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

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER *Charadrius semipalmatus*
Family: CHARADRIIDAE Order: CHARADRIIFORMES Class: AVES
B156

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Common to abundant on central and southern California intertidal mudflats of estuarine habitats in spring (late March to mid-May) and fall (late July to mid October) migration periods. Migrants are rare to uncommon inland (coastal lowlands, Central Valley, and Great Basin regions), except at the Salton Sea where they are common in spring and fairly common in fall. Uncommon to fairly common on coastal estuaries from mid-October to late March, but rare and generally irregular away from the outer coast in winter. Rare on the northern California coast in winter (Yocom and Harris 1975). Occurs rarely through the summer on coastal estuaries (Cogswell 1977, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981). Also uses sandy beach marine habitats, and inland occurs on pastures and wet meadows occasionally on fallow croplands, and along the shores of lacustrine and riverine habitats (Cogswell 1977).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Forages in typical plover fashion by running a short distance, then halting abruptly and pecking quickly at the surface of the substrate. Also may pat the mud surface with the feet on occasion, apparently making prey easier to capture. Often feeds in small groups spaced several meters apart. Prey taken in the nonbreeding season include annelid worms, small mollusks, amphipods, fly larvae, locusts, and various other aquatic and terrestrial insects (Bent 1929). On San Francisco Bay, and in coastal Panama, takes mostly polychaete worms (Recher 1966, Strauch and Abele 1979). One stomach collected in southern California contained mostly sand crab (Emerita analoga) remains (Reeder 1951).

Cover: Requires undisturbed areas above high tide water for roosting during the high tide period.

Reproduction: Breeds in Alaska and Canada on dry, gravelly tundra, turfy areas with scattered grasses, and on sand or gravel beaches. The nest is a shallow depression in the substrate and may be lined with small pebbles or debris (Palmer 1967, Harrison 1978).

Water: No additional data found.

Pattern: Open tundra habitats consisting primarily of gravel, sand or turf substrates are used during the nesting season. The most important wintering habitat is estuarine mudflats of coastal bays and lagoons.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Southward migrants arrive in central coastal California in late July; adults precede juveniles by about 1 mo (Page et al. 1979). Most spring migrants

have passed through the state by mid-May (McCaskie et al. 1979). Arrives on the breeding grounds in late May and early June (Palmer 1967).

Home Range: No data found on nesting density or home range.

Territory: Defends feeding territory in nonbreeding season (Myers et al. 1979).

Reproduction: Breeding season begins in early June; nesting apparently is semicolonial. Probably monogamous; average clutch 4 eggs, and both sexes incubate. Two broods may be produced in a season in the southern part of the range. Incubation period is about 23 days. The precocial young leave the nest within hours of hatching; are accompanied by both parents until they are able to fly at about 22 days (Palmer 1967, Harrison 1978, Johnsgard 1981).

Niche: Winters through West Indies and along coasts to Chile and Argentina (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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