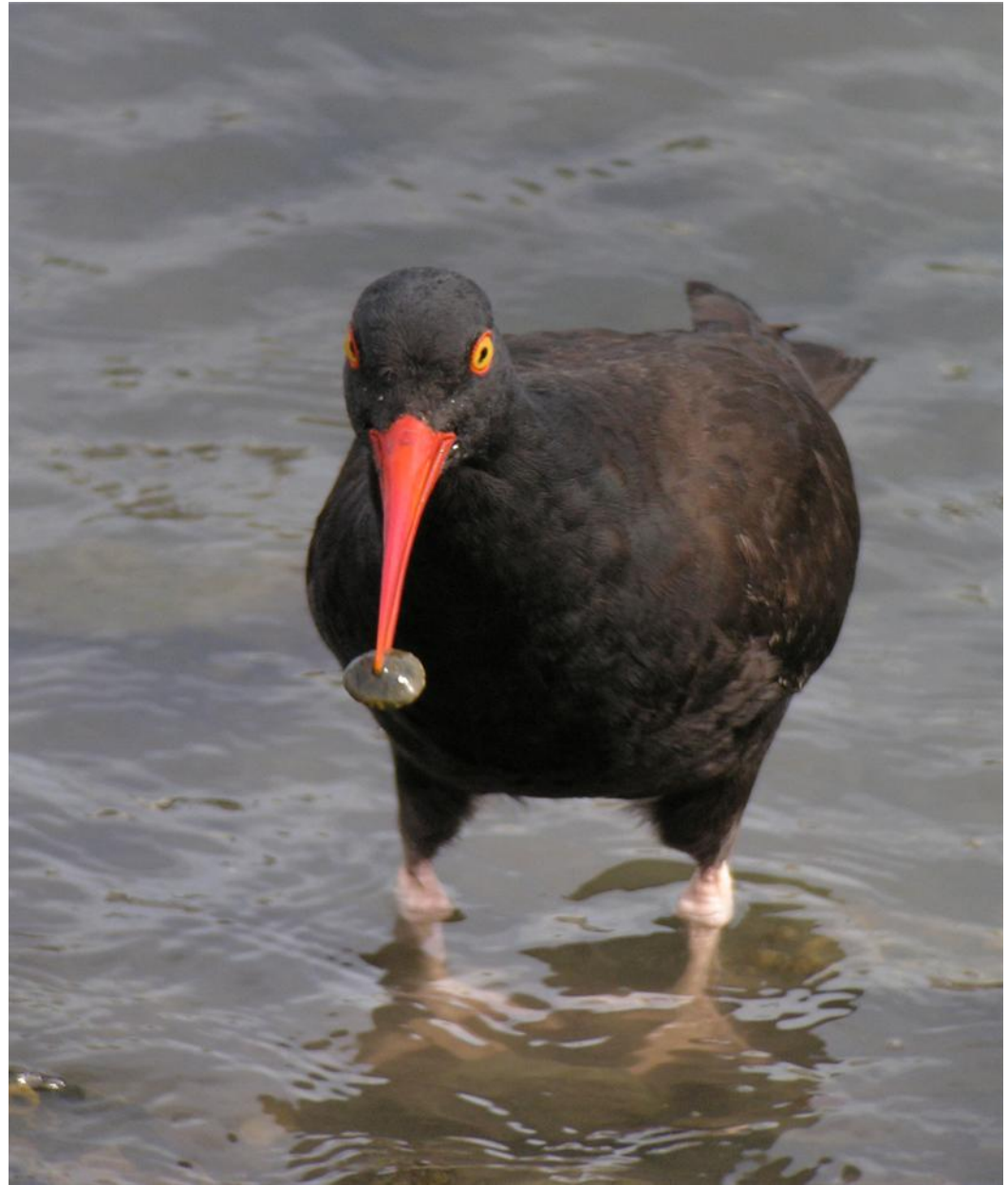
(Left) – The male's pupil usually looks rounder than the female's.



Black Oystercatcher – *Haematopus bachmani*

(Right) – The adult oystercatcher has pried a limpet from an intertidal rock using its flattened bill as a chisel. Their diet consists mainly of limpets and mussels, plus the occasional worm. Spud Point Marina, Bodega Bay Harbor, CA, March.

(Below) – The red color of the bill develops gradually over the first 2-3 years. The distal half of the bill on this subadult is still gray. Porto Bodega, Bodega Bay Harbor, CA, May.



American Oystercatcher – *Haematopus palliatus*



The American Oystercatcher has white underparts, easily distinguishing it from the west coast Black Oystercatcher. Bird pictured above is a female, as judged by the prominent black fleck at the 7:30 position on the yellow iris. Fred Howard, Park Tarpon Springs, FL, February.

American Oystercatcher – *Haematopus palliatus*



Adult male American Oystercatcher (round pupil). North Beach, Fort De Soto Park, FL, February.

Black-bellied Plover – *Pluvialis squatarola*



The black-bellied is the largest of the *Pluvialis* plovers. Note the robust build and heavy bill. The breeding male (above) is blacker than the female. Soon they'll head north to breed in the tundra. Seen here at North Beach, Fort De Soto Park, St. Petersburg, FL, late April.

Black-bellied Plover – *Pluvialis squatarola*



(Left) - Typical winter plumage, with muted shades of gray. Common on the West Coast. Plovers are sight feeders, with large eyes to spot a variety of invertebrate prey. San Leandro Marina, San Leandro, CA, December.

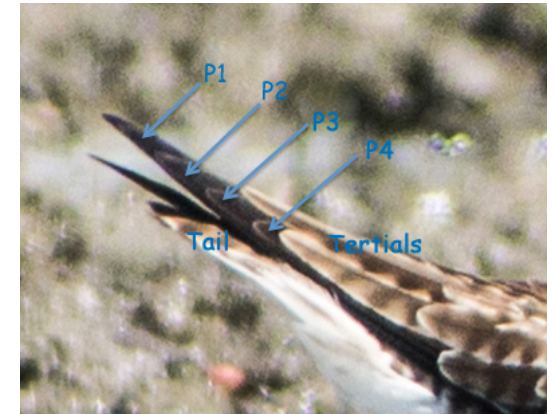


(Right) - In April we see the appearance of some black on the face and belly, transitioning into breeding plumage. Rollover Pass, Bolivar Peninsula, TX, April.

American Golden-Plover – *Pluvialis dominica*



(Left) – American Golden-Plover in a muddy field near the entrance to Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, TX, April. Note the long wingtips and the prominent white supercilium.



(Right) – Long wings extend beyond tail, here showing the tips of 4 primary feathers.

(Right) – During migration the American Golden-Plovers feed on a variety of invertebrate prey. A mowed lawn makes it easy for them to find insects and worms. The face and belly are in transition to the jet black of breeding plumage. They are less shy in public areas like here at Fort Travis Park, Bolivar Point, TX, near the entrance to Galveston Bay. April.



Pacific Golden-Plover – *Pluvialis fulva*



(Left) – Pacific Golden-Plover in February, resting on the shoreline of a diked pond at Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA. The bill is intermediate in thickness and length between those of the Black-bellied and American Golden-Plovers. To me they are the most golden of the golden-plovers.

(Right) – Small numbers of these bright golden-plovers winter in the San Francisco Bay area, usually in the company of Black-bellied Plovers. The wings are not quite as long as those of the American Golden-Plover, and fewer black primaries project past the tertials. Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, February.



Killdeer – *Charadrius vociferus*



(Left) – Juvenile Killdeer. Las Gallinas, San Rafael, CA, June. The upperpart feathers have neat buffy edges. Killdeers earned the “vociferus” part of their name by their frequent piercing flight calls.

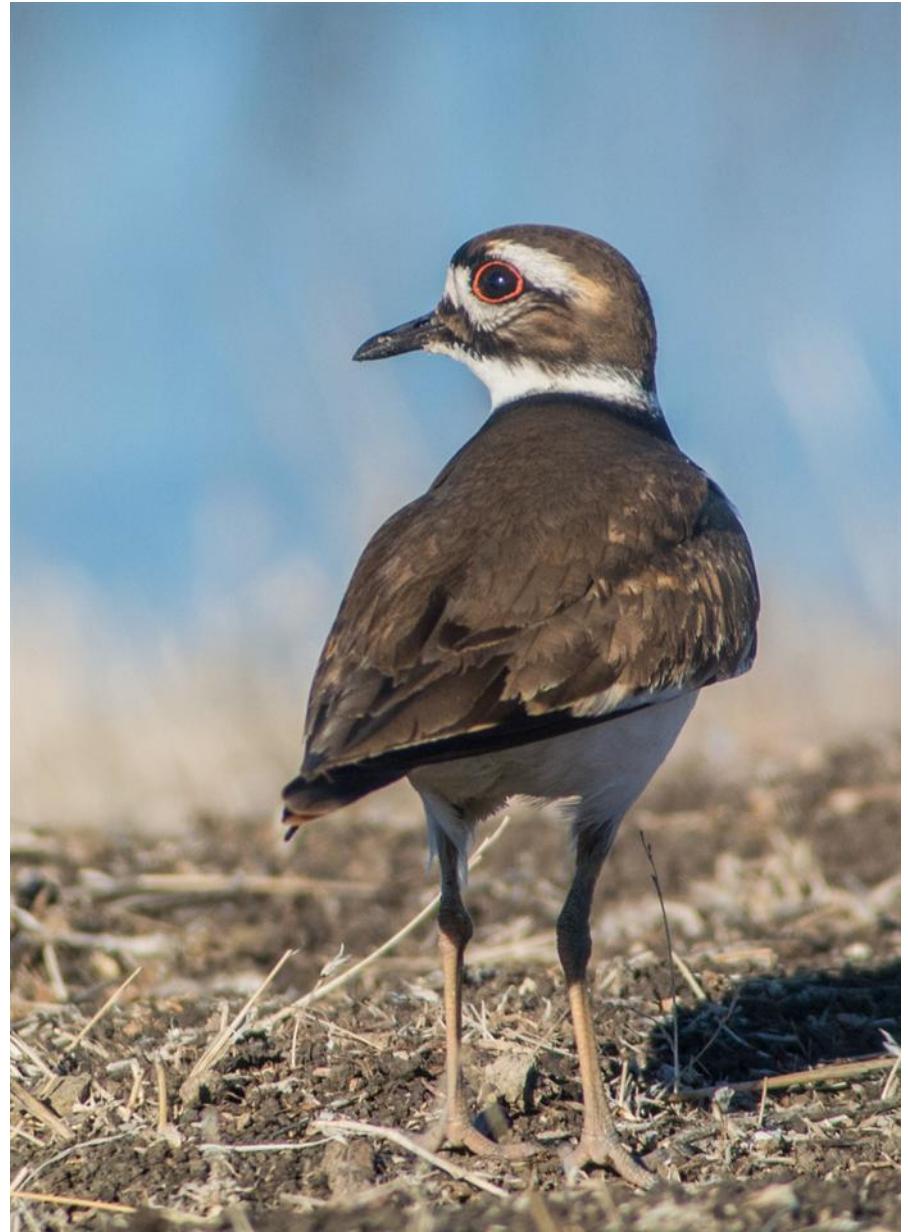
(Right) – Killdeers are seen throughout the U.S., both near water and in open fields or lawns. The flame orange eyering glows when the angle of the sun is just right. The Killdeer is the largest of our *Charadrius* plovers. Llano Seco unit of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife preserves in the Central Valley, CA, January.



Killdeer – *Charadrius vociferus*



(Above) – The back of a Killdeer can vary in color. The wings usually hide the bright orange of the rump seen here. Las Gallinas ponds, San Rafael CA, September.



(Right) – Adult Killdeer at the Llano Seco unit of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife preserves in California's Central Valley, January. Note the dark brown color and lack of fringing on the back. Good bill profile.

Wilson's Plover – *Charadrius wilsonia*



(Left) – Wilson's Plovers with a Dunlin at Rollover Pass. In breeding plumage the black chest band stands out, the forehead darkens and some rufous appears on the supercilium. The plainer female is on the left and the male is in front of a Dunlin on the right. Bolivar Peninsula, TX, April.

(Below) – Male Wilson's resting in a depression in the sand. Neck not extended, so the breast band appears thicker. East Beach, Fort. De Soto Park, FL, April.



(Below) – Bright male at East Beach, Fort De Soto Park, St. Petersburg, FL, April.

Wilson's Plover – *Charadrius wilsonia*



(Above, left and right) – East Beach, Fort De Soto Park, St. Petersburg, FL, April. The subdued black on breast band and forecrown suggest they are females. The long heavy bill readily sets them apart from other single-banded plovers.



(Left) – A Wilson's Plover with its favorite prey item, a small crab. East Beach, Fort. De Soto Park, St. Petersburg, FL, April.

Semipalmated Plover – *Charadrius semipalmatus*



(Above) – Male in breeding plumage. The thin orange periorbital ring can be difficult to see at times. Fred Howard Park, Tarpon Springs, FL, April.



(Above) – Female in breeding plumage. Lake Tarpon, Tarpon Springs, FL, April.



(Left) – Sharing a rock with a Semipalmated Sandpiper. Sandy Point, West Haven, CT, July.

(Below) – Partial webbing between the toes, *i.e.* “semipalmated”.



Semipalmated Plover – *Charadrius semipalmatus*



(Above) – Juvenile, Doran Beach, Bodega Bay, CA, October. Note the fringed coverts.



(Above) – Some have an incomplete breast band. Dark back helps separate it from the similar Piping Plover. Fred Howard Park, Tarpon Springs, FL, February.

(Right) – First winter plumage. Sandy Point, West Haven, CT, September.



Piping Plover – *Charadrius melodus*

(Right) – Adult female in breeding plumage. The nesting area is protected by a marked exclosure, but the presence of predators such as Great Black-backed Gulls is problematic. Note the black forecrown, orange at bill base, orange-yellow legs, pale upperparts, and broken chest band. Sandy Point, West Haven, CT, July.



(Left) – Precocious Piping Plover chick, foraging near the wrack line along the top of the Sandy Point beach, West Haven, CT, July. The adults allow the chicks to roam freely. No dogs allowed here.

Snowy Plover – *Charadrius nivosus*



(Above) – Snowy Plover resting in a footprint. Limantour Beach, Point. Reyes National Seashore, CA, December.



(Above) – Black legs and dark upperparts help separate the Snowy from the Piping Plover. Limantour Beach, Point Reyes National Seashore, CA, December.



(Left) – Snowy Plover, breeding. Doran Beach, Bodega Bay, CA,

(Right) – Winter plumage, Doran Beach, Bodega Bay, CA. January.



Mountain Plover – *Charadrius montanus*



This “shorebird” prefers inland wintering grounds featuring relatively bare areas such as mowed, tilled, or burned fields. Big eyes like all the plovers, and relatively long legs. The soft gray brown blends well with bare substrates, making them hard to see until they move. These birds are rather shy, so approach slowly or not at all. A few were found at a field along Pierce Point Road in the Pt. Reyes National Seashore, CA, December. More commonly found in plowed fields in California’s Central Valley, where they can be seen only if they fly or move around amongst the dirt clods.

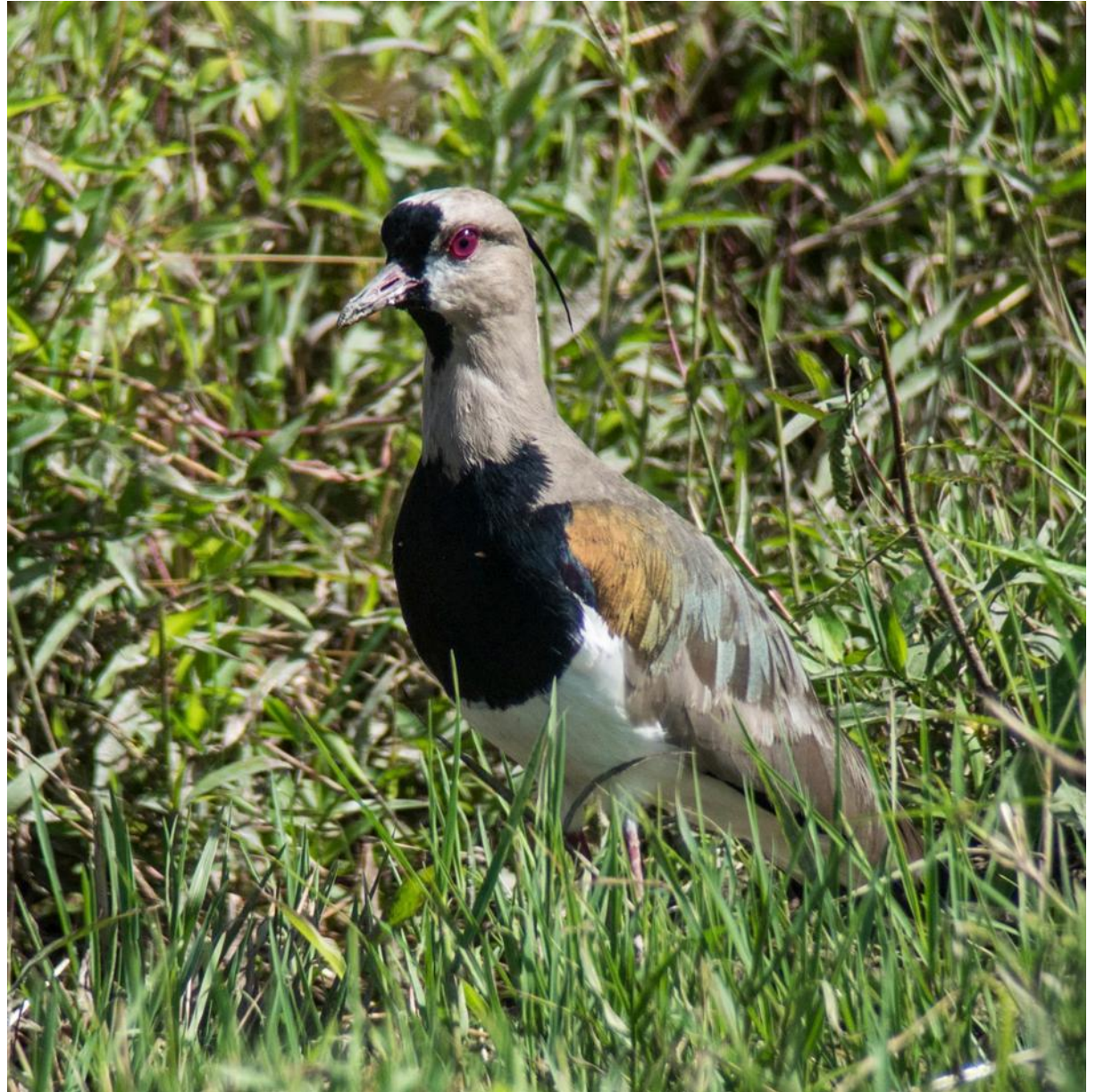


Southern Lapwing – *Vanellus chilensis*

The family *Charadriidae* is made up of the plovers and lapwings. Except for rare vagrants, the lapwings are *not* seen in North America. The **Southern Lapwing** has a wide distribution in South America, and has been extending its range into Central America and Mexico. This individual was seen in Trinidad at the **Aripo Livestock Station** during a January birding trip to the island country of Trinidad and Tobago.

The expanding distribution of the Southern Lapwing is not all good news, as the clearing of natural habitats has allowed the species to move northward.

The **Northern Lapwing** (not shown) is a species seen in Eurasia, and sometimes a vagrant in the U. S. Northeast.



Northern Jacana – *Jacana spinosa*



(Above right and left) – Adult Jacana, Costa Rica, January. The male, smaller than the female, stays close to the juvenile until it matures. Occasionally seen in Texas and Arizona wetlands.

(Right) – Juvenile Northern Jacana at a marshy pond in Costa Rica, January. The watchful male parent was close by.



Upland Sandpiper – *Bartramia longicauda*



(Left) – Upland Sandpipers breed in Alaska, Western Canada and in northern states across central and eastern U.S., then migrate to South America for the winter. They forage in grassy areas, such as these in a field north of the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, TX, April.

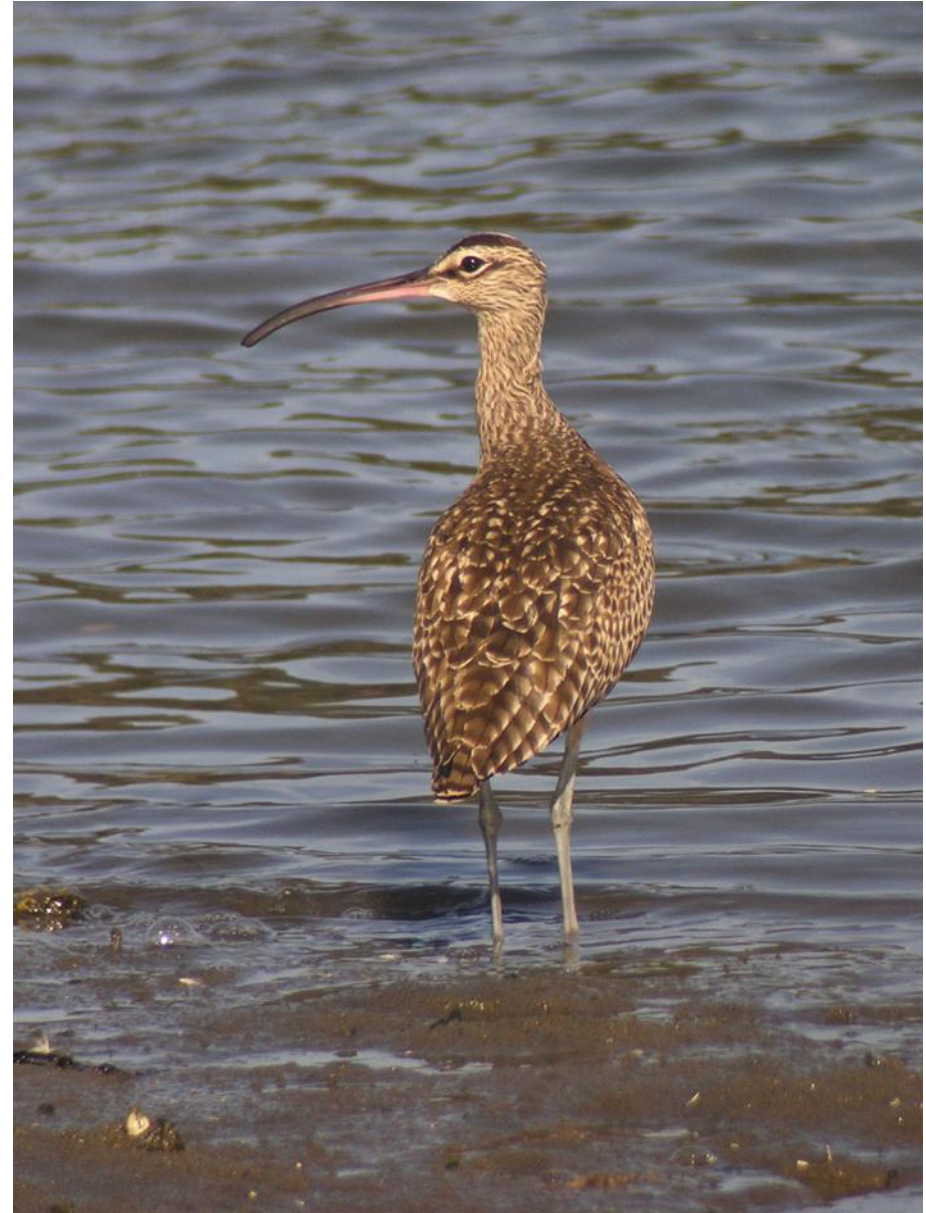
(Right) – Two of a flock of 10 Upland Sandpipers that were working their way slowly through the same grassy field. They have long necks and long yellow legs. We used eBird to find recent sightings, as this species is not usually seen on the refuges.



Whimbrel – *Numenius phaeopus*



(Above) – The Whimbrel looks a lot like its close relative, the Long-billed Curlew. Note the dark crown stripes, lacking on the Long-billed Curlew. Doran Beach, Bodega Bay, CA, November.



(Right) – Fresh-looking plumage, but age uncertain. Doran Beach, Bodega Harbor, November.

Long-billed Curlew – *Numenius americanus*

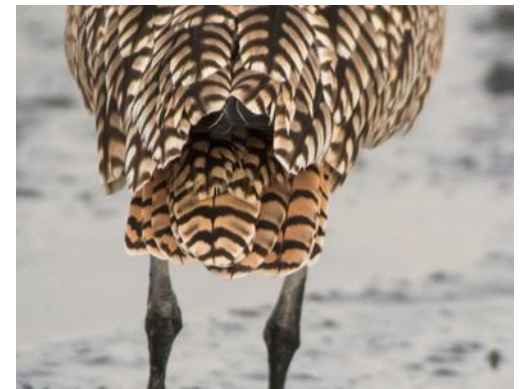


(Above) – Juveniles have dark scapular bars and less cinnamon color. Many curlews forage here in winter, despite noise and proximity from a major highway. Shorebird Marsh, Corte Madera, CA, December.



(Above) – Adult Long-billed Curlew, Bolinas Lagoon, CA, December. Note the buffy underparts. This species is common along the West Coast, where many will stay for the winter. They breed at inland locations., and often forage as a large flock in fields.

(Right) – Close-up view of the colorful banding on the tail. Shorebird Marsh, Corte Madera, CA, December.



Hudsonian Godwit – *Limosa haemastica*



(Above) – Rare appearance of a Hudsonian Godwit in the San Francisco Bay Area, September 2013. Seen at a wetland in southern Napa County, CA, along Buchli Station Road. Note the white supercilium above the dark lores, dark centers on coverts and scapulars, and the gently upcurved bill with pink base. Compare to larger Marbled Godwit with its longer pink-based bill (next page). Age and sex uncertain, but one expert judged it to be a hatch year bird.



(Above and below) – Foraging near a slightly smaller Greater Yellowlegs.



Marbled Godwit – *Limosa fedoa*



(Left) – At high tide godwits and willets leave the intertidal mud flats and find a safe spot to roost. They were in alert postures because a Peregrine Falcon was flying overhead. Porto Bodega, Bodega Bay, CA, November.

(Right) – In basic plumage the proximal 2/3 of the bill is pink. End of bill is black, and often muddy when feeding. Warm underparts. See front cover for the Marbled Godwit in breeding plumage, when orange replaces pink and extends almost to the tip of the bill. Doran Beach, Bodega Bay, CA, October.



Black Turnstone – *Arenaria melanocephala*



(Left) – In spring Black Turnstones molt into breeding plumage, showing some white on the head and face. Soon they'll soon leave to nest in Alaska. Bodega Harbor, Bodega Bay, CA, April.

(Below) – Black Turnstones are common on the west coast, usually on rocky shores. Some will forage on muddy shores, such as in Bodega Harbor, where flip algae over to look for food items on the underside. Bodega Bay, CA, October.



(Below) – Shorebird flock at Bodega Harbor: 4 Black Turnstones, 1 Ruddy Turnstone, 1 Surfbird, 1 Willet and 2 Marbled Godwits. September.



Ruddy Turnstone – *Arenaria interpres*



(Above) – Foraging in the wrack line along a Florida causeway in winter. Howard Park, Tarpon Springs, FL, February.



(Left) – Ruddy Turnstone in dull winter plumage, preening on a resort dock on Tobago, January. This wide-ranging species is found on the shores of all 6 non-icy continents.

(Below) – The change to breeding plumage in spring is dramatic. Ruddy Turnstones are not shy, offering good opportunities for observation and photography. Lake Tarpon, Tarpon Springs, FL, April. See also on back cover.



Red Knot – *Calidris canutus*



(Left) – In spring the knots head north, some stopping briefly in the San Francisco Bay Area to re-fuel. Breeding plumage. Bodega Bay Harbor, CA, May.



(Right) – This knot is in transition to full breeding plumage. Bodega Bay, CA,



(Left) – Breeding plumage. Bodega Bay, CA, May.

(Right) – Dull gray basic plumage. Knots winter in small numbers in the San Francisco Bay Area. Plain appearance makes them easy to miss. Bodega Bay Harbor, CA, October.



Surfbird – *Calidris virgata*



(Above) – Breeding adult, migrating back from Alaska. Many will winter along the West Coast. Bodega Harbor, Bodega Bay, CA, August,



(Above) – Typical winter plumage. Dull gray blends well on rocky substrates. Bodega Harbor, CA, October.



(Left) – The molt from breeding to basic plumage results in some puzzling appearances. The bill and leg colors helped ID this one as a Surfbird. Bodega Harbor, CA, August

Ruff – *Calidris pugnax*



(Left) – Juvenile Ruff at Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, September. Sightings of migrating Ruffs are uncommon in the San Francisco Bay Area.

(Right) – The Ruff seen here stayed close to an injured Willet on the estero side of the Limantour Beach spit. Pt. Reyes National Seashore, CA, December, during a Christmas Bird Count.



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper – *Calidris acuminata*



(Left) – Uncommon vagrant to the West Coast. Juvenile here visited Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, in October. Note the sharply defined eyering, and how the white supercilium widens toward the nape. Nice rufous-edged tertials and rufous crown.

(Right) – The medium-sized Sharp-tailed Sandpiper dwarfs nearby Least Sandpipers, although the size difference here may be exaggerated. Same bird as in the above photo.



Stilt Sandpiper – *Calidris himantopus*



(Left) – Long legs allow the Stilt Sandpiper to forage in water too deep for the other calidrine sandpipers. Breeding plumage in the lower bird and basic plumage in the bird above it. Indian Point Park, near Corpus Christi, Texas, April.

(Right) – Basic plumage shown better here. Slight droop of bill is typical. They breed on the tundra and most will winter well down in South American. Not many migrate down the west coast, as most choose the central or eastern flyways. These were photographed at Indian Point Park, near Corpus Christi, Texas, April.



Sanderling – *Calidris alba*



(Left) – The juvenile Sanderling sports a striking spangled back. Sandy Point, New Haven Harbor, CT, September .



(Right) – Transition to breeding plumage, Fred Howard Park, Tarpon Springs, FL, April.



(Left) – Sanderling in transition to breeding plumage. Resting with dowitchers at East Beach, Fort De Soto Park, St. Petersburg, FL, April.



(Right) – Sanderling in basic plumage. Note the gray back, straight black bill and black legs. Bodega Harbor, Bodega Bay, CA, October.

Dunlin – *Calidris alpina*

(Below) – Dull winter plumage. The Dunlin is usually darker than the other “peeps”, and the longer drooping bill allows it to forage in slightly deeper water. Tarpon Springs, FL, February.



(Above) – Breeding plumage Dunlin with 2 Ruddy Turnstones, East Beach, Fort De Soto Park, FL, April.



(Left) – Breeding plumage Dunlin, with a Short-billed Dowitcher. North Beach, Fort De Soto Park, FL,



Rock Sandpiper – *Calidris ptilocnemis*

(Right) – The Rock Sandpiper is an uncommon visitor to coastal California, as its usual range is farther to the north. This one appeared in December on the rocky outcrops below Bodega Head, Bodega Bay, CA. Note the yellow legs, and yellow at the base of the bill.



(Left) – Same bird and location. The Rock Sandpiper often rests and forages near other “rockpipers”, such as here with a Black Turnstone on the right. It seemed equally comfortable roosting near Surfbirds. The pale fringing on the coverts suggests a juvenile.

Baird's Sandpiper – *Calidris bairdii*



(Left) – Soft shot of a juvenile Baird's, with dark streaking on the buffy breast. Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, August.



(Right) – Note the straight black bill and black legs, as well as the long dark primaries. Pale fringing on the upperparts suggests a juvenile. Abbott's Lagoon, Pt. Reyes National Seashore, CA, September.

Least Sandpiper – *Calidris minutilla*

(Right) – At high tide shorebirds leave the mudflats and find a safe spot to roost, such as on a rock along the bike path from Sausalito to Mill Valley, CA, December. Small size, short straight bill and yellow legs distinguish it from other small sandpipers. Winter plumage, browner than the other small sandpipers. The Least Sandpiper ranks as the smallest sandpiper in the world.

(Below) – Probably a juvenile, near the Rich Stallcup Platform (Doran Beach). The bill often droops a bit, as here. Bodega Bay, CA, August.



(Right) – They typically feed in shallow water or in nearby grassy areas. Breeding plumage, Celery Fields, Sarasota, FL, April.



Pectoral Sandpiper – *Calidris melanotos*



(Left) – The Pectoral Sandpiper at 8.5” is about the size of a Dunlin. Note the dramatic streaks on the breast, clean white belly, and yellow legs. Seen at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, TX, April.

(Below) – Juvenile Pectoral at Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, October. Similar Baird’s Sandpiper has dark legs and lacks orange at the base of the bill.



Semipalmated Sandpiper – *Calidris pusilla*

(Right) – The Semipalmated Sandpiper is common during migration on the East Coast. It's also a regular migrant on the West Coast in small numbers, but difficult to separate from the similar Western Sandpiper. Most will continue south to spend winter in South America. A short stubby bill is the best field mark for the Semipalmated. Sandy Point, West Haven, CT, July.



(Left) – Partial webbing between the front 3 toes, i.e. “semipalmated”. Note the straight stubby bill. Fred Howard Park, Tarpon Springs, FL, April.

Western Sandpiper – *Calidris mauri*



(Left) – Adult Western Sandpiper, with red on crown and face. Adults arrive in July, followed by juveniles in August. Population exceeds 3 million, making it one of the most abundant of the shorebird species. Most breed on the tundra of northwestern Alaska, and some in Siberia. Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, July 7.

(Right) – Gray winter plumage. Similar Semipalmated Sandpiper winters down in South America. Limantour Beach, Point Reyes National Seashore, CA, December.



Short-billed Dowitcher – *Limnodromus griseus*



Short-billed Dowitcher in breeding plumage. Separation from Long-billed Dowitcher can be difficult. Note spotting on breast and bill size. Best ID feature is the voice. Fred Howard Park, Tarpon Springs, FL, April.

Long-billed Dowitcher – *Limnodromus scolopaceus*



(Left) – The Long-billed Dowitcher is often seen at inland locations, while the short-billed prefers marine shores. Many dowitchers appeared at the Ellis Creek water treatment ponds as the water level was lowered. Petaluma, CA, December.

(Right) – Foraging Long-billed Dowitchers probing recently exposed pond vegetation. Ellis Creek ponds, Petaluma, CA, December.



Wilson's Snipe – *Gallinago delicata*



(Above) – The long bill allows the snipe to probe deeply for invertebrate prey. Snipes are commonly seen at the Merced National Wildlife Refuge, especially near the main viewing platform. Merced, CA, November.



(Above) – Wilson's Snipe has a strongly patterned head and back, but usually stays well hidden. The stripes on its back may give away its presence. Note the large eye and long bill. Las Gallinas treatment ponds, San Rafael, CA, October.



(Left) – Note the barring on the flanks and strong dark crown stripes. Location uncertain, December.

Spotted Sandpiper – *Actitis macularius*



(Left) – The Spotted Sandpiper feeds alone, foraging along rocky shorelines. Low direct flight is a helpful clue in the field. Note the yellow legs and unspotted underparts. This bird from the Tiburon shoreline, Tiburon, CA, December.



(Right) – The bold black spots on the chest and belly appear in spring for the breeding season. Hammonasset State Beach, Madison, CT, July.

Solitary Sandpiper – *Tringa solitaria*

(Right) – The bold white eyering and pale-based bill are helpful field marks. Usually seen alone, but this was one of a group of 5 at a former water treatment pond south of Lee Vining, CA, August. The ponds have since dried up, as they are no longer used by the local agency.



(Left) – Foraging in shallow water. Greenish-yellow legs. An adult bird in August should show more streaking on neck and breast, so these birds may be juveniles. Same location as above bird. Solitary Sandpipers are seen infrequently in the San Francisco Bay Area, as they spend the winter well to the south of the U.S.



Wandering Tattler – *Tringa incana*



(Left) – Soft photo of a Wandering Tattler in transition plumage. On rocks at the base of a cliff, Bodega Harbor entrance channel, Bodega Bay, CA, April.

(Right) – Cropped view of a distant tattler on a rocky outcrop. Note the heavy barring on the neck and underparts, signifying breeding plumage. This is one of several species of sandpipers that forage on intertidal rocks, including the Surfbird, Turnstones, and Rock Sandpiper, informally called “rockpipers.” Bodega Head, Bodega Bay, CA, April.



Greater Yellowlegs – *Tringa melanoleuca*

(Right) – Greater Yellowlegs, showing its long yellow legs and pale-based bill. Subdued but still attractive basic plumage of winter. Note that the bill is at about 1.5 times the length of the head, and is slightly upturned. Las Gallinas Ponds, San Rafael, CA, December.

(Below) – Breeding plumage, with heavy barring below and all black bill. Giacomini Wetlands, Pt. Reyes Station, CA, May.



Lesser Yellowlegs – *Tringa flavipes*

(Left) – The smaller Lesser Yellowlegs on the right is dwarfed by a Greater Yellowlegs as they forage in a drained pond. Note the short, fine, all black bill of the Lesser, about the same length as its head. Despite many similarities, the 2 species are not the closest of relatives. Ellis Creek, Petaluma, CA, December.

(Right) – The fine bill is perfect for plucking prey from the surface of shallow ponds, much in the manner of a phalarope. Also at the Ellis Creek water treatment facility, Petaluma, CA, December.

Willet – *Tringa semipalmatus*

(Right) – In winter Western Willets forage on rocky shorelines, where the gray color makes them harder for a predator to spot from above. Bill foreshortened a bit here, making it look a bit like the Eastern Willet. The AOS will likely elevate Western and Eastern Willets to full species status in a future split. Richardson Bay, Strawberry shoreline, Mill Valley, CA, January.



(Left) – Breeding plumage is marked by dramatic spotting on the upperparts and barring on the flanks. Hammonasset State Beach, Madison, CT, July.

Wilson's Phalarope – *Phalaropus tricolor*



(Left) – Female Wilson's Phalarope at County Park, Mono Lake, CA, June. Phalaropes stage here before continuing far down to South America to winter on saline lakes in the Andes.



(Right) – The long needle-like bill is an important field mark for Wilson's. Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, June.



(Left) – Female Wilson's Phalarope. Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, June.

(Right) – Male Wilson's Phalarope. South end of Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, CA, August.



Red-necked Phalarope – *Phalaropus lobatus*

(Left) – The male Red-necked Phalarope is a paler version of the female. The males brood the eggs and tend to the young. Location uncertain. May.

(Below) – Female Red-necked Phalarope. Late April, entrance road to Doran Beach, Bodega Bay, CA. The fine bill and red neck make it unmistakable.



(Left) – The pale buffy stripes on the back are hallmarks of the juvenile Red-necked Phalarope. Rodeo Lagoon, Golden Gate National Wildlife Area, CA, August.

Red Phalarope – *Phalaropus fulicarius*



(Above) – Winter plumage Red Phalarope, foraging in a shallow extension of Abbott's Lagoon, Point Reyes National Seashore, CA, December.

(Right) – Soft photo of a female Red Phalarope. Male is less red. Highly pelagic species, so not commonly seen at inland locations. Hayward Shoreline (Frank's Dump), Hayward, CA, May.



(Above) – Winter plumage, with plain gray back. Note the relatively short bill
Bird here was feasting on kelp flies. North Beach, Point Reyes National Seashore, CA, December



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Ruddy Turnstone – Ft. De Soto Park, St. Petersburg, Florida, April

