



Raincoast Field School @home

Shorebird Question and Answer

1. Will we see the Shorebirds again as they head South? What time of year does that happen?

The birds head north to have their young on the tundra and teach them how to feed themselves. When it is time to migrate south, the adults depart first leaving the young on their own. The young will take off a bit later flying by instinct to a place they have never been before! Typically we will see some birds returning in late June- these would be the males and failed breeders. However those birds able to successfully reproduce will be seen here in August.

2. How do birds not run into one another when they fly in large flocks?

Their long-pointed wings allow for quick turns and aerial maneuvers!

3. Can shorebirds swim?

They do not normally swim. Although they are always found near the coastline, these birds have adapted to probe deep into the surface for food, they cannot swim underwater like a duck to find food. As well, they do not have webbed feet. Instead they have long toes and long legs to help with balance and to wade through shallow waters.

4. Will shorebirds eat my garden? The birds you find in your backyard garden most likely will not be shorebirds. Shorebirds migrate in large flocks and feed together on the mudflats and shorelines. Unless you have a massive garden I don't think these birds would enjoy their time there or even fit! As well remember shorebirds have adapted to have different beak lengths to help them dig down into the different soil layers. These birds collect and eat the different organisms living below; they aren't necessarily looking to snack on lettuce varieties.

5. How do we monitor shorebird migration?

Mark actually helps out with this! He goes out in the middle of the night, and bands shorebirds. He catches them on the beaches with a large net and carefully attaches a monitoring band on the bird's leg. Tracking towers have been set up along the coastal shores and when a banded bird flies past, it will be recorded. It helps us see when birds are in our area and track their migration routes.



6. Can birds fly when it is raining?

The migration continues no matter the weather! The bird's feathers have a waxy coating allowing them to stay waterproof while flying. When it comes to weather, these birds are really looking at the wind patterns. They want to be flying when strong winds are blowing north to help them on their journey.

7. Do shorebirds migrate at night?

Yes they do! Some species that chose night time flying can rarely be seen flying during the day.

8. How do birds stay warm when they are up in the arctic?

Their feathers keep them warm! Remember they have their down feathers that help with insulation and warmth. They also stay quite active during the long arctic nights.

9. How fast do shorebirds fly?

Different species fly at different speeds! But typically, around 50Kph or more.