

April 2014

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**Protocol  
for  
Incidental Take Permit and Authorization  
Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)**

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**Note**

*If carrying out a given protocol is not feasible, or multiple listed species in a given management area pose conflicts, contact the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation (NHC) at DNRERReview@wisconsin.gov. Staff in NHC will work with species experts and managers to establish an acceptable protocol for a given site that will allow for incidental take without further legal consultation or public notice*

**I. Species Background Information**

**A. Status**

**State Status:** Threatened, Species of Greatest Conservation Need

**USFWS Region 3 Species of Management Concern?** Yes

**Breeding Distribution and Abundance in Wisconsin:** Uncommon.

Distribution is irregular and localized across the state, tied to areas of sufficiently open grass-dominated landscapes; in such areas it can be locally common. Areas of population concentration occur in the southwest, central, eastern, and northwest parts of the state.

**Global Range:** The contiguous breeding range is east of the Rocky Mountains, bounded on the north from southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, southwest Manitoba, northern Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, southeast Ontario and southern Quebec, south to the central U.S. Great Plains (Kansas, n. Oklahoma, and western Missouri), south-central Illinois and Indiana, southwest Ohio, southern Pennsylvania and northern Virginia. It is locally distributed along the Atlantic coast from Delaware north to the Canadian Maritime Provinces. Isolated breeding populations occur most notably in Alaska, the Yukon and Northwest Territories, as well as in Oregon and Washington states. The core wintering range of the Upland Sandpiper is in South America, east of Andes Mountains. It extends

from southwestern Brazil and eastern Bolivia, south to Paraguay, Uruguay, and the Chaco and pampas regions of central and northeastern Argentina. There is also a notable isolated population in Suriname.

## B. Habitat

**General Habitat Description:** Upland Sandpipers prefer relatively short-stature grasslands with low to moderate forb cover, < 5% woody cover, and moderate cover of grass, litter, and bare ground. They generally select fields in open, grass-dominated landscapes that provide patchy micro-sites with a variety of vegetation heights. The preferred field size depends on the amount of grass in the surrounding landscape; for example, relatively isolated grass fields in areas cropland and some woods need to be larger (~>120 acres) than fields surrounded by pastures and idle grasslands. Optimal breeding habitat contains a mixture of short grass (approx. 10-20 cm) areas for feeding and courtship, interspersed with moderate height grasses and forbs (approx. 20-50 cm tall, or a Robel pole reading of  $\leq 15$  cm) for nesting and brood cover. Dominant breeding habitats in Wisconsin include lightly grazed pastures, old fields, idle upland grasslands, barrens, and hayfields for nesting; heavily grazed pasture, hayfields, fallow fields, and row crops for foraging.

**Critical Habitat Features:** Short to moderate height grasslands, preferably located in an open (relatively treeless), grass-dominated landscape (preferably >500 acres, with a minimum of 250 acres).

## C. Life History

**Territory Size/Home Range:** Upland Sandpipers have large home ranges that typically vary between 20 and 150 acres, sometimes exceeding 500 acres. Most home ranges include a nest site surrounded by moderate-height vegetation adjacent to loafing and feeding grounds comprised of shorter vegetation. Nesting densities across the continent range widely, from 0.7 to 101 nests/100 ha. Although Upland Sandpipers sometimes defend the immediate area surrounding the nest site, the loafing and feeding grounds are often shared with neighboring pairs, with little territoriality exhibited.

**Does Species Nest Colonially?** Nesting pairs are often clustered within a suitable area to form loose colonies.

**Site Fidelity:** Annual return rates of marked birds range from 20-50%. Colony persistence is only moderate from year to year.

**Nest Location and Height:** Nests are located on the ground in very shallow depressions that are sometimes lined with grasses, leaves or twigs. Surrounding grasses may be pulled over to partially conceal the nest.

**Number of Generations/Broods per Year:** Single-brooded; may re-nest after failed attempts.

**Resident or Migrant?** long-distance migrant; winters in South America.

**Breeding Season Dates for Wisconsin:**

Note: for purposes of this document, northern Wisconsin is defined as north of State Highway 64 (except north of State Highway 8 in St. Croix and Polk counties)

**Arrival in spring:** Migration begins in early to mid-April in the southern part of the state, and late April central and north. Migration continues until mid-May.

**Dates for nests with eggs:** 30 April to 12 July in southern Wisconsin. Add about 7 days for northern Wisconsin.

**Last known date for hatchlings:** July 12<sup>th</sup> in southern Wisconsin.

**Peak nesting period (period with 70%-80% of active nests):** Dates for active nests in southern Wisconsin range from 30 April to 30 July. About 75% of nests are active between 15 May and 19 June. Peak nesting activity is 28 May. In northern Wisconsin, add about 7 days to these dates.

**Does Species Re-Nest after Failed First Nest Attempts?** Yes (likely).

**Length of Breeding Cycle (cumulative time required for nest-building, egg-laying, incubation, and hatchling stages, to the time of fledging):** 61-62 days (31-32 days from nest building to hatching; young able to fly after another 30 days)

## **II. Management Protocol For Authorized Incidental Take**

If the management activity is for the purpose of recovering, maintaining or improving the grassland, prairie or savanna ecosystem that includes habitat for Upland Sandpiper, then incidental take is allowed if these conditions are followed (Note: for purposes of this document, northern Wisconsin is defined as north of State Highway 64 (except north of State Highway 8 in St. Croix and Polk counties)):

**A. Burning, Mowing, Grazing, Selective Brush/Tree-cutting, and Herbicide Use:**

1. If any of the above management activities are to occur at a site (see definitions below) between 11 August and 30 April (add 7 days to these dates for northern Wisconsin),

then there are no restrictions on the activities, as take is avoided under these circumstances.

2. If any of the above management activities are to occur at a site between 1 May and 9 August (add 7 days to these dates for northern Wisconsin),

then incidental take is allowed as described under the following conditions:

Note: for all practices below, the extent of disturbance at a site within a year depends upon the amount of undisturbed suitable grassland habitat in the landscape immediately surrounding the managed parcel. For example, individual grass fields can be disturbed by management in their entirety if adjacent to other suitable grassland habitat patches >40 acres in size (although managed parcels with native vegetation should leave undisturbed refugia for sensitive invertebrates). Otherwise, it is typically best to disturb only a portion (<1/3) of a field in a given year.

**a) Burning, Mowing, and Prairie or Savanna Plantings (where permanent grass cover already exists):**

Allowed on up to 1/3 of the site, as long as a minimum of 40 contiguous acres of the site is left unmanaged.

**Grazing:**

Light grazing, defined as leaving >50% of a pasture with a grass height of at least 10 inches, or stocking at a rate of 0.4 to 0.5 animal units per acre, is allowed over the entire pasture. Grazing heavier than this is allowed on up to 1/3 of the site in a given year as long as a minimum of 40 contiguous acres of the site is left unmanaged.

**b) Selective Brush/Tree-cutting:**

As long as precautions are taken to minimize unnecessary trampling or crushing of herbaceous vegetation, there are no restrictions on this activity.

c) **Herbicide Use:**

- (i) If herbicide is being used to control invasion of open grassland habitat by woody vegetation

then there are no restrictions on this activity as long as precautions are taken to avoid drift of chemicals onto adjacent herbaceous vegetation.

- (ii) If the herbicide is being used to control herbaceous weeds,

AND

- (a) if the herbicide use consists of spot treatment of localized infestations of noxious weeds,

then there are no restrictions on this activity as long as precautions are taken to avoid drift of chemicals onto adjacent herbaceous vegetation.

- (b) if the herbicide use consists of broadcast spraying of large areas,

then the activity may be employed only under consultation with the DNR Bureaus of Natural Heritage Conservation and Science Services.

## Survey Protocol

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For Presence / Absence Surveys:

Personnel must be able to identify Upland Sandpipers in the field by song and by sight.

Survey period: 25 April – 5 July (add 7 days to these dates for northern Wisconsin).

Weather conditions: No rain, wind  $\leq$ 10mph.

Time of day: Conduct surveys between 30 minutes before sunrise and 10 a.m.

Number and timing of surveys: At least two surveys (preferably 3) must be conducted prior to the initiation of any management activities, preferably at least 4 days apart, including at least one survey < 1 week prior to proposed management activity that may impact Upland Sandpipers.

Size of area surveyed: Entire area to be subjected to management that contains suitable nesting habitat for Upland Sandpiper.

Method: Area searches are effective for surveying Upland Sandpipers. Survey the entire affected area that contains suitable Upland Sandpiper nesting habitat (see “Habitat” section above) by walking slowly throughout the area and stopping occasionally to scan fenceposts, utility wires, etc. for perched birds; also listen for singing and calling birds, both perched and flying overhead. Birds vocalizing and performing display flights (wings fluttering rapidly, generally held below the body midline) directly over the field of interest are likely using that field as part of their home range. Record the following data: date, location (GPS waypoint in datum WGS84, Decimal Degrees), all Upland Sandpipers seen or heard, numbers of pairs and juveniles, behavioral observations such as courtship displays or food carries.

## Definitions

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**Definition of “Site” for Upland Sandpiper:** Any area or patch of habitat suitable for Upland Sandpipers (see general habitat description above), designated as a management unit, as well as any directly contiguous suitable habitat within a given property ownership, or across ownerships where survey and management agreements for the species are in place. Site also refers collectively to groups of more than one patch of suitable Upland Sandpiper habitat (plus any contiguous suitable habitat, as above) in a management area. The suitable habitat patches in these management areas must be grouped in close proximity (i.e., the average distance between patches is 1/2 mile or less). Examples of management areas include properties such as some DNR Habitat Restoration Areas, Habitat Areas, Wildlife Areas, State Parks, State Natural Areas, and Recreation Areas.