

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

---

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER

*Calidris bairdii*

Family: SCOLOPACIDAE  
B648

Order: CHARADRIIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: T. Kucera, 1998

#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, SEASONALITY

Baird's sandpiper is rare spring (March-June) transient and an uncommon to locally common fall (July-November) transient (Small 1994) in California. Most birds appear from mid-August to mid-September, and according to Small (1994), are juveniles; the adults pass through earlier, in late July. Baird's sandpipers are found in estuaries and tidal mudflats with low grasses, and along pools, ponds, lakes, streams, and alkali flats. It is found widespread the length of the state (Small 1994). It occurs the length of the coast. In the interior, it occurs in northeast California, the Central Valley, Mono Basin and Owens Valley, and in mountain lakes in the Cascade Range and Sierra Nevada. Baird's sandpiper breeds along the margins of the Arctic Ocean, and winters in southern South America (Jehl 1979, Hayman et al. 1986, Myers et al. 1982).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Feeds largely on insects on soft mud or in shallow water; feeds on beach wrack in the fall, rarely probes for food (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Feeds relatively high on the shore, rarely wades (Hayman et al. 1986).

**Cover:** Open mudflats, shorelines, or shallow water provide cover.

**Reproduction:** Nests in dry coastal and alpine tundra in Alaska and Canada, producing one brood per year (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Water:** A shorebird, always associated with water.

**Pattern:** Transient in a variety of shoreline, mudflat, and alkali flat habitats with insects for food.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Active at all times of day; active all year.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Nest in coastal and alpine tundra during June and July from northwest Siberia to Greenland. Winter as far south as Tierra del Fuego (Hayman et al. 1986, Ehrlich et al. 1988). Most migration is over the North American prairies. Appear in California before and mainly after breeding (Small 1994)

**Home Range:** Not known.

**Territory:** Males are territorial during nesting and have circular song flights; during migration, some individuals may defend feeding territories (Hayman et al. 1986, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Reproduction:** Lay one brood of two to four eggs during June or July in a cryptic nest, often a depression in the ground lined with leaves or lichens (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Niche:** Less gregarious than most calidrids; tends to feed higher on the shore, often among

vegetation.

#### REFERENCES

- Ehrlich, P. R., D. S. Dobkin, and D. Wheye. 1988. *The birder's handbook*. Simon and Schuster, New York.
- Hayman, P., J. Marchant, and T. Prater. 1986. *Shorebirds: an identification guide to the waders of the world*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.
- Jehl, J. R. Jr. 1979. The autumnal migration of Baird's sandpiper. *Studies in Avian Biol.* 2: 55-68.
- Myers, J. P., O. Hilden, and P. Tomkovich. 1982. Exotic *Calidris* species of the Siberian tundra. *Ornis. Fenn.* 59:175-182.
- Small, A. 1994. *California birds: their status and distribution*.

B648

---

Life history accounts for species in the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) System were originally published in: Zeiner, D.C., W.F.Laudenslayer, Jr., K.E. Mayer, and M. White, eds. 1988-1990. *California's Wildlife*. Vol. I-III. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California. Updates are noted in accounts that have been added or edited since original publication.