

California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Interagency Wildlife Task Group

MARBLED GODWIT

Limosa fedoa

Family: SCOLOPACIDAE
B176

Order: CHARADRIIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: C. Swarth

Reviewed by: L. Mewaldt

Edited by: S. Granholm, R. Duke

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common to abundant migrant and winter visitant from mid-August to early May in estuarine habitats the length of the state. A fairly common migrant and winter visitant at the Salton Sea, but generally rare elsewhere in the interior of the state. Small numbers regularly winter at Los Banos, Merced Co. Small numbers of nonbreeders remain on the coast and at the Salton Sea through the summer. On the coast, most common on estuarine mudflats, but also occurs on sandy beaches, open shores, saline emergent wetlands, and adjacent wet upland fields (Cogswell 1977, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Forages on wet mud or sand or in shallow water; obtains invertebrate prey by probing into the substrate. Prey items in estuarine habitats include small snails and clams, sand crabs, amphipods, and worms (Cogswell 1977). Stomachs examined from godwits collected at San Francisco Bay and Sunset Beach, Orange Co., contained mostly polychaete worms (Reeder 1951, Recher 1966). On the breeding grounds, takes aquatic insects, grasshoppers, and mollusks (Bent 1927).

Cover: In winter, requires undisturbed areas (typically saline emergent wetland, upland fields, and salt ponds) above high water for roosting during the high tide period.

Reproduction: Nests on the prairies of central Canada, and on the northern coterminous U.S. prairies from Montana to Minnesota, generally close to water. The nest is a shallow depression on the ground, sparsely lined with dried grass (Palmer 1967).

Water: No additional data found.

Pattern: Grassy prairies are used for nesting, and estuarine mudflat habitats are used extensively in nonbreeding season.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. In estuarine habitats feeds on mudflats at night.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Migrants begin arriving on central coastal California estuaries in mid-July, with the major influx occurring in August (Kelly and Cogswell 1979, Page et al. 1979). In south San Francisco Bay, a large percentage of individuals marked in one winter study returned to the same area the following winter, indicating strong site fidelity (Kelly and Cogswell 1979). Large numbers winter in California. Spring migration usually ends by mid-May, but small numbers remain through the summer.

Home Range: In North Dakota, average nest density over the entire state was 0.52 pairs/256 ha (640 ac). Maximum density was 8 pairs/256 ha (640 ac) (Stewart and Kantrud 1972). Nests were as close as 60 m (200 ft) apart (Johnsgard 1981). In south San Francisco Bay, regularly flies 1.0 to 6.1 km (0.6 to 3.8 mi) from high tide roosts to mudflat feeding areas (Kelly and Cogswell 1979). While feeding on the mudflats, few moved more than 300 m (980 ft) (Kelly and Cogswell 1977).

Territory: Male performs a courtship flight over his nesting territory, but distinct territorial boundaries apparently are lacking. Nonbreeders not territorial in sandy beach and estuarine habitats (Myers et al. 1979).

Reproduction: Nesting season starts mid-to late May; often nests semicolonally. Average clutch size is 4 eggs, and both parents share in incubation of probably 21-23 days. One brood is produced in a season. Precocial young leave the nest within hours of hatching, and are tended by both parents until they are able to fly at about 3 wk (Johnsgard 1981).

Niche: Range shrinking as breeding habitat converted to agriculture.

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