

Calidris pusilla

Semipalmated Sandpiper

Linking Communities

Breeding in the Arctic areas of Canada the Semipalmated Sandpiper is reliant on areas such as Chaplin Lake, Old Wives Lake, and Reed Lake as staging grounds along its migration route. Appearing in these areas during May and June on its northern migration and again from August to October as it is southbound. Up to 30,000 birds have been recorded passing through. The Semipalmated Sandpiper is quite small and with high metabolic activity therefore requiring a lot of energy to complete its migration. For this reason human encroachment on these staging areas is a major threat and can effect a large number of birds. Populations have been declining creating concern for the future of this species.



Brett Harahin

Identification

The Semipalmated Sandpiper gets its name comes from the reduced webbing between its toes. A small bird, has a short neck and a moderately long bill and legs. Its grey to buffy brown on its upper parts and nearly white underneath with sparse streaks on its upper breast.



World Council Lab of Ornithology
Range data by NatureServe

Habitat & Distribution

Breeding occurs in the high arctic on open tundra, near water. It winters along the coasts of South America on the shores of different water bodies. The winter and migration grounds of the Semipalmated Sandpiper can include mudflats, sandy beaches, shores of lakes and ponds, and wet meadows.

Feeding

As with many other shore birds the Semipalmated Sandpiper's diet consist of invertebrates which are pecked or probed from the soft mud along the edges of lakes or oceans. Its feeding is only occurs through wading and does not include swimming or diving.

Nesting

Despite migrating in large congregations the Semipalmated Sandpiper is a solitary breeder. The male defends territories about 1 ha in size. Breeding depends on the availability of food and can be delayed or not even occur if food is scarce. Four eggs are laid and both the male and female incubate the equally. Soon after hatching the female leaves the brood and the male cares for the young. This allows the female to find optimal feeding areas and restore her energy before migrating south. The young can feed on their own and once large enough join the flocks of males and depart south.



Corey Hayes