

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

WESTERN SANDPIPER
Family: SCOLOPACIDAE
B183

Calidris mauri
Order: CHARADRIIFORMES Class: AVES

Written by: M. Rigney
Reviewed by: L. Mewaldt
Edited by: R. Duke, E. Beedy

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Common to abundant on estuarine and riverine mudflats of California all year except late May and early June (Cogswell 1977). Small numbers reported at San Francisco Bay salt ponds in June (Swarth et al. 1982). Appears along the southern California coast by mid-June (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Adults return to California wintering grounds from July to mid-August. Juveniles do not arrive until mid- to late August along central California coast and estuaries (Cogswell 1977). Tideflats and saline emergent wetlands are preferred over rocky or sandy beaches. High concentrations of nonbreeders can be found in muddy fields and ponds of the Central Valley, and along the shores of the Salton Sea (Cogswell 1977)

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeds in small to large mixed flocks by probing and gleaning insects, mollusks, crustaceans, or worms in the soft mud of tidal marine mudflats, estuaries, river banks, lake shores, and wetfields (Murie and Bruce 1935). Sometimes feeds with head immersed, or by running at prey with head down (Terres 1980). Prefledging young feed on adult and larval flies and beetles (Holmes 1972).

Cover: Frequently roosts in dense flocks along salt ponds, in diked wetlands, or wet fields.

Reproduction: Breeds on the coasts of western and northern Alaska (Cogswell 1977). Nests on elevated, drier islands with tundra surrounded by ponds and marshes. Nest is a shallow scrape lined with lichens, placed beneath dwarf birches or other tundra vegetation (Harrison 1978).

Water: No additional data found.

Pattern: Requires large expanses of soft mud or sand, with dense concentrations of invertebrate prey, in the winter. Needs roosting sites that provide shelter from storms and high tides (Jurek and Leach 1973).

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. Migration occurs at night.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Adults arrive on wintering grounds from mid-June to mid-August; juveniles follow through September. Local population along the central coast augmented by individuals passing through during spring and fall migration.

Home Range: Holmes (1972, 1973) reported loose colonies with nest densities of 4-5 pairs/ha (1.5-2/ac).

Territory: Johnsgard (1981) described a regular pattern of nest distribution, with small defended territories near the nests and large communal feeding areas. Does not defend a defined feeding territory during the winter. Some aggressive behavior is exhibited just before spring migration (Cogswell 1977).

Reproduction: Breeding begins in late May; pairs are loosely colonial (Terres 1980). Nest usually contains 4 eggs, rarely 5. Single-brooded; both parents incubate the clutch for about 21 days (Harrison 1978). Young precocial, but tended by both parents until able to fly at 17-18 days. Female may depart before the young are independent (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Winters along coasts to Peru and Surinam.

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