

9. Upland Sandpiper: Shorebird of the Prairie

We like to drive in open areas and look for wildlife. Sometimes we have to look hard, and sometimes it seems the wildlife is perched and waiting for us!

This is an Upland Sandpiper, which is often referred to as 'the shorebird of the prairies', because despite the fact that they are a shorebird, they spend little time near water. True sandpipers, such as this, generally prefer to live in muddy flats or near water; however this species prefers living on the prairie.

A sandpiper's diet primarily consists of insects, although they will also eat earthworms, seeds, and waste grain. This species often perches on fence posts and other elevated perches above the grassland, but when feeding, you will find them walking through the grassland, picking up food items from the ground.

I find it fascinating that Upland Sandpipers are long distance migrants. They travel a long distance each fall to spend their winters in South America.

Once abundant in the Great Plains, the Upland Sandpiper has undergone steady population declines since the mid-19th century, mainly due to hunting and loss of habitat. Sandpipers have recovered locally, but are still not as common as they once were.

Today, Loss of prairie habitat is their biggest concern. Also, livestock grazing sometimes damages nests resulting in less young being born. Controlled burns may benefit this species as they feed on low-growing plants that are more easily spotted after a fire.

I like watching and listening to the sounds of the Upland Sandpiper, and photographing them is fun too!

Sources:

http://sdakotabirds.com/species/upland_sandpiper_info.htm

http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Upland_Sandpiper