# Lagoon Shorebirds

Migrating visitors use created habitat

## Species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>ID Tips</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Foraging &amp; Habitat</th>
<th>Breeding Sites</th>
<th>Fun Fact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Least Sandpiper</td>
<td>The only small shorebird with yellow legs has drooping thin bill</td>
<td>Flies, small mollusks, earthworms; sometimes minnows, frogs or seeds</td>
<td>Rarely wades but pecks at surface at water’s edge in muddy or sandy sites</td>
<td>Breeds in low Arctic regions</td>
<td>World’s smallest shorebird</td>
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<tr>
<td>Killdeer</td>
<td>Parallel black throat bands; distinctive white stripes on wing tips while in flight</td>
<td>Insect larvae, marine worms, crustaceans and mollusks</td>
<td>Most feeding occurs at night on beaches, lawns, mudflats and gravel</td>
<td>Breeds locally and across southern and western US and Mexico</td>
<td>Adults will fake a broken wing to lure predators away from nests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-billed Dowitcher</td>
<td>Relatively stout bird with long bill</td>
<td>Dragonfly nymphs, aquatic bugs, small fish, and frogs</td>
<td>Uses sensors on bill to probe in “sewing machine” motion in fresh water pools and lagoons</td>
<td>Breeds in high Arctic tundra</td>
<td>Both sexes share incubation responsibility, but only the male cares for the young</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater Yellowlegs</td>
<td>Distinctive long yellow legs, protruding neck looks like human “adam’s apple”</td>
<td>Brine flies, water boatmen, beetle larvae; sometimes grasshoppers, crickets, small fish, and frogs</td>
<td>Uses side-to-side motion in shallow water of intertidal estuaries and brackish wetlands</td>
<td>Breeds in boreal wetlands</td>
<td>Runs frantically to chase fish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black-necked Stilt</td>
<td>Contrasting colors and long red legs; needle-like bill, curves upward in female, straight in male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stirs up mud to reveal invertebrate prey along inland shorelines and treatment ponds; seldom on beach</td>
<td>Breeds locally and in mountains and coastlines of southern US and Mexico</td>
<td>Second to flamingos, longest legs in proportion to body size</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Habitat

**Shorebirds Have Preferences Too!**

While some shorebirds favor the beach, these shorebirds prefer the lagoon’s calm, shallow water and mudflats.

**Shorebirds of a Different Feather**

Some popular beach going shorebirds include Snowy Plovers, Least Terns, Sandpipers, Willets, Whimbrels and Curlews.

### When are the Shorebirds Here?

The graph shows the seasonal visitation of shorebirds to the lagoon. The data indicates that the shorebird visitation is highest in April and October, with a significant drop in May and June.

### Shorebird Visitation is Seasonal

These shallow and muddy margins are important for migrating shorebirds, especially during the fall and winter. The lagoon and beach area are important stopover points between nesting grounds as far north as Alaska and wintering grounds in southern California and further south. The calm lagoon provides refuge for many bird species during high tide and storms.

### Foraging Zones and Prey

Shorebirds have developed specific foraging behaviors and prey preferences that allow them to exploit the unique habitats of the lagoon. The diagram illustrates the foraging zones and the types of prey items found in each zone.

**Bills, Legs, and Foraging Habits**

Shorebird bill and leg characteristics have evolved in conjunction with the prey and competitors that share their niche. This narrow shoreline habitat provides a rich diversity of prey, which supports the diversity of body structures shown below.

**Bird sizes are shown proportionally. Circled prey items are enlarged to show detail.**

**Least Sandpiper**
- Crustaceans

**Killdeer**
- Insects

**Long-billed Dowitcher**
- Amphipod

**Greater Yellowlegs**
- Marine Worm

**Black-necked Stilt**
- Small Fish

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