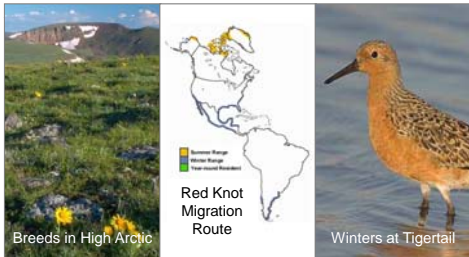


# Feathers, Flyways and Fast Food



Living Together: People and Birds on Sand Dollar



Breeds in High Arctic

Red Knot Migration Route

Winters at Tigertail

## THE JOURNEY

Each fall, thousands of shorebirds make their annual migration from distant nesting grounds on the tundra of Canada and Alaska - high above the Arctic Circle - to spend the winter months at warmer spots as far away as southern South America. In the spring, they repeat the long, arduous journey in reverse.

En route, exhausted migrants stop at Sand Dollar beach and Tigertail lagoon for both food and a brief rest before continuing their travels. These shorebirds use stored fat as energy and need to eat a lot and feed frequently to refuel themselves.

Repeated disturbance causes birds to waste valuable energy reserves. Weakened and vulnerable, migrating shorebirds with a reduced ability to feed may not survive to complete their journey.

## SHOREBIRDS AS SNOWBIRDS

For some migrating shorebirds, Sand Dollar is their final destination until the following spring. Up to 7,000 shorebirds stay on as winter visitors to escape the cold northern climate and to take advantage of a variety of coastal habitats containing an abundant food supply.

## WHAT'S FOR DINNER?...THE FOOD CHAIN AT WORK

At low tide, the expansive mudflat of Tigertail lagoon provides an excellent feeding ground for most shorebirds. Their diet may consist of polychaete worms, insect larvae, tiny snails and shrimp, invertebrate eggs and small clams

While some shorebirds rely on sight to find a meal, others use their sensitive bills to probe in the sand or mud for food.

The bill of each different shorebird species differs in length and shape. This allows each species to pursue different prey in the same area at the same time and not compete with its neighbors. For safety in numbers, shorebirds often feed together in mixed flocks ...but large concentrations of shorebirds can attract predators.

In winter, peregrine falcons also patrol our beaches and mudflats looking for their dinner - often an old, sickly or weakened shorebird.

## A VERY SPECIAL VISITOR

Scientists estimate there are only about 5,000 piping plovers left on the planet.

Monitoring data show that during their non-breeding season (from late July until late April) as many as 80 piping plovers over-winter at Sand Dollar beach and Tigertail lagoon.

Others winter on the coast from the Carolinas to the Yucatan and some scatter through the Bahamas and West Indies.

Piping plovers breed only in the northern U.S. and Canada and are considered **Endangered** or **Threatened** throughout both their breeding and wintering ranges.

## Our Shorebird Visitors



Black-bellied Plover

(*Pluvialis squatarola*)

Snowy Plover \*

(*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

Wilson's Plover \*

(*Charadrius wilsonia*)

Semipalmated Plover

(*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

Piping Plover

(*Charadrius melodus*)

American Oystercatcher

(*Haematopus palliatus*)

Greater Yellowlegs

(*Tringa melanoleuca*)

Lesser Yellowlegs

(*Tringa flavipes*)

Willet

(*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*)

Whimbrel

(*Numenius phaeopus*)

Marbled Godwit

(*Limosa fedoa*)

Ruddy Turnstone

(*Arenaria interpres*)

Red Knot

(*Calidris canutus*)

Sanderling

(*Calidris alba*)

Western Sandpiper

(*Calidris mauri*)

Least Sandpiper

(*Calidris minutilla*)

Dunlin

(*Calidris alpina*)

Short-billed Dowitcher

(*Limnodromus griseus*)

\* Breeds in Collier County



Whimbrel



Willets

Peregrine Falcon



Resting Western Sandpipers and Dunlin

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Enjoy the birds, but please keep your distance
- Never intentionally flush or force birds to fly
- Share the shore
- Avoid closed, posted areas and encourage others to do the same



Piping Plover

If birds appear agitated and take flight...they're trying to tell you you're too close for comfort.

Sand Dollar has been designated as a **Critical Wildlife Area** by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) and is protected by law because the sandy beaches, dunes and mudflats provide valuable nesting, resting and feeding grounds for over 60 species of migratory and resident coastal birds.

