

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

STILT SANDPIPER

Calidris himantopus

Family: SCOLOPACIDAE

Order: CHARADRIIFORMES

Class: AVES

B193

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

An uncommon migrant, and an irregular, uncommon winter visitant at the south end of the Salton Sea, where it prefers the adjacent mudflats and the edges of nearby sloughs, pools, and ponds. The main spring passage at the Salton Sea is from late April to about May 20. Fall migrants begin appearing in mid-July and the largest flocks arrive in August (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Very rare elsewhere in the state; most records are for fall migrants on intertidal estuaries and adjacent sandy shores. Breeds in the wet tundra of northern Canada and northeastern Alaska. Most of the population migrates through the Great Plains and winters in South America.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: In summer, takes various adult and larval insects, mostly flies and beetles. Small worms, snails, and various seeds also are taken (Bent 1927). Foraging occurs while wading belly-deep in water, or by probing in soft mud or sand (Johnsgard 1981). Prey also are snatched from the surface, or captured by swinging the bill back and forth (Palmer 1967). Has been observed feeding within an area measuring 1 m² (11 ft²) for more than 1 hr (Palmer 1967).

Cover: Nests near or on sedges or other tufts of vegetation at edge of taiga. Seeks sheltered areas in migration and winter (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Reproduction: Nests on wet tundra, in dry vegetation atop sedge hummocks, or on low gravel ridges (Palmer 1967, Johnsgard 1981). The nest is a shallow, unlined or sparsely lined hollow, and may be hidden in the vegetation or exposed (Harrison 1978).

Water: No additional data found.

Pattern: Small sloughs, ponds, and mudflats adjacent to large lakes are used in migratory and wintering periods.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity; probably migrates at night.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Occurs regularly in small numbers only at the south end of the Salton Sea in fall migration and winter nonbreeding season.

Home Range: No data found.

Territory: Male establishes a nest territory with a prolonged display flight, and makes a number of nest scrapes before 1 is chosen as the final nest location. Territory size averages

6-8 ha (15-20 ac), but in some areas it may cover only 1-2 ha (3-5 ac). There is a high degree of fidelity to previously held territories and mates (Jehl 1973). In winter, apparently nonterritorial (Myers and Myers 1979).

Reproduction: Breeding season begins in June and extends into July. A monogamous, solitary nester. Clutch size averages 4 eggs, and 1 brood is raised in a season. Incubation period 19-21 days, and both sexes incubate. Precocial young leave the nest soon after hatching; tended at first by both parents, but later by the male only. Young fly at 17-18 days (Jehl 1973).

Niche: Often feeds in tight flocks in winter with dowitchers.

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