

# Western Sandpiper

*Calidris mauri*



Photo by Larry Neel

## Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Open Water (shorelines) Ephemeral Wetlands/Playas	
Key Habitat Parameters ●	
Plant Composition	Cattail, bulrush, sedges, saltgrass, rushes
Plant Density	Very sparse or no vegetation <sup>3</sup>
Mosaic	Shallow shorelines and mudflats with saturated soils and little or no vegetation <sup>3</sup>
Water Depth	≤ 4 cm (2") <sup>3</sup>
Water Quality	Tolerates variety of salinities <sup>EO</sup>
Response to Vegetation Removal	Neutral <sup>EO</sup>
Area Requirements ●	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown
Recommended Patch Size	50 ha (110 ac) <sup>EO</sup>
Home Range	Unknown

## Conservation Profile

Priority Status	
Conservation Species	
Species Concerns	
Probable population declines High Nevada stewardship for migration	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S5M
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	None
IW Shorebird Plan	Very Important
Trends	
Historical	Unknown
Recent ●	Probably declining <sup>1</sup>
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ●	12,000; highly variable <sup>2</sup>
Global ●	3,500,000 <sup>1</sup>
Percent of Global ●	< 1%
Population Objective	
Increase by 30% <sup>EO</sup>	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NDOW shorebird surveys, NWR and WMA counts, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV ●	Very good in Lahontan Valley, Fair elsewhere
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Lahontan and Ruby valleys, all Great Basin open water
Restoration	All Great Basin open water

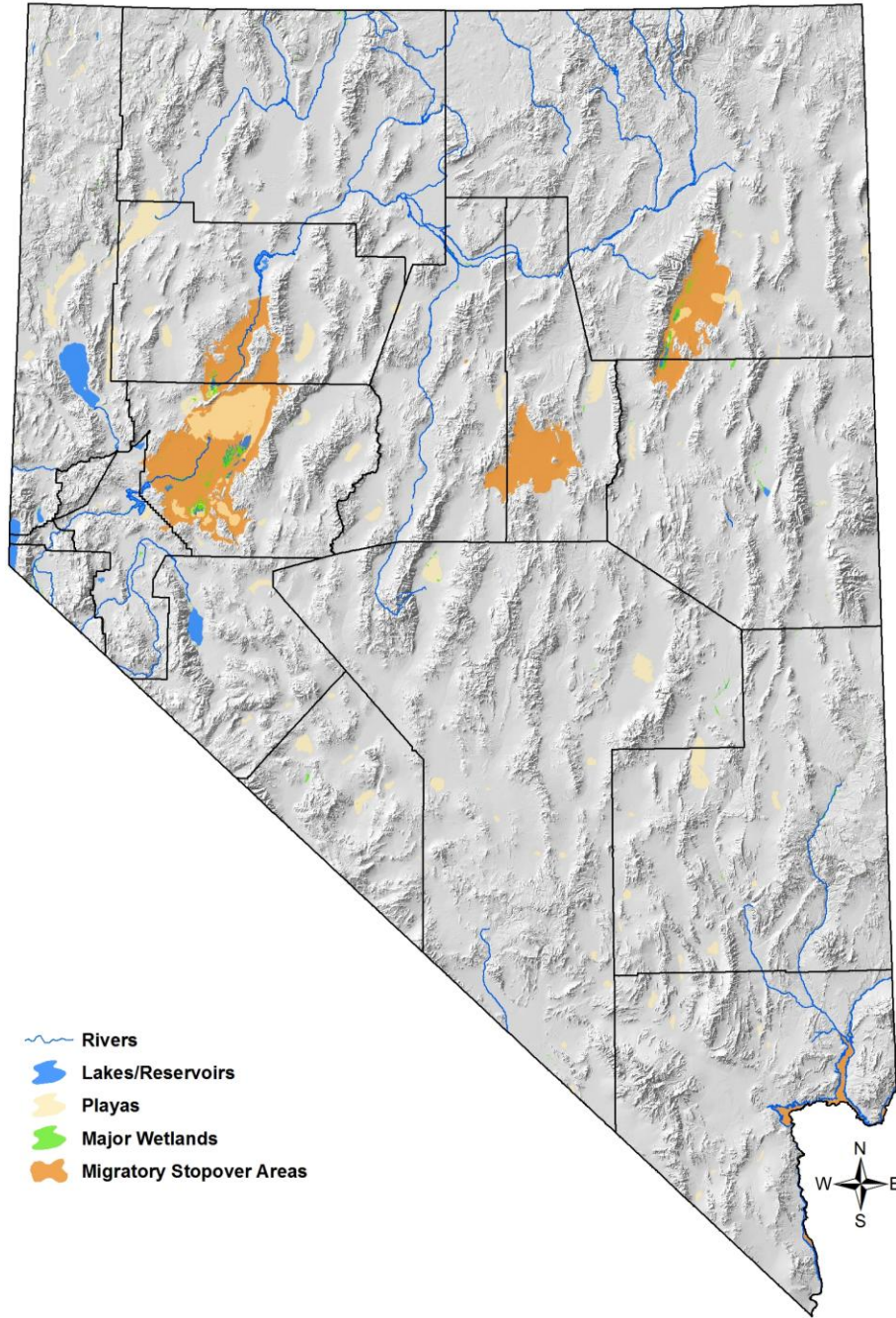
## Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring and fall migration (peaks: April, August/September)	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
Not a breeder	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	n/a
Site Fidelity	Probably low/moderate for migration sites <sup>EO</sup>
Food Habits	
Basic	Invertebrates; benthic prober
Primary Prey	Benthic invertebrates <sup>3</sup>
Secondary Prey	Terrestrial invertebrates <sup>3</sup>

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References: <sup>1</sup> WHSRN, <sup>2</sup> Andres spreadsheet, <sup>3</sup> Wilson (1994), <sup>EO</sup> expert opinion

### Overview

Although most Western Sandpipers migrate between their Arctic breeding grounds and wintering grounds along the Pacific Coast, significant numbers take inland routes including through the Great Basin where they are often the most commonly observed small sandpiper. They use shallow ephemeral wetlands, mudflats, recently exposed shorelines and beaches of Nevada's open water habitats. In contrast to Least Sandpipers, however, with whom they commonly mix, Western Sandpipers tend to occur in Nevada in larger numbers during the fall than spring migration (Wilson 1994). Western Sandpipers appear to be declining across their range, and it has been suggested that threats during migration and in wintering habitat play a role in this decline. However, the specific nature of these threats, beyond the basic pattern of wetland losses, has not been well-studied.

### Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- Ten-year average for Lahontan Valley is 7,600, with 4,400 in other locations
- Ten-year peaks in Lahontan Valley typically exceed 45,000, with highest recorded peak of 66,700 in 1987 (Neel and Henry 1996)

### Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

- None

### Main Threats and Challenges

- Loss or degradation of suitable Open Water shoreline habitat and other foraging habitat for migration (mudflats, shallow ephemeral wetlands).
- Summer water in migration habitats that provide for invertebrate resources during late summer/fall migration.

### Species with Similar Conservation Strategies

- Least Sandpiper

### Further Reading

- Shuford et al. (2002)
- Fernández et al. (2006)

## **Western Sandpiper**

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### **Conservation Strategies**

#### **Habitat Strategies**

1. Open Water and Ephemeral Wetland/Playa conservation strategies benefit this species, with special attention to period of fall migration period (see habitat accounts).
2. Maintain open water and mudflat habitats with water depths of  $\leq 2$  inches with sparse emergent vegetation to promote benthic invertebrates during the spring (20 April – 10 May) and fall (1 – 30 August) migration seasons.

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