

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*

REGULATORY STATUS

USFWS: Migratory Game Bird

USFS R2: No special status

USFS R4: No special status

Wyoming BLM: No special status

State of Wyoming: Game Bird (see regulations); Protected Bird

CONSERVATION RANKS

USFWS: Bird of Conservation Concern

WGFD: NSSU (U), Tier II

WYNDD: G5, S4S5

Wyoming Contribution: LOW

IUCN: Least Concern

PIF Continental Concern Score: Not ranked

STATUS AND RANK COMMENTS

Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*) is assigned a range of state conservation ranks by the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database due to uncertainties over population trends for this species in Wyoming.

NATURAL HISTORY

Taxonomy:

There are currently no recognized subspecies of Upland Sandpiper ^{1, 2}.

Description:

Identification of Upland Sandpiper is possible in the field. It is a medium sized shorebird, 28 to 32 cm long. Males and females are identical in appearance. The species is similar to other shorebirds, possessing long legs, a short neck, and a small head. The bill is yellow with a black tip. The head is dovelike in appearance. Upland Sandpiper has cryptic coloration, with dull olive to brown-buff upperparts, and whitish to dull yellow underparts. It has strong patterns and streaks on the head, neck, back, wings, flanks, and breast. Juveniles are similar in appearance to adults, but have a pale head. In the species' habitat, the only similar species is Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*). Mountain Plover has a short bill, and lacks patterns and streaking to its plumage ^{1, 3}. Other shorebirds are similar in appearance, but are typically associated with habitats where Upland Sandpiper is unlikely to be found.

Distribution & Range:

During the breeding season, Upland Sandpiper is distributed across North America. The species is most commonly found in the northern Great Plains. Scattered breeding occurs as far northwest as Alaska, west to California, and east to New England. Wyoming is at the western edge of the species distribution in the Great Plains. The species migrates to South America for the winter.

Range contractions have occurred throughout the species range as native grasslands have been lost¹.

Habitat:

Upland Sandpiper is associated with grassland habitats. In particular, native prairie habitats are preferred. Habitat use in Wyoming has not been studied, though is likely similar to habitat use in nearby states. In the Great Plains, the species uses native grasslands, fields held in the Conservation Reserve Program, agricultural fields, grazed pastures, hayfields, and mountain meadows. Suitable breeding habitat is characterized by moderately tall, dense vegetation for nest concealment¹. The highest concentrations of breeding individuals in Wyoming occur in mixed-grass prairie in the eastern regions of the state^{4, 5}. Habitat use is similar during migration, but little is known about habitat associations on the winter grounds¹.

Phenology:

Upland Sandpiper arrives in Wyoming in May⁵. Nest construction occurs about two weeks after arrival and incubation lasts 23 to 24 days on average. Young are precocial upon hatching, and forage for food on their own with the parents until fledging at about 30 days of age¹. Fall migration in Wyoming is likely in August⁵.

Diet:

Upland Sandpiper primarily feeds upon small invertebrates, though small amounts of weed seeds are eaten¹.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Abundance:

Continental: WIDESPREAD

Wyoming: UNCOMMON

There are no robust estimates of abundance for Upland Sandpiper in Wyoming. The species has a statewide abundance rank of UNCOMMON and also appears to be uncommon within suitable environments in the occupied area⁶. From 1968–2015, annual Wyoming Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) detections of Upland Sandpiper ranged from 0 to 60 (average = 22), with 60 recorded in 2015⁷. Annual detections of Upland Sandpiper ranged from 2 to 59 during surveys for the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR) program between 2009–2015⁸. While surveys conducted as part of the BBS and IMBCR programs do detect this species, neither is specifically designed to capture sandpiper observations.

Population Trends:

Historic: LARGE DECLINE

Recent: UNKNOWN

Historically, Upland Sandpiper experienced large declines in parts of its continental distribution, which are largely attributed to the loss of native prairie habitat¹. Survey-wide trend data from the North American BBS indicate that Upland Sandpiper increased by 0.49% annually from 1966–2013 and 0.78% annually from 2003–2013; however, neither survey-wide estimate was statistically significant⁹. Wyoming BBS trend data indicate that Upland Sandpiper experienced statistically significant annual increases of 6.14% from 1968–2013 and 5.60% from 2003–2013⁹.

Intrinsic Vulnerability:

MODERATE VULNERABILITY

The habitat specificity of Upland Sandpiper makes the species vulnerable. The species is restricted to grassland type habitats. Additionally, suitable grassland habitats for Upland Sandpiper must have relatively tall and dense vegetation for nest concealment ¹.

Extrinsic Stressors:

SLIGHTLY STRESSED

Little is known about Upland Sandpiper habitat use in Wyoming. It is thought that the species' habitat is slightly threatened by human and environmental factors in the state, such as wind and other natural resource development, as well as long term climactic factors such as global climate change ¹⁰. The species is sensitive to habitat alteration and conversion, such as the conversion of native grasslands to cropland. These types of activities may place the species at risk in Wyoming ⁵.

KEY ACTIVITIES IN WYOMING

Upland Sandpiper is classified as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), and as a Level I Priority Bird Species requiring conservation action in the Wyoming Bird Conservation Plan ¹¹. In 2015, WGFD initiated a targeted grassland SGCN monitoring program for Upland Sandpiper, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, and Burrowing Owl ¹². Upland Sandpiper is detected annually during BBS and IMBCR surveys in Wyoming; however, the species is not detected frequently by either program.

ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION NEEDS

Robust estimates of abundance and population trends are lacking for Upland Sandpiper in Wyoming. The species has shown sensitivity to human impacts on the landscape such as agriculture and ranching, and it is unknown how severe these impacts may be on the species in Wyoming.

MANAGEMENT IN WYOMING

This section authored solely by WGFD; Zachary J. Walker. Upland Sandpiper is considered a SGCN in Wyoming due to habitat degradation, conversion, and fragmentation. General large-scale bird monitoring programs may not be adequately monitor Upland Sandpiper. It is recommended that species specific monitoring should continue for this species in the long term. Additional work could be conducted to examine landscape impacts of habitat development on this species. Best management practices for Upland Sandpiper include maintenance of large (> 125 acres) tracts of suitable grassland habitat. High intensity grazing and spring mowing should be avoided. If habitat disturbances are required, utilize practices where some habitats reach a climax successional stage and numerous suitable habitat patches are retained. Prescribed burns should occur in the fall and designed to maintain nesting cover. Protect habitat around moist soils where Upland Sandpiper can breed.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Figure 1: Adult Upland Sandpiper in Logan County, Colorado. (Photo courtesy of Bill Schmoker)

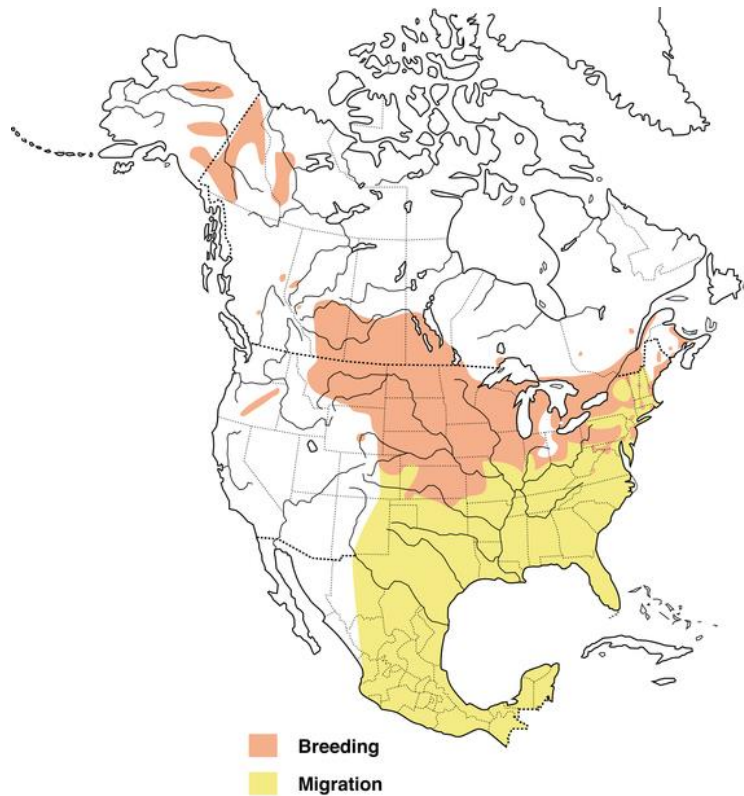
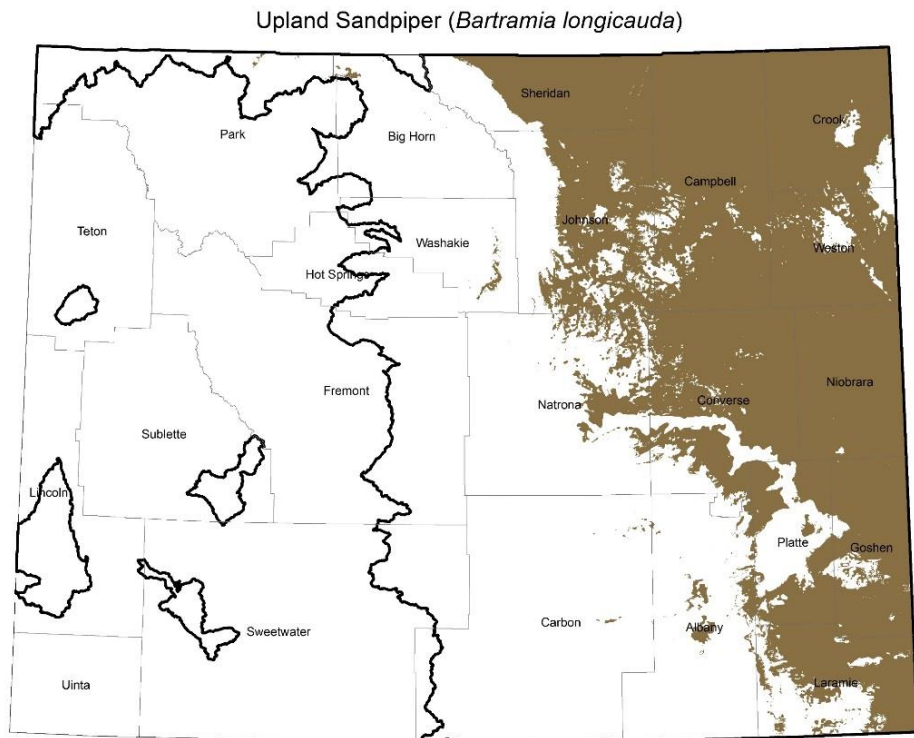


Figure 2: North American range of *Bartramia longicauda*. (Map courtesy of Birds of North America, <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna>, maintained by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology)



Figure 3: Grassland habitat in Thunder Basin National Grassland, Wyoming. (Photo courtesy of Michael T. Wickens)



SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: Sept. 2016.
Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming.
Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution of the species;
heavy black lines indicate outermost boundaries of possible occurrence.

Figure 4: Range and predicted distribution of *Bartramia longicauda* in Wyoming.



Figure 5: Upland Sandpiper in flight in Logan County, Colorado. (Photo courtesy of Bill Schmoker)