

Non-breeding Shorebirds & Seabirds

Winter Birds

During the winter months, Florida supports a tremendous number and diversity of shorebirds and seabirds.

Many shorebirds and seabirds nest during the spring-summer months in the northern latitudes of North America, and return south to spend the winter in warmer climes. Florida is an important wintering area for several of these species, particularly the following habitats: beaches, inlets, mudflats, inshore and offshore waters, and salt and freshwater wetlands.

Several of Florida's breeding species remain here year-round, and some experience an influx of birds from more northerly parts of their range.

Most shorebirds and seabirds look very different in the winter compared to the bolder and more colorful plumage they wear during the spring-summer seasons.

Photos: 1) Snowy Plover (Jack Rogers). 2) Forster's Tern (Maxis Gamez). 3) Northern Gannet (Chris Burney). 4) Flock of Dunlin (Jack Rogers).

Migrant Birds



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Winter Birds

Florida is an important flyway for shorebirds and seabirds during spring and fall migration.

In spring, it is often difficult to determine whether a particular bird is a new arrival or overwintered since many species in Florida do both. For other species it is easier since they only occur in Florida during migration.

During the spring, migrants are traveling North to their nesting grounds, and consequently many are either partially (still molting) or completely in breeding plumage. Conversely, migrants moving through in the fall are in non-breeding plumage or nearly so. In general, non-breeding plumage is much drabber than breeding plumage.

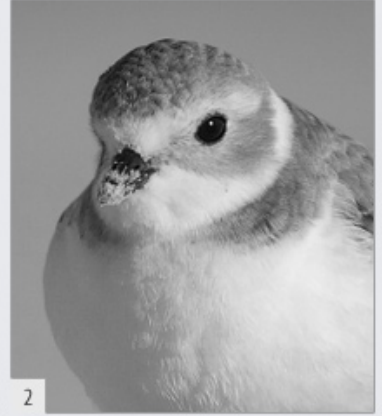
Certain sites in Florida are very important for migrating birds, and some are considered critical staging areas for particular species.

Photos: 1) Black Tern in fall- mostly occurs as a migrant through Florida (Mia McPherson). Next three photos are of species that winter and migrate through Florida: 2. Piping Plover (Mia McPherson), 3. Red Knot (Mia McPherson), and 4) Black-bellied Plover (Maxis Gamez).

Migrant Birds



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Summer Birds

Winter Birds

Shorebirds and seabirds present in the summer are predominately breeding birds, but it is common to find non-breeding birds of various species at most sites throughout Florida.

Often, young birds or birds in poor condition will not make an attempt to nest, and for species that nest outside of Florida, they will frequently skip migration as well. Instead, they spend the summer months feeding and/or recuperating.

Species that nest in the Arctic Regions only make one attempt to nest, and if they fail early, some of these birds return south immediately and start "overwintering" in Florida.

Photos: 1) Second-year Brown Pelican (Mia McPherson). 2) Second-year Least Tern (Alex Kropp). 3) Black-bellied Plover (Jack Rogers). 4) Sanderling (Mia McPherson).

Migrant Birds



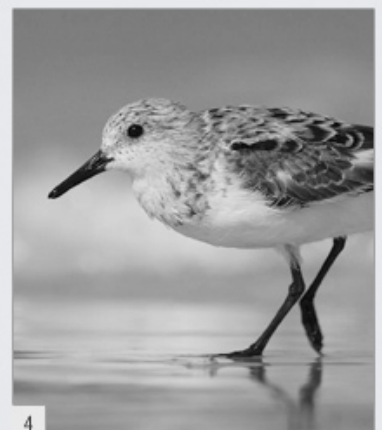
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Summer Birds