

## Species Status Assessment

**Class:** Birds  
**Family:** Scolopacidae  
**Scientific Name:** *Tryngites subruficollis*  
**Common Name:** Buff-breasted Sandpiper

### Species synopsis:

Buff-breasted sandpiper was severely overhunted in the early part of the 1900s, reportedly declining to near extinction from a population that may have numbered in the millions. All available evidence suggests that buff-breasted sandpiper is declining across its range. It occurs in New York only as a fall migrant; spring migration occurs along the Central Flyway. Small numbers of birds occur in New York annually; rarely, groups reach 30 or 40. Sod farms provide the best habitat for buff-breasted sandpipers in New York.

### I. Status

#### a. Current Legal Protected Status

- i. **Federal** Not Listed **Candidate:** No  
ii. **New York** SGCN

#### b. Natural Heritage Program Rank

- i. **Global** G4  
ii. **New York** SNRN **Tracked by NYNHP?** No

### Other Rank:

IUCN – Near Threatened  
USFWS - Bird of Conservation Concern  
Audubon Watch List – Red  
U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan – Highly Imperiled

**Status Discussion:**

Buff-breasted sandpiper is an uncommon, but regular fall migrant in New York. It is ranked as Near Threatened by the IUCN because the species underwent rapid historical declines and its moderately small remaining population continues to decline.

Lolya (1998) reports “two flocks of more than 40” on plowed fields in Suffolk County in 1973 and 70 birds at another location in Suffolk County in 1977. He notes that although reports have increased in the previous 20 years, observations of more than one or two individuals are still very rare. This remains true today; birds are seen in small numbers annually with rare records of up to 40 birds in an area (Schiff and Wollin 2001).

**II. Abundance and Distribution Trends**

**a. North America**

**i. Abundance**

  X   declining    \_\_\_increasing       \_\_\_stable       \_\_\_unknown

**ii. Distribution:**

  X   declining    \_\_\_increasing       \_\_\_stable       \_\_\_unknown

**Time frame considered:**   Since turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century  

**b. Regional**

**i. Abundance**

  X   declining    \_\_\_increasing       \_\_\_stable       \_\_\_unknown

**ii. Distribution:**

  X   declining    \_\_\_increasing       \_\_\_stable       \_\_\_unknown

**Regional Unit Considered:**   Atlantic Flyway  

**Time frame considered:**   Not specified

**c. Adjacent States and Provinces**

**CONNECTICUT**                      **Not Present** \_\_\_\_\_                      **No data**   X  

**i. Abundance**

\_\_\_\_\_ **declining**    \_\_\_\_\_ **increasing**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **stable**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **unknown**

**ii. Distribution:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **declining**    \_\_\_\_\_ **increasing**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **stable**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **unknown**

Time frame considered: \_\_\_\_\_

Listing Status: \_\_\_\_\_   Not Listed                        SGCN?   Yes  

**MASSACHUSETTS**                      **Not Present** \_\_\_\_\_                      **No data**   X  

**i. Abundance**

\_\_\_\_\_ **declining**    \_\_\_\_\_ **increasing**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **stable**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **unknown**

**ii. Distribution:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **declining**    \_\_\_\_\_ **increasing**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **stable**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **unknown**

Time frame considered: \_\_\_\_\_

Listing Status: \_\_\_\_\_   Not Listed                        SGCN?   No  

**NEW JERSEY**                      **Not Present** \_\_\_\_\_                      **No data**   X  

**i. Abundance**

\_\_\_\_\_ **declining**    \_\_\_\_\_ **increasing**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **stable**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **unknown**

**ii. Distribution:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **declining**    \_\_\_\_\_ **increasing**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **stable**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **unknown**

Time frame considered: \_\_\_\_\_

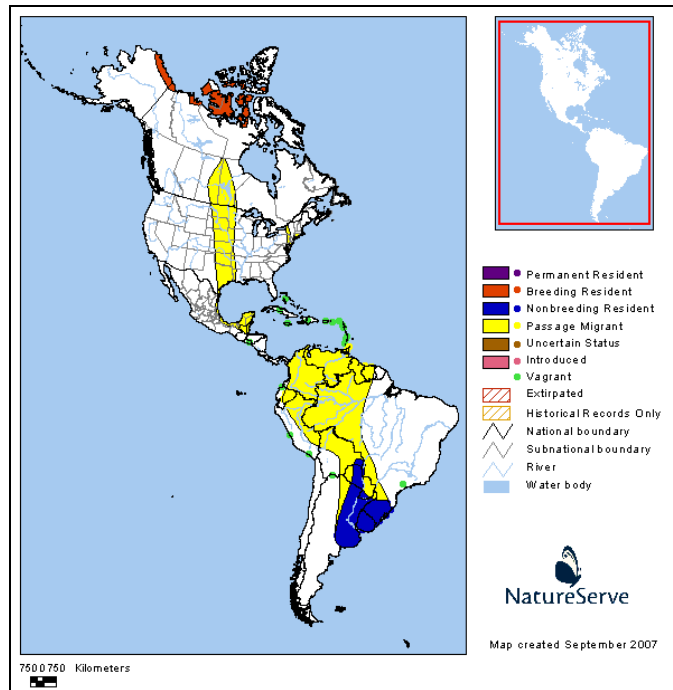
Listing Status: \_\_\_\_\_   Not Listed                        SGCN?   No





### Trends Discussion:

The population numbered in the hundreds of thousands to millions in the 1890s to 1900s (Gotthardt and Lanctot 2002, citing Forbush 1912 and Hudson 1920) and was brought to near extinction in the early 1920s by hunting; now is numbers only 35,000-78,000 (Lanctot et al. 2010). All available evidence suggests the species is declining, thus there is still a need to be concerned about the status of this species. In New York, Lolya (1998) states that reports of this species have increased in the past 20 years.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of buff-breasted sandpiper in the Americas (NatureServe).

**III. New York Rarity, if known:**

<b>Historic</b>	<b><u># of Animals</u></b>	<b><u># of Locations</u></b>	<b><u>% of State</u></b>
<b>prior to 1970</b>	_____	_____	_____
<b>prior to 1980</b>	_____	_____	_____
<b>prior to 1990</b>	_____	_____	_____

**Details of historic occurrence:**

Lolya (1989) reports two records of the largest concentrations reported in New York: two flocks of more than 40 birds on plowed fields in Suffolk County in August 1973; 70 birds in Suffolk County in September 1973.

<b>Current</b>	<b><u># of Animals</u></b>	<b><u># of Locations</u></b>	<b><u>% of State</u></b>
	_____	_____	_____

**Details of current occurrence:**

Lolya (1989) notes that “reports of this species have increased during the last 20 years but groups of more than one or two individuals are still very rare.”

**New York’s Contribution to Species North American Range:**

**Distribution** (percent of NY where species occurs)

- 0-5%
- 6-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- >50%

**Abundance** (within NY distribution)

- abundant
- common
- fairly common
- uncommon
- rare

**NY’s Contribution to North American range**

- 0-5%
- 6-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- >50%





**V. New York Species Demographics and Life History**

- Breeder in New York
  - Summer Resident
  - Winter Resident
  - Anadromous
- Non-breeder in New York
  - Summer Resident
  - Winter Resident
  - Catadromous
- Migratory only
- Unknown

**Species Demographics and Life History Discussion:**

Buff-breasted sandpipers presumably breed at 1 year, although lack of natal philopatry prevents accurate determination. No estimate of lifetime reproductive success because of low breeding site-fidelity. One brood per season. No natal philopatry and low adult breeding fidelity indicate most breeders immigrate from elsewhere.

**VI. Threats:**

On the breeding grounds, habitat is being lost or degraded due to energy production and climate change. Major threats on migration routes include the following four issues. (1) Loss of native grassland and prairie habitat has resulted from conversion to agriculture or from development. Grassland areas that have been preserved in the United States are frequently very small and few are managed to make them appropriate for buff-breasted sandpipers (i.e., short vegetation). (2) Exposure to pesticides and herbicides may pose a threat. Much of the habitat that is used during migration is subject to pesticide and herbicide use, i.e. airports and sod farms. (3) Increase in frequency and severity of hurricanes along Atlantic Coast could affect migrating juveniles. (4) Rather than causing direct mortality, wind fields could cause birds to avoid historic staging areas.

Buff-breasted sandpipers have both suffered and benefited from increased ranching. If properly managed, grazing animals can create this sandpiper's short grass habitat without drying out the ground. Oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge may become another threat, as the accompanying roads and trash would support predators and disturb nesting.

**Are there regulatory mechanisms that protect the species or its habitat in New York?**

No       Unknown

Yes

Buff-breasted sandpipers are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

**Describe knowledge of management/conservation actions that are needed for recovery/conservation, or to eliminate, minimize, or compensate for the identified threats:**

Conservation actions following IUCN taxonomy are categorized in the table below.

Conservation Actions	
Action Category	Action
Education & Awareness	Awareness & Communications (educational materials)
Land/Water Protection	Site/Area Protection (acquisition, easements)
Land/Water Protection	Resource/Habitat Protection
Land/Water Management	Site/Area Management (posting or fencing)
Law & Policy Actions	Policy/Regulations (establish seasonal use restrictions, adjust state land unit mgmt plans)
External Capacity Building	Alliance & Partnership Development (support and participate in international shorebird conservation efforts)

The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (NYSDEC 2005) includes recommendations for the following actions for transient shorebirds, which includes buff-breasted sandpiper.

**Fact Sheet:**

- \_\_\_ Develop educational materials about conservation needs of shorebirds in New York, and promote habitat protection measures.

**Habitat Management:**

- \_\_\_ As important foraging areas become known, identify potential threats and protect those habitats (ex- beaches, tidal flats, shoals, etc.) from permanent alteration, degradation, or adverse human disturbances. Management may include acquisition, easements, establishing seasonal use restrictions, and posting or fencing, etc. as is currently done for beach-nesting birds.

**Habitat Research:**

- \_\_\_ Conduct field studies to document ecology of transient shorebirds on Long Island, including important food items, habitat use (ex- importance of tidal flats) and time/activity budgets.
- \_\_\_ Compile data and input from birders to derive a map showing important shorebird foraging and resting areas in New York.

**Other Action:**

- \_\_\_ Provide technical support, funding, or political support as needed, to further international shorebird conservation efforts.

**Population monitoring:**

- \_\_\_ Identify specific locations, procedures, and observers (volunteer or other) for conducting annual shorebird surveys at 5-10 locations in New York, and initiate surveys as soon as possible.

**State Land Unit Management Plan:**

- \_\_\_ On state-owned or other public lands, ensure that management plans consider shorebird needs and appropriately restrict site development and seasonal uses that may adversely affect critical shorebird foraging areas.

**Statewide Management Plan:**

- \_\_\_ Develop a conservation plan for transient (non-breeding) shorebirds that regularly occur in New York, to include objectives and actions that we can assist with both inside and out of New York State.

**VII. References**

BirdLife International 2008. *Tryngites subruficollis*. In: IUCN 2011. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2011.2. <[www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org)>. Downloaded on 09 December 2011.

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**Date last revised:**      July 2014