

ATLASSING TIPS

LONG-BILLED CURLEW

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HOW TO IDENTIFY A LONG-BILLED CURLEW

There are several field identification points that should be looked for when attempting to identify the long-billed curlew...

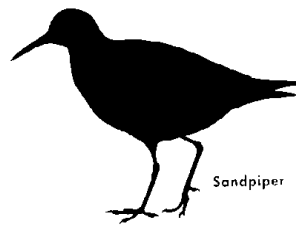


THE CURLEW'S BILL AND COLOURATION:

The bill is a distinguishing feature. It can grow up to 19 cm (7.5 in) long and has a distinct sickle shape with a pronounced curve towards the ground. The Long-billed curlew is sandy brown and has no distinct head striping. In flight, the bright cinnamon wing linings are distinctly visible.

THE CURLEW'S SHAPE:

The curlew is the largest shorebird in British Columbia, with a weight of 800-900 grams and measures 50 to 60 centimeters (19-24 in) from the tip of the bill to the tip of the tail. The basic shape of the **much smaller sandpiper** can be seen in the image to the right. A long-billed curlew will generally stand more upright with an elongated neck, as seen in the image below.



BODY POSITION:

At rest the long-billed curlew will point its head into the direction of the wind (similar to a weather vane). When threatened and on the nest, the long-billed curlew will lie flat on the ground with its neck stretched out.

HABITAT:

The long-billed curlew is generally seen on the ground in **open, dry grasslands** with short vegetation. This includes large agricultural fields, abandoned fields, meadows and pastures.

Areas with trees or other tall objects are avoided. **Note: curlews are rarely seen in wetland areas during the breeding season in BC.** Curlews are fairly easily seen while they are foraging in open habitats. Watch for them on the ground as they move through the grass probing for insects. Also watch and listen for them in the air. Each pair will generally inhabit a territory that is about 15 to 24 hectares in area. The nest is generally a shallow scrape in the ground lined with minimal vegetation, making it very difficult to find.



HOW TO SURVEY

Curlews are cryptically colored and can be difficult to see so spend sufficient time scanning for them. Keep curlews in sight to avoid double counts. Listen for calls. They have a loud call that rises on the ending notes. This is where the curlew gets its name from its loud and unmistakable “curleeeeeeeeeuuuuuuu” call.

TIMING: Late April and early May are the best times to survey for Long-billed Curlews.

DO NOT DISTURB...

Do remember that this is the Long-billed Curlew breeding season. DO NOT approach or disturb any nest. This species is protected under the British Columbia *Wildlife Act*.

Enjoy your time in the grasslands!