



summer

Photos courtesy of Olivia Graves ©

SHOREBIRDS

Black-bellied Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

Status:	Winter resident
Abundance:	Common
When found:	Almost year round; most are gone in June
Habitat:	Mudflats, salt pannes
Best locations:	Grand Battures Washover, Point aux Chenes Salt Pannes



winter

Notes: These shorebirds spend most of the year here, but fly to the high arctic for a month or so to nest and raise their young.



Wilson's – Photo courtesy of Olivia Graves © Piping – Photo courtesy of Olivia Graves ©

Wilson's Plover

Charadrius wilsonia

- Status: Summer resident, nests at Grand Bay
Abundance: Uncommon
When found: March–September
Habitat: Salt pannes, sand & shell beaches, shell middens
Best locations: Bangs Island, Grand Battures, Point aux Chenes

Notes: Ten to fifteen pairs of Wilson's Plovers nest at Grand Bay each summer. Several sightings in late November and early February suggest that a few may overwinter.

Piping Plover

Charadrius melodus

- Status: Winter resident
Abundance: Rare
When found: January and February
Habitat: Mudflats
Best locations: Grand Battures Washover

Notes: One Piping Plover found at Grand Bay was marked with a unique combination of colored leg bands. Later, we learned it was banded as a chick on the Missouri River in South Dakota.



Oystercatcher – Photo courtesy of Jeff Rester ©

Stilt – Photo courtesy of Olivia Graves ©

American Oystercatcher

Haematopus palliatus

- Status: Permanent resident, nests at Grand Bay
Abundance: Fairly common
When found: Year round
Habitat: Mudflats, sand & shell beaches
Best locations: Bangs Island, Grand Battures

Notes: Oystercatchers were once very rare in Mississippi, but now they are residents along the coast. Grand Bay is one of the few known nesting areas for this species in the state.

Black-necked Stilt

Himantopus mexicanus

- Status: Summer resident, nests just outside of the Reserve
Abundance: Uncommon
When found: June–September
Habitat: Mudflats, shell beaches
Best locations: Bangs Lake and Island, Grand Battures Washover

Notes: Stilts often nest by the impoundments in the Chevron oil refinery. After breeding, they show up in small flocks across the Reserve.



Photo courtesy of Olivia Graves ©

Willet

Tringa semipalmata

- Status: Permanent resident, nests at Grand Bay
Abundance: Common
When found: Year round
Habitat: Mudflats, salt pannes, salt marsh
Best locations: Bayou Heron Boat Launch, Grand Battures Washover, Point aux Chenes Salt Pannes

Notes: If you venture too close to a Willet's nest or young, they won't let you stay for long. Be prepared for an ear-piercing racket, and possibly a good dive-bombing.

“I find that birding in the Grand Bay Reserve is very productive. There is no better place in the Mississippi Sound to observe large rafts of over-wintering bay ducks, such as three species of scoters, Redheads, and Greater Scaup than in the outer waters of the Reserve. During my “Big Year of Birding” a few years ago, I sighted many significant species of birds on the Reserve, including the Short-eared Owl. My observations have also led me to suspect (although not yet prove) that Wilson’s Plovers overwinter at the Reserve.”

Don McKee, Avid Mississippi Birder



A bird in the hand... – Photo courtesy of Jennifer Buchanan ©



Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

- Status: Transient
Abundance: Fairly common
When found: March–May, July–September
Habitat: Salt pannes, mudflats
Best locations: Point aux Chenes Salt Pannes, Catch 'em All Bar

Notes: Grand Bay is perhaps the best place to observe migrating Whimbrels on the Mississippi coast. Flocks of over 100 have been seen in the past.

Photo courtesy of George Housley, Jr. ©

Long-billed Curlew

Numenius americanus

- Status: Transient
Abundance: Uncommon
When found: April–May,
rare in winter
Habitat: Salt pannes,
mudflats
Best locations: Point aux
Chenes Salt
Pannes,
Catch 'em
All Bar

Notes: These huge shorebirds at first may look similar to Whimbrels, but Curlews are much larger, have extra-long bills, and show a cinnamon wash on the underside of their wings.



Photo courtesy of Joan White-Spunner Dixon ©

Marbled Godwit

Limosa fedoa

Status:	Transient
Abundance:	Uncommon
When found:	Most are found in April or November. Irregular in winter
Habitat:	Mudflats, shell beaches
Best locations:	Bangs Island, Grand Battures Washover



Photo courtesy of Olivia Graves ©

Notes: Look for Marbled Godwits among big groups of larger-sized shorebirds such as Willets or American Oystercatchers.

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Status:	Winter resident
Abundance:	Common
When found:	July–May; absent only in June
Habitat:	Shell middens, sand and shell beaches
Best locations:	Bangs Island, Grand Battures



Photo courtesy of Olivia Graves ©

Notes: Look for turnstones along the shorelines of the middens or outer beaches. Because they are not shy, if you are quiet, they may walk right up to you.

Western Sandpiper

Calidris mauri

Status:	Winter resident
Abundance:	Common
When found:	August–April
Habitat:	Mudflats, salt pannes, tidal creeks
Best locations:	Grand Battures Washover, Point aux Chenes Salt Pannes



Photo courtesy of Jake Walker ©

Notes: The Reserve plays host to some of the largest aggregations of Western Sandpipers in Mississippi. Flocks of over 400 Western Sandpipers can often be seen during high tide.

Dunlin

Calidris alpina

Status:	Winter resident
Abundance:	Common
When found:	October–May; a few may linger through the summer
Habitat:	Mudflats, salt pannes, small bayous
Best locations:	Grand Battures Washover, Point aux Chenes Salt Pannes



Photo courtesy of Olivia Graves ©

Notes: Dunlins are the most abundant shorebirds at Grand Bay. At high tide, large flocks roost at the aforementioned locations, but at low tide, they are scattered across the Reserve, feeding in the exposed mud.



Photo courtesy of Donna McDonald-Bailey ©

Long and Short-Billed Dowitchers

Limnodromus scolopaceus and *L. griseus*

- Status: Winter residents
Abundance: Both are common
When found: Almost year round; absent in June
Habitat: Mudflats, salt pannes, small bayous
Best locations: Grand Battures Washover, Point aux Chenes Salt Pannes

Notes: In Grand Bay, be careful using the rule of thumb used by many birders that suggests that in winter, Short-billed Dowitchers are found near salt or brackish water, while Long-billed Dowitchers favor freshwater. Many of the dowitchers found in Grand Bay in saltwater are actually Long-billed.

Wilson's Snipe

Gallinago delicata

Status:	Winter resident
Abundance:	Fairly common
When found:	October–April
Habitat:	Salt, brackish, & freshwater marshes, wet pine savannas
Best locations:	Bayou Heron Road, Hawkes' Marsh, Point aux Chenes

Notes: Look for Snipe in the ditches as you drive down Bayou Heron Road.



Photo courtesy of Olivia Graves ©

American Woodcock

Scolopax minor

Status:	Winter resident
Abundance:	Uncommon
When Found:	November– February
Habitat:	Pine savanna
Best Locations:	Coastal Resources Center Savannas, East Pecan Road

Notes: American Woodcocks, also known as Timberdoodles, are most easily observed at dusk crossing Bayou Heron and East Pecan Roads.

The bird in this photograph exhibits a rare pigment abnormality, leucism, where the normally black pigmented feathers are white.



Photo courtesy of Paula Waggy ©