

Upland Sandpiper

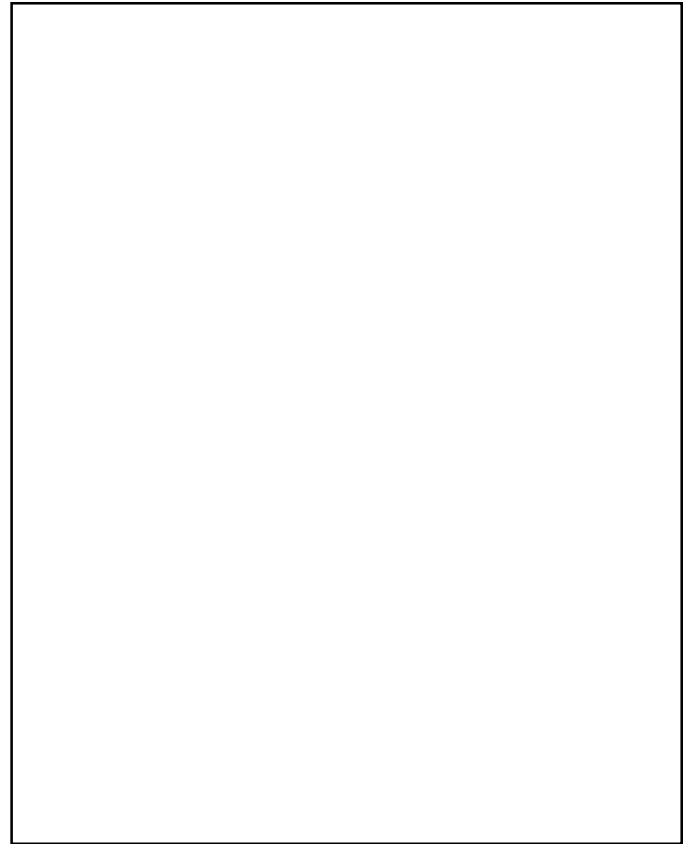
Bartramia longicauda

As their name implies, Upland Sandpipers normally avoid muddy shorelines in favor of upland grasslands. Their preferred breeding habitats are characterized by relatively flat, open grasslands where the vegetation is normally 1–2 feet high, with fence posts and telephone poles from which they declare their territories. Hilly terrain is normally avoided, even if the grasslands are otherwise suitable, as are overgrazed pastures and regularly mowed hayfields. Hence, their distribution and relative abundance reflects the health of undisturbed grasslands in Ohio. While their populations fluctuated during the 19th century, increasing as the forests were converted to farmlands and declining during the era of market hunting, Ohio hosted a fairly sizable breeding population during the early 1900s. Jones (1903) considered Upland Sandpipers to be fairly common summer residents in most counties, least numerous along the southern border. Their distribution had not markedly changed in the 1930s, when Hicks (1935) cited breeding records from 76 counties. Upland Sandpipers were absent from 10 southwestern counties and were very locally distributed along the unglaciated Allegheny Plateau.

Between 1940 and 1970, Upland Sandpipers markedly declined as Ohio's grasslands were converted to cultivated crops and the remaining hayfields were mowed too regularly to allow them to successfully raise young. Despite their expansion into several southwestern counties, there was a 62% decline in their historic range. These declines were most apparent in the southeastern, west-central, and northwestern counties (Osborne and Peterson 1984). Numbers of breeding individuals noticeably declined within the 30 counties where they still nested.

The statewide distribution of Upland Sandpipers during the Atlas Project was similar to that described by Osborne and Peterson (1984), which hopefully indicates their populations have stabilized in recent years. The Atlas Project produced Upland Sandpiper records from 23 priority blocks, 5 special areas, and 9 other locations. These records were scattered across 28 counties and concentrated within two regions. The majority of sightings were in the northern third of Ohio, primarily the counties bordering Lake Erie with a few records south through Allen, Wyandot, Richland, and Holmes counties. The remaining records were concentrated in a band extending from Butler and Highland counties in southwestern Ohio to Licking, Pickaway, and northern Ross counties in central Ohio. Uplands also regularly nest at one location in Clark County, although this site was not surveyed during the Atlas Project. They were recorded from only one location on the unglaciated Allegheny Plateau, breeding on a reclaimed strip mine near Steubenville (Jefferson County) during 1987.

Many of these Upland Sandpipers were found in large grassy fields bordering airports, a trend also noted by Osborne and Peterson (1984). These sites regularly hosted as many as 5–8 pairs in the most favorable habitats, but normally fewer than five pairs at most sites. No sizable breeding colonies are currently known to occur in the state. These sandpipers also annually nested on several wildlife refuges. Their use of farmlands was

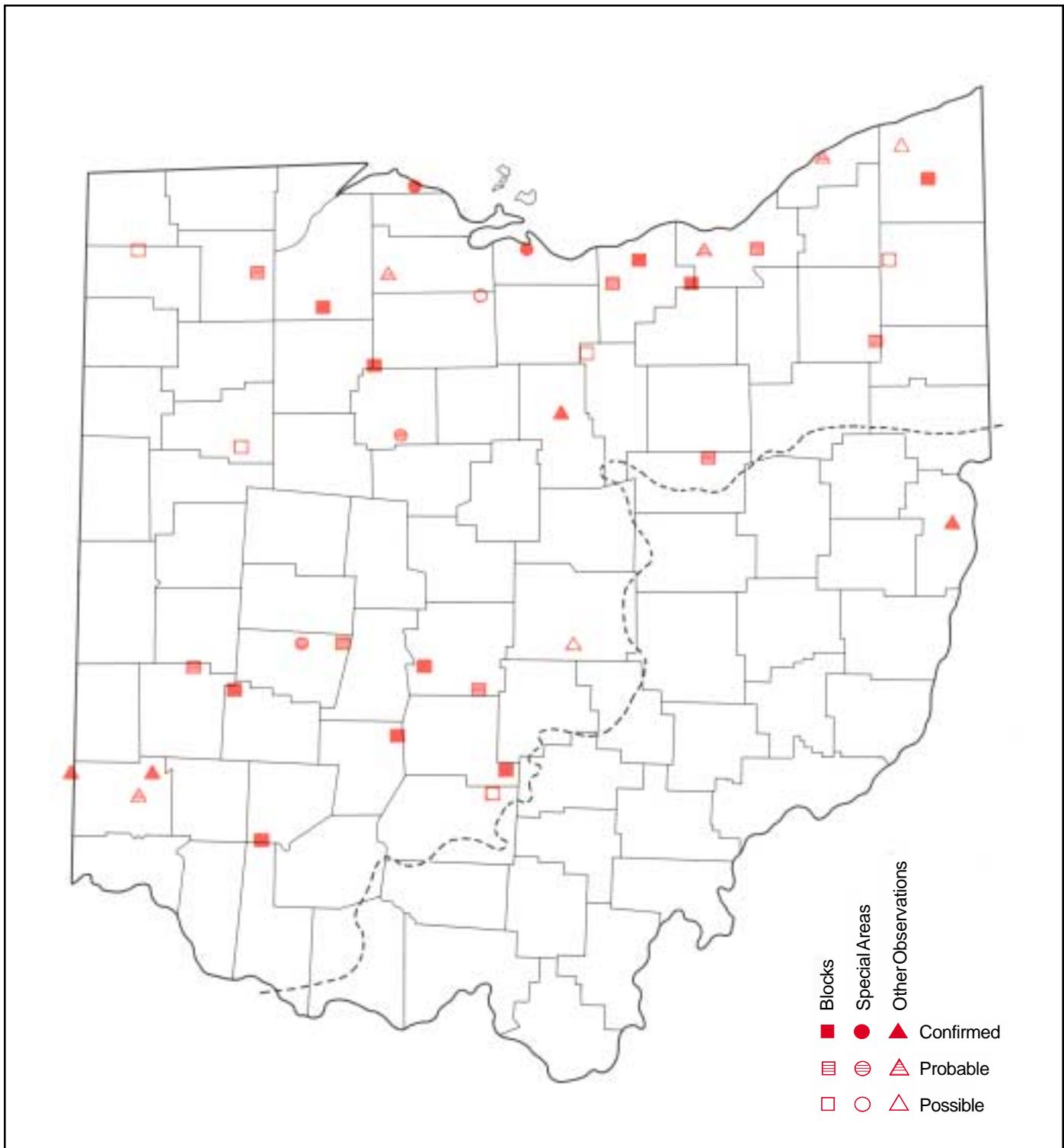


Picture to be added

more ephemeral, primarily occupying a location for only one or two years before disappearing. Based on the data accumulated during the Atlas Project, between 100–200 pairs of Upland Sandpipers may currently reside in Ohio.

Like most occupants of grasslands, Upland Sandpipers nest on the ground. Their nests are hidden in dense grasses, usually in the middle of large fields, and are very difficult to locate. Only one nest was discovered during the Atlas Project. The other confirmed breeding records were either distraction displays by adults or sightings of partially grown young. Their territorial activities are very conspicuous and provided most of the probable breeding reports. Records of possible nesters were only accepted between May 20 and July 15 to preclude migrants.

Upon their return to their breeding grounds, Upland Sandpipers immediately establish territories. Nests with eggs have been reported as early as April 29 (Goodpaster and Maslowski 1948), but most clutches are laid during May. The latest clutches have been discovered through June 19–20 (Campbell 1968, Price 1972). Since recently hatched young have been reported as early as May 7 (Trautman 1940), a few clutches must be laid during the second half of April. Most partially grown young have been discovered between May 25 and June 30; they become independent by mid-July when the adults start their southward migration. A few late nests are responsible for reports of partially grown young into the first half of July.



Analysis of Block Data by Physiographic Region

Physiographic Region	Total Blocks Surveyed	Blocks with Data	% with Data	Regional % for Ohio	Ave. # Individ per BBS Route (1982–1987)
Lake Plain	95	4	4.2	17.4	0.5
Till Plain	271	12	4.4	52.2	<0.1
Ill. Till Plain	46	1	2.2	4.4	–
Glaciated Plateau	140	6	4.3	26.1	<0.1
Unglaciated Plateau	212	–	–	–	–

Summary of Breeding Status

No. of Blocks in Which Species Recorded		
Total	23	3.0%
Confirmed	10	43.5%
Probable	8	34.8%
Possible	5	21.7%