

## SPECIES PROFILE

# Semipalmated Sandpiper

*Calidris pusilla*

Federal Listing: Not listed

State Listing: Not listed

Global Rank: G5

State Rank: SNA , New Hampshire Fish and Game

### ELEMENT 1: DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

#### 1.1 Habitat Description

Semipalmated sandpipers use beaches, mudflats, tundra, sandy areas along rivers and ponds, and dotted sand dunes during the summer for feeding and nesting (Godfrey 1986, Peterson 1980). Coastal mudflats and intertidal zones are used for feeding and staging areas in preparation for migration (DeGraaf and Yamasaki 2001, Boates and Smith 1989). Evidence shows high fidelity to migratory staging areas, and females tend to return to the same breeding areas, especially if they were successful in raising young the previous year (Gratto 1992). Sandpipers are territorial and monogamous during the breeding season.

#### 1.2 Justification

Approximately 71% of the regional population migrates through New Hampshire, with 200 to 600 birds occurring along the coast during migration (Hunt 2005). The primary threat to these populations is degradation of coastal and inland wetlands, where the birds make crucial stopovers on their long migratory route between northeast North America and wintering areas in South America (Senner and Howe 1984; Lank 1989; Gratto et al. 1981, 1987, 1988, 1992). Development along the Atlantic coast has resulted in significant habitat loss and degradation and has exposed semipalmated sandpiper habitat to increased pressure from human recreation (United States Fish and Wildlife Survey 1985, National Sur-

vey on Recreation and the Environment 1994).

#### 1.3 Protection and Regulatory Status

- Migratory Birds Convention (1916)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918)
- BCR 14 moderate concern
- BCR 30 moderate concern

#### 1.4 Population and Habitat Distribution

Semipalmated sandpipers are possibly the most abundant shorebird (NatureServe 2005), with flocks of up to 300,000 birds observed in key wintering and migratory staging areas (Gratto 1992). International Shorebird Survey data taken during migration did not show significant declines in semipalmated sandpipers in the past 12 years (Howe et al. 1989). The total population is estimated to be 3.5 million (Morrison et al. 2001).

#### 1.5 Town Distribution Map

*Not completed for this species.*

#### 1.6 Habitat Map

*See coastal sand dune systems.*

#### 1.7 Sources of Information

Information on semipalmated sandpiper habitat, population distribution and status was collected from literature, NatureServe data, and the internet.

#### 1.8 EXTENT AND QUALITY OF DATA

Semipalmated sandpipers have been well studied during migration, but little is known about their wintering biology, and breeding biology has only been studied in Alaska and northern Manitoba (Gratto 1992).

Data on the local distribution of the species are limited. Increased and consistent monitoring efforts, combined with intensive management of human recreation in feeding and migration areas, are needed.

### 1.9 Distribution Research

Conservation and preservation of migratory areas are vital to the population's survival. Although protecting key staging areas is crucial, much of the population depends on the many smaller staging areas distributed throughout the migration route, such as the New Hampshire coast. Management along the New Hampshire coast should include managing human recreational uses in coastal sand dunes and along mudflats as well as increasing public education and outreach. The possibility of restoring salt marshes to create feeding areas should also be investigated.

## ELEMENT 5: REFERENCES

### 5.1 Literature

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