

Preliminary study of shorebird habitat and feeding conditions at Lobos Bay, Sonora, Mexico

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Lobos Bay and the Yaqui River Delta in southern Sonora, Mexico (27°30'N, 110°35'W), which have a surface area of 60,000 ha, are composed of extensive marshlands with a system of lagoons and small natural salt-marshes adjoining a shallow bay, separated from the Gulf of California by a dune island (Lankford 1977). Some inlets and marshes are dammed and flooded for the year-round extraction of salt. An equable climate [BW (h') hw(e); Garcia 1973] favours development of micro-organisms on which aquatic larvae, insects, fish and higher vertebrates feed. Preliminary surveys of climate, topography and invertebrate life in 1990–1991 also showed the area to be used by a variety of shorebirds, mainly migratory species. Seasonal use by the various species has not yet been determined, as visits were made only in May through October. A maximum number of 2,100 birds, composed of 21 species, was counted on 5 July. The most common species were Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (800), Western

Sandpiper *C. mauri* (500) and Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus* (300). Shorebirds foraged by day on mudflats around mangrove thickets, where a variety of invertebrates (Polychaeta: 53%, Crustacea: 23%, Mollusca: 18%, others: 6%) occurred. At dusk, they resorted to the shallow water of evaporation pits at the Lobos Bay salt plant, where prey was artificially concentrated and a profusion of shore flies (Ephydriidae) provided easy foraging.

References

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