



CTYBC TIPS for birding the Gulf Coast

DISTINCTIVE SHOREBIRDS

Shorebirds most commonly found in April on Mustang Island that have distinctive characteristics are:

Killdeer, American Oystercatcher, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Black Skimmer, Roseate Spoonbill, White Ibis.

Killdeer are the only plovers to have two black bands on the breast. They also have a distinctive call that can be easily heard. They are often seen in parking lots.

American Oystercatchers have long, bright red bills and red eye rings, black heads and bright white bellies with brown backs. In flight they have a bright white wing stripe near the trailing edge of the dark wing that merges into a white tail band.

American Avocets are usually found in flocks, often swimming as far from people as they can get. Their long, narrow bills are turned upwards. In April the adults have pale reddish heads and necks, or are starting to get the coloring. The white scapulars on the black wing are the easiest part to see at a distance.

Black-necked Stilts can be found in roadside ditches as well as more common birding sites. They have very long and skinny red legs, and are often found wading in water. The pattern of the black back and white front with a white patch above the eye on a black face is distinctive. The bill is black, long and straight, and very narrow.

Black Skimmers are unmistakable. They are short and a little smaller than a Royal Tern, and have a red bill with black on the end; the lower mandible is longer than the upper one. It is white on the front and black on the back, and often lies with its head stretched out and bill resting on the ground. When feeding it flies low over the surface of the water, mouth open and lower mandible in the water as it skims the water.

Roseate Spoonbills are large pink birds with a flat spoon-shaped bill. They are often seen flying overhead singly, or in flocks in shallow water. Either way the bright pink color and long neck and bill are a give-away.

The **White Ibis** adult is white with a large red down-turned bill and red legs. In flight you can see the down-turned bill and black tips on the white wings. Juveniles are mottled brown but the same bill is obvious.
