

Shorebird Profiles

Grade Level: upper elementary/ middle school; upper middle school/ high school

Duration: one 40-minute class period

Skills: critical thinking, vocabulary, comparison of similarities and differences, and communication
Subjects: science and language arts, social studies (geography), and fine arts (in the additional activities)

Concepts

- Shorebirds have a unique combination of physical and behavioral characteristics that help us in their identification.
- Shorebirds are birds specially adapted to live in open land and often near water.
- Most shorebirds are migratory.
- Learning about representative species of shorebirds and their ecology can help us learn about birds in general.

Vocabulary

This list will vary depending on the shorebird species you study. See the highlighted words in each profile you select to build your own vocabulary list for this activity.

Overview

By reading four shorebird profiles provided in this education guide, students will learn to make direct comparisons among the appearance, food habits, migration routes, and mating behaviors of four shorebirds found in their area. They will explore values associated with, as well as threats to, these four shorebirds.

Objectives

After this activity, students will be able to:

- Name four shorebirds found in their area.
- List the differences in appearance, food habits, migration routes, and mating behavior of these four shorebirds.
- Describe at least one interesting fact about each of the four shorebirds they studied.

Materials

- *Shorebird Profiles* (found in the Appendix)
- Student worksheet (included in this activity)

Introduction

You will find 20 descriptions of shorebirds commonly seen in the United States in the *Shorebird Profiles* section of the *Appendix*. Select four profiles for your students to read. Be sure to select shorebirds that are found in your area. If you are not sure which species to choose, check the list of shorebird species for your flyway at the beginning of the profiles. If you are not sure which flyway you are in refer to the flyway section in the *Shorebird Primer*.

Activity Preparation

1. Make one copy of each shorebird profile you select for each student.
2. Make one copy of the student worksheet for each student.

Procedure

1. Instruct your students to read each shorebird profile. Ask them to concentrate on making direct comparisons among the species.
2. Have students fill out the accompanying worksheet table or use the table as a guideline for a discussion of what they read. Encourage them to:
 - Avoid simply listing information under each heading.
 - Compare similarities and differences among the species.
 - Limit the number of variables they compare. In this case, the only variable should be “species.” For example, when comparing what these birds eat, do not compare food eaten in winter to food eaten in summer (unless you indicate that you are aware you are introducing season as another variable).
 - Translate the table to sentence form on the back of the worksheet: “The similarity between the way a female Western Sandpiper and a female Dunlin behaves is -----. The difference between their behaviors is -----.”



Additional Activities



Cultural Extension

Students can use the cultural profiles in the *SSSP and Connecting Cultures* section to add an interesting fact about one of the countries that the shorebirds migrate through.

Shorebird Profile Jigsaw

Divide the class into four cooperative groups with each responsible for reading and then teaching the class about one of the four shorebirds. Give each group 30 minutes or more to prepare its presentations. Encourage them to include a drawing of their bird in its most colorful plumage, a color-coded map showing where the bird winters, migrates, and breeds, and unique facts in the oral presentation. Have each group write and turn in two quiz questions about its shorebird. After all the groups have made their presentations, choose at least one question from each group for a short shorebird quiz.

Community Research

Assign your students to do additional research for more information on your local shorebirds. Where and when can you find them nearby? What habitats are most likely to attract shorebirds? Talk to local wildlife biologists, conservation groups, and bird-watchers.

Map Your Habitats

Using the activity *Map Your Habitats* (found in the *Habitat Activity* section), have students study maps of your local area to determine where suitable shorebird habitat is located and which species you might find there.

Creative Writing

Have each student write a creative story about one of the shorebirds. Ask them to include at least five facts found in the profile. Suggest writing from the perspective of the bird, describing an exciting fall migration south to its wintering grounds or an especially difficult breeding season, selecting just the right mate and nest site.

Shorebird Adaptations

Advanced students can practice critical thinking skills by choosing one behavioral or morphological adaptation for a shorebird they studied. Ask them to write their own theories on how or why this trait may have developed. Then have him or her research to see if his or her theory could be accurate.



Shorebird Profiles Student Worksheet

Directions: List the common names of the four shorebirds you read about. Then fill in the table below with direct comparisons among the shorebirds.

<i>Shorebird Name</i>	<i>Physical Description</i>	<i>Food (note the season)</i>	<i>Spring Migration (time and place)</i>	<i>Mating Behavior</i>	<i>Most Interesting Fact</i>