



CTYBC TIPS for birding the Gulf Coast

TALL WADING BIRDS

Apart from the Whimbrel, Curlews and Godwits, whose bills give them away, the long-legged wading birds that can be seen in April on the Gulf Coast and that can be confused with each other are: Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary sandpiper, Willet, Spotted Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper.

Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs do, indeed, have yellow legs, but at times it is hard to see leg color, and other birds can also have yellow legs. Their bills are long, narrow, and pointed, and slightly upturned, more so on the Greater. Without having a size reference, look for the barring of the breeding plumage along the flank—the barring goes past the legs toward the rear on the Greater, but only as far as the legs on the Lesser. Neither have markings on the wings in flight, but have white tails with faint bars on the tip. Both feed actively in shallow water.

Solitary Sandpipers are smaller than Yellowlegs and have greenish legs. Their shoulders are very dark and the dark back and wings have tiny white spots. The bill is sharp and straight. They have no wing markings in flight but the tail has a black center and bars on a white background.

Willetts are large with a slightly upturned bill and gray legs. The white stripe on the upper and lower wing surface is distinctive.

Spotted Sandpipers are small and short-necked, with a white crescent at the shoulder. In breeding plumage it has a black spotted breast and flanks, but may not have spots yet in April. It has a white supercilium and black eye line, and a narrow white stripe on dark upper wing surfaces. It bobs frequently and prefers the water's edge.

Upland Sandpipers are tall and have long yellow legs, but with a short yellow bill with dark tip that turns downwards slightly. The wings are mottled in flight, and the tail is dark and mottled. It prefers dry ground.

Stilt Sandpipers have long yellow-green legs, and a heavy, drooping bill and white supercilium. In April they are transitioning from pale gray to heavy barring. They look similar to dowitchers but are smaller and have much shorter bills.
