

WADER GURU

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Short answer: Nothing the two words are synonymous.

Long answer: Whilst wader and shorebird are synonymous when referring to the group of birds in the sub-order [Charadrii](#), they can mean different things in different places.

For example, in the Americas where the Charadrii are generally referred to as shorebirds, the term wader is also in wider use but refers to any bird that wades. This includes birds such as herons, ibises, storks spoonbills *etc.* Conversely, elsewhere, particularly in the UK, although shorebird is widely understood to mean the same as wader, there is some confusion in that shore birds (two words) are basically any bird that frequents the shore and can be anything from ducks, through waders, to terns, gulls and auks.



Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*; A classic wader
© Elis Simpson



Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*; A classic shorebird
© Elis Simpson

Some argue that wader is not a good term as not all waders, wade. This is certainly true but the counterpoint that not all shorebirds frequent the shore is equally true. As the taxonomists increased the number of species included within this sub-order, then so did the variety of lifestyles present in the group. Now neither word is universally apt but their widespread use means that both are here to stay and there is actually no real alternative that makes any sense, given the range of species involved.



Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*; A non-wading wader © Elis Simpson



American Woodcock *Scolopax minor*; A shorebird that rarely frequents the shore © Knut Hansen

Neither shorebird nor wader is more correct than the other, so it is purely a matter of personal choice, or local custom, which determines the name you use. Some use both, as we do, but in the end they all refer to the same eclectic bunch of birds housed within the sub-order Charadrii.