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

LAPLAND LONGSPUR *Calcarius lapponicus*
Family: EMBERIZIDAE Order: PASSERIFORMES Class: AVES
B514

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

An uncommon but regular fall migrant and winter visitor. Most occur in Great Basin in northeastern California (McCaskie et al. 1979). A few occur along coast and in interior, including Humboldt Bay, Point Reyes, Carrizo Plain, San Joaquin Valley, Antelope Valley, Imperial Valley (Small 1974, Garrett and Dunn 1981). Rare on Channel Islands in fall, and uncommon on Farallon Islands (Garrett and Dunn 1981, DeSante and Ainley 1980). Frequents sparse annual grassland, perennial grassland, cropland, and pasture habitats.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Diet includes grass, forb, and sedge seeds, and some insects and spiders. Gleans on ground and in short vegetation (Bent 1968, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Cover: Seeks cover on ground in short grasses and forbs or plowed cropland.

Reproduction: Nests in open tundra of Alaska, Canada and Siberia. Places nest in shallow depression of moss, sedge, grass, in moist or dry hummocked terrain with or without trees (Harrison 1978, Terres 1980, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Water: May eat snow (Bent 1968). No additional information found.

Pattern: Frequents sparse, short grasslands, recently plowed croplands, and pastures with low vegetation.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Usually arrives in northern California in September and October (McCaskie et al. 1979). By mid-October, can be found in southern California where it remains until early winter (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Usually rare along coast in north, and in southern interior. Most individuals depart for northern breeding grounds by late April (Bent 1968).

Home Range: In Alaska, Seastedt and MacLean (1979) reported density averaged about 23 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac), varying from 17-37 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac). Tryon and MacLean (1980) reported individuals using 3-8 ha (7.5 to 20 ac) for 95% of foraging activity in breeding season. Also in Alaska, Bent (1968) reported 14 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) in low riparian willows, and up to 65 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) in sedge meadows.

Territory: Territory apparently not established in wintering areas, California or elsewhere.

Reproduction: Does not nest in California. Breeding extends from late May or early June into August, with most activity in June and July. A monogamous, solitary nester. Female lays 2-8 eggs, usually 5 or 6; 1 brood per season. Incubation 10-14 days after last egg laid. Altricial young leave nest at 8-10 days; learn to fly 3-5 days later. Female incubates eggs and both parents feed young (Custer and Pitelka 1977, Harrison 1978).

Niche: Falcons prey upon wintering individuals. Prolonged periods of inclement weather kill individuals on wintering grounds. Occurs in winter in mixed flocks with horned larks, pipits, and other species (Bent 1968, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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