Spotted Sandpiper

Actitis macularia

Description:
Spotted sandpipers are small, short legged birds with a distinctive stiff winged fluttery flight. They are brown to olive gray on their crown, nape, back and wings, and bright white on their face, throat, chest and belly with yellow to pinkish colored legs. They are often observed walking or feeding along coastlines fluttering their tails.

Size:
Spotted Sandpipers are 7-8" long with wingspans of 15-16". Females are larger than males, weighing 43 to 50 g compared to 34 to 41 g for males.

Offspring:
Spotted sandpipers breed between May and August. They build their nests with weeds or stems in a shallow spot in sand or soil typically located in marshes, on coastlines, and near other water sources. The female lays a clutch of 4 eggs about 5 times per year. Incubation takes about 21 days. The young fly when only 17 to 21 days old.and join larger groups of juvenile sandpipers.

Lifespan:
The oldest known spotted sandpiper lived at least 12 years. Most do not live nearly that long.

Habitat:
The most widespread breeding sandpiper in North America, the Spotted Sandpiper breeds along the edges of nearly any water source throughout the northern half of the continent. It is at home around urban ponds as well as tundra pools.

Food:
Spotted sandpipers are opportunistic carnivores, eating nearly all animals that are small enough for them to eat, such as midges, fish, mayflies, flies, grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, worms, caterpillars, mollusks, crustaceans, spiders and carrion.

Fun Facts:

- Male spotted sandpipers provide the majority of parental care. Females contribute in varying amounts to nest building, incubation and raising the chicks during the fledgling stage.
- The female is larger than the male and is the dominant sex. She will viciously fight with other females over an unclaimed male. The victor usually mates with him and then leaves him to incubate the eggs and rear the young. She then seeks for one or more males to repeat the process, thus ensuring that she leaves the maximum number of descendants. The female may store sperm for up to one month. The eggs she lays for one male may be fathered by a different male in a previous mating.
- The function of the teetering motion typical of this species has not been determined. Chicks teeter nearly as soon as they hatch from the egg. The teetering gets faster when the bird is nervous, but stops when the bird is alarmed, aggressive, or courting.