

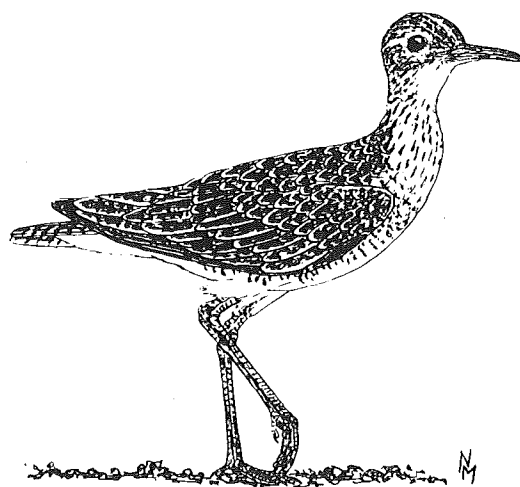
## Upland Sandpiper

*Bartramia longicauda*

Although the Upland Sandpiper is the largest "shorebird" breeding in Vermont, it is rare and seldom seen by most birders unless specifically sought. Because the species tends to breed in loose colonies, its distribution is spotty even when the grasslands it breeds in are extensive. Although its breeding distribution may have been more extensive a century ago when 75% of the state was cleared of forests, hunting pressure at that time may have kept populations low. Today the Upland Sandpiper is restricted to the northern two-thirds of the state; most records come from the dairy lands bordering Lakes Champlain and Memphremagog. Within this area, the birds are typically found in pastures and hayfields where, unless displaying, they are easily overlooked. White (1983) concluded that extensive short-grass habitat and level topography were principal components determining the distribution of Upland Sandpipers in Wisconsin; clearly these components are determinants in Vermont as well. Almost all nesting in the state occurs in regions that fit this description.

A long-distance migrant that winters on the Argentinian pampas, the first Upland Sandpipers arrive in Vermont in late April. Any extensive grasslands may be utilized as a breeding habitat, but the practice of early summer haying makes successful nesting most likely in undisturbed pastures. These birds tend to avoid abandoned fields with invading shrubs and trees. Pairs exhibit loose coloniality (Bowen 1975); therefore entire colonies can be lost if a breeding area is mowed or tilled.

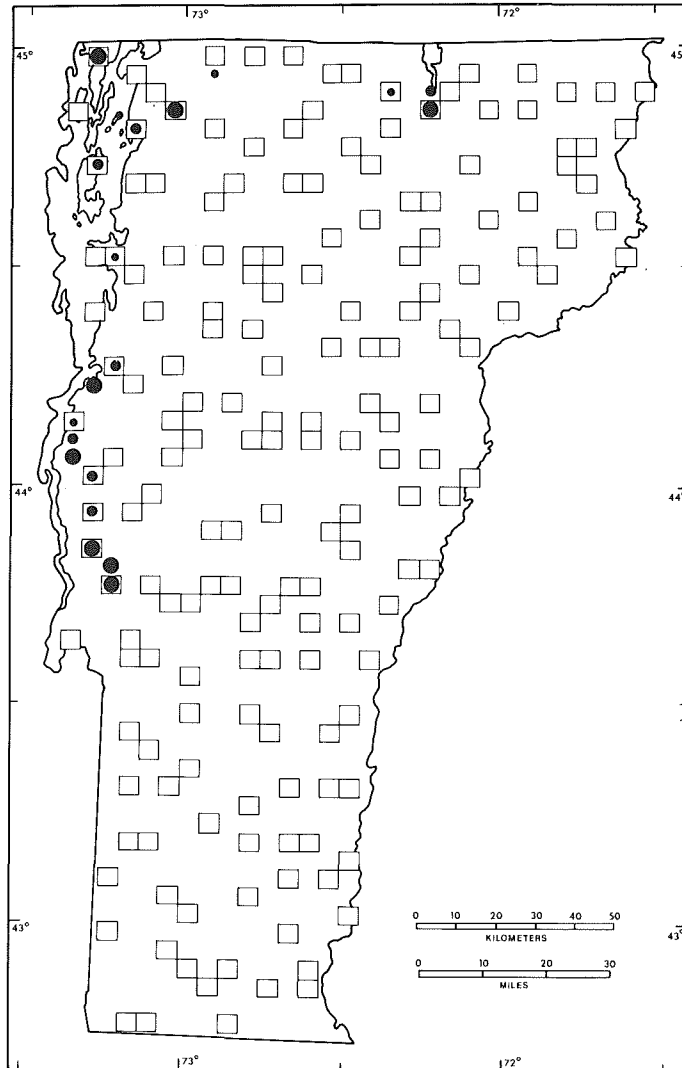
At the nesting areas, Upland Sandpipers can frequently be seen atop fences or utility poles or on wires as they watch the observer's intrusion. Courtship flights are performed both in high soaring displays accompanied by a drawn-out "wolf" whistle, and low over the ground on vibrating wings, accompanied by rolling trills and flutelike



notes. The wolf whistle is also frequently heard from perched birds.

The grass-lined nest is built in a depression in a grassy field during late May or early June. Three egg dates in Vermont range from May 5 to May 20. Bull (1974) gave egg dates for New York from April 23 to June 15, but it is unlikely that Vermont birds commence nesting that early. Both sexes share the 21- to 24-day incubation of the 4 creamy to pink-buff eggs speckled with reddish brown. The precocial young are tended by both parents, who exhibit distraction displays similar to the Killdeer's when the family is threatened. Although the adults will eat a variety of seeds, Upland Sandpipers eat primarily invertebrates; this is particularly true of the young. The young begin flying at 1 month of age; four dates for downy young in Vermont range from June 9 to June 27. Migration takes place shortly thereafter, usually sometime during August. During migration periods local populations may occasionally be augmented by an influx of sandpipers from breeding areas in southern Ontario and Quebec, but it is unusual to encounter more than a dozen birds a day. Upland Sandpipers are rarely found in Vermont past the first week of September.

Because of their restricted distribution and specific habitat requirements, Upland Sandpipers appear to have a tenuous hold



**No. of priority blocks in which recorded**

TOTAL 13 (7%)

Possible breeding: 3 (23% of total)  
 Probable breeding: 5 (38.5% of total)  
 Confirmed breeding: 5 (38.5% of total)

**Physiographic regions in which recorded**

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	10	32	76.5
Green Mountains	1	2	7.5
North Central	1	5	7.5
Northeast Highlands	0	0	0
East Central	0	0	0
Taconic Mountains	1	6	7.5
Eastern Foothills	0	0	0

on their Vermont breeding range. As a result of concern expressed about loss of Upland Sandpiper breeding grounds and apparent population declines in the Northeast and central U.S., the species has been placed on the National Audubon Society's Blue List (Tate and Tate 1982) and proposed for Vermont's Threatened Species List.

The Upland Sandpiper displays strong fidelity to breeding sites, provided that the habitat has not been destroyed. This fact, and the species' predisposition to occupy a man-induced disclimax (grasslands), make it an ideal candidate for intensive habitat management. Since the Upland Sandpiper re-

quires short-grass habitats, a species management program would not preclude continued use of a nesting area for limited pasturage or carefully timed haying. In fact, these activities may be essential to retard succession and maintain the short-grass nature of a site. Since a mix of habitat types may be desirable to supply nesting, brood, and foraging needs (Ailes 1976), it may be possible to integrate Upland Sandpiper management programs into normal farm operations with a minimum of disruption.

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