

## August - Week 5

### *Shorebirds and Shorelines*

**August is a great time to walk along** a Minnesota waterway. As the weather cools, early fall migration is starting and many birds gather around our more than 10,000 lakes, rivers, and wetlands. These habitats are so vast that Minnesota has more miles of shoreline than California. Of the 52 species of shorebirds in North America, 33 species visit our state with many of them spending only a few weeks in Minnesota during migration as they fly to and from the Arctic and South America. Early to mid-August is prime time to observe a wide variety of shorebirds in Minnesota.

Plan a walk along the shoreline of a local lake, river, or wetland. If you are barefoot, you learn things your eyes may not tell you. Look at your footprints. Have other creatures left tracks too? What can you tell about who walked here? What does the shore or beach feel like? Compare the feel of heat on sand, rock or mud with temperatures in the water. Can you feel wind or sunshine on your face? Is the water a “cloudy reflection” of the sky or does it have a different “personality” today?

Near the water you may see small shorebirds dipping beaks in mud in search of aquatic insects, stoking up for their long flights. Look for plovers, including killdeer; sandpipers; and yellowlegs. If you linger until nightfall, you may even hear flocks of birds twittering in the dark sky as they fly south. Can you imagine their journey?



Blue Heron

If you do not see any shorebirds, are there other birds swimming or wading in the water? Who are they? Are raptors nearby, keeping an eye out for a meal? Make note of the birds congregating around the water. Add a sketch of a bird you've observed walking, swimming, or bobbing. Add labels to your sketch and use your observations to help name the species.