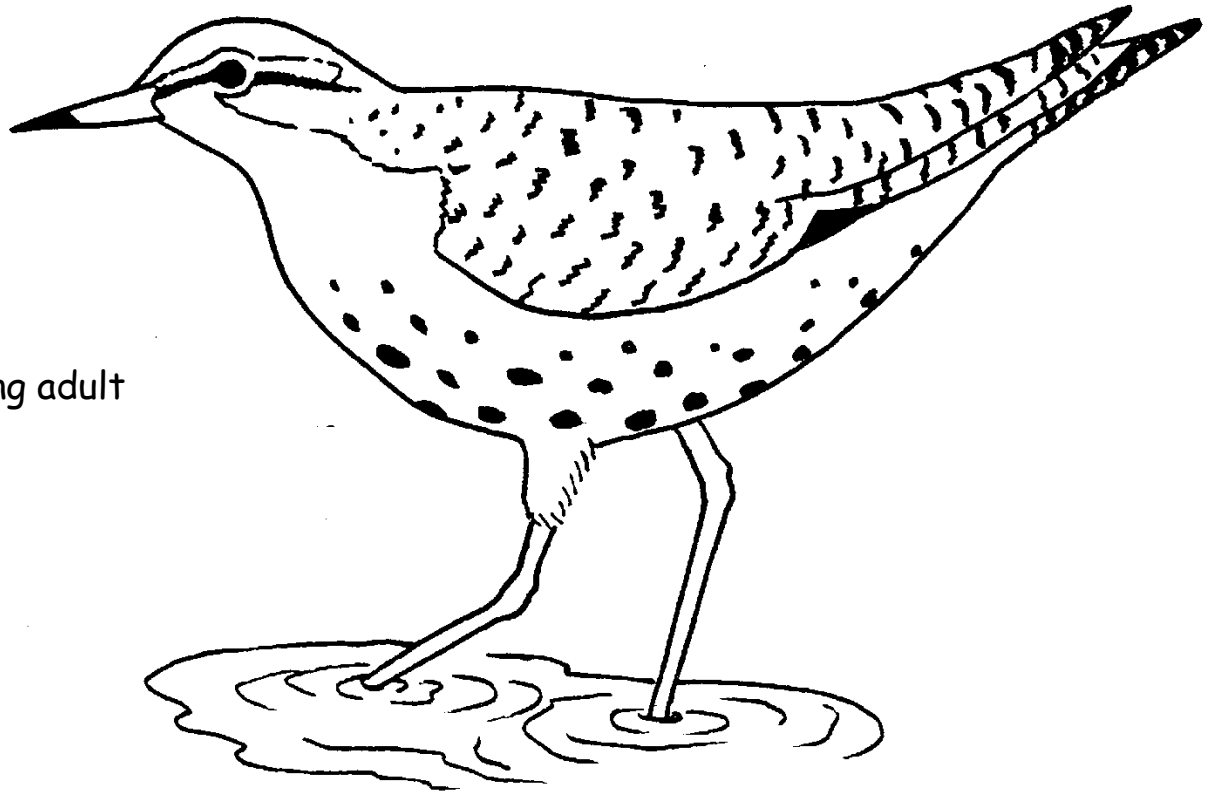


Breeding adult



Spotted Sandpiper

Coloring instructions:

Orange - the bill

Yellow - the legs

White - the eye stripe, chin, throat, breast, belly, thigh, and undertail

Brown - the crown, nape, ear patch, back, wings, and tail

Spotted Sandpiper

Length: 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Habitat: Common along streams and rivers.

Field marks: Medium-sized shorebird with dark spots on the belly and an orange bill.

Field notes: It bobs its tail up and down almost continuously. It typically stands with its body tilted forward and its head lowered, as if it were crouching.

Most people have seen sandpipers at the beach, scurrying back and forth in front of the waves. There are many species of sandpipers. They use their bills for probing in sand and mud for food. Like most sandpipers, the Spotted Sandpiper's appearance is a very plain combination of gray, brown, black, and white feathers - though the brown spots on the belly will help you identify it in the summer. Sandpipers need their protective coloration because they mostly nest on the ground.

Most sandpipers migrate far to the north in spring. The Spotted Sandpiper, however, nests throughout much of North America. It is quite common along our rivers and streams from late spring until autumn.

The Spotted Sandpiper reverses sex roles. The females are larger. They establish and defend their territory against other females. The female will mate with a male and lay four eggs. The male then sits on the nest, hatches the eggs, and raises the babies.

After laying her eggs, the female might leave that nest, mate with another male, and lay four more eggs somewhere else within her territory. The second male then hatches and raises those babies while the female might mate with a third male. The female helps raise only her final clutch of eggs.

A **clutch** is the group of eggs laid in one nest. This strategy allows a single female to lay up to 20 eggs during the breeding season, far more than females of other species which sit on their eggs and take care of their babies and so have time to lay only one or two clutches per year.

A Spotted Sandpiper never lays more than four eggs in a clutch. Usually there are not many males available for breeding because most of the males are sitting on nests or raising babies. This makes competition among the females intense. The older, more mature females are more successful and so have a greater chance of laying up to five clutches of eggs.

Spotted Sandpiper Challenges

Put a check mark in the box when you have completed the challenge.

- Identify a Spotted Sandpiper. Females tend to be larger and more heavily spotted than males, but they are hard to tell apart.
- See their distinctive flight, low over water with wings alternating between very shallow rapid wingbeats and being held stiffly downward.
- See the tail bob distinctly up and down whenever the bird is walking or standing.
- See a Spotted Sandpiper in the fall or winter when the breast is clear instead of spotted. Birds replace their feathers in a process called **molting**. Birds that molt only once a year usually look the same throughout the year. But birds that molt twice a year often have a breeding plumage and a nonbreeding plumage. The spotted breast of this sandpiper is part of its breeding plumage.

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