

*calidris himantopus*

# Stilt Sandpiper

## Linking Communities

The Stilt Sandpiper is a common sight along the shores of Chaplin, Reed, and Old Wives Lakes during its migration northward in the spring and again as it is southbound in the fall. As it commonly occurs at these lakes protection of its habitat through the Linking Communities Project is required. These lakes act as staging grounds which provide the Stilt Sandpiper the rest and feeding opportunities needed to complete its long migration.



## Identification

The Stilt Sandpiper is a medium sized sandpiper with a slender body, white rump, and long, greenish legs and bill. In its breeding plumage it is easily distinguished by its heavily barred underside, dark blotches on the back, and chestnut cheek patch. Its nonbreeding plumage is less obvious having a gray back with a lighter belly and loosing the bright cheek patches.



## Habitat & Distribution

The Stilt Sandpiper breeds near the wooded borders of the taiga on sedge tundra located near water. Unlike other sandpipers it tends to avoid mudflats and prefers pools or lagoons for feeding. However, during migration it can be found on mudflats, flooded fields, shallow ponds and pools, and marshes. Flocks of less than 100 birds migrate north in the spring and back south in the fall passing along the edges of the Great Plains.

## Feeding

Feeding occurs on wet soils with no vegetation in waters up to 8 cm deep. The Stilt Sandpiper's diet consists of invertebrates which are collected by probing in the soft mud. During non-breeding season it eats seeds, leaves, roots of aquatic plants, marine worms, and other aquatic invertebrates.

## Nesting

Breeding does not occur until the Stilt Sandpiper is two years old. The Male arrives on the breeding grounds a few days before the female and pairs form once she arrives. The male constructs a few scrapes in a dry spot on the ground. The female then chooses one of the scrapes for the nest. The nest is often located on a ridge or hummock of sedge, surrounded by water. The nest may be sparsely lined with sedge leaves. Both parents incubate the four eggs and the young leave the nest within a day of hatching and find their own food. Both parents tend the young at first, but the female usually leaves within seven days. The male stays with the young for 10 to 14 days, but abandons them before they can fly well. Each pair raises only one brood per season.

