

Appendix A: Birds

Sora

Porzana carolina

Federal Listing	N/A
State Listing	SC
Global Rank	G5
State Rank	S3
Regional Status	Very High



Photo by Len Medlock

Justification (Reason for Concern in NH)

Secretive marsh birds like the Sora have generally been considered conservation priorities because of known losses of wetland habitats, combined with often poor data on species' distribution, abundance, and trend. In the case of the Sora, repeated Breeding Bird Atlases in the Northeast have consistently documented increases in occupied range (Cadman et al. 2007, McGowan and Corwin 2008, Renfrew 2013, MassAudubon 2014), a trend corroborated by the Breeding Bird Survey (although this species is poorly-surveyed by the BBS, Sauer et al. 2014). In contrast to the broader trends mentioned above, records of Sora in New Hampshire appear to be in decline, and the species is not regularly recorded at some historically reliable locations.

Distribution

Breeds across southern Canada and the northern and western United States, and winters from the southern U.S. to northern South America (Melvin and Gibbs 2012). In New Hampshire, most breeding season records are from the south (Cheshire, Merrimack, Hillsborough, Strafford, and Rockingham counties), particularly from the coastal plain. The most consistently occupied sites elsewhere in the state since 1990 have been the wetlands around Cherry Pond and Lake Umbagog, although this pattern may reflect observer bias more than actual distribution. There is some indication that reports from parts of the species' NH range have declined, especially in the north and southwest, although there are no systematic data with which to evaluate this hypothesis.

Habitat

Soras breed in shallow or intermediate-depth freshwater wetlands with dominated by emergent vegetation such as cattails (*Typha*), sedges (*Carex*, *Cyperus*), bur-reeds (*Sparganium*) and bulrushes (*Scirpus*) (Melvin and Gibbs 2012).

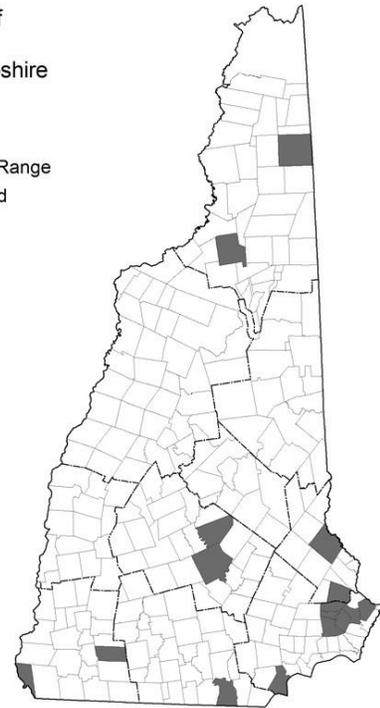
Appendix A: Birds

NH Wildlife Action Plan Habitats

- Marsh and Shrub Wetlands

Distribution of
SORA
in New Hampshire

■ Current Range
▨ Localized



Distribution Map

Current Species and Habitat Condition in New Hampshire

Stable or increasing across most of the Northeast, but possibly declining in New Hampshire.

Population Management Status

Management is not currently in place for this species.

Regulatory Protection (for explanations, see Appendix I)

- Fill and Dredge in Wetlands - NHDES
- Marsh and shrub wetlands
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918)

Quality of Habitat

No information

Habitat Protection Status

No information

Habitat Management Status

Habitat management has not been implemented for this species

Appendix A: Birds

Threats to this Species or Habitat in NH

Threat rankings were calculated by groups of taxonomic or habitat experts using a multistep process (details in Chapter 4). Each threat was ranked for these factors: Spatial Extent, Severity, Immediacy, Certainty, and Reversibility (ability to address the threat). These combined scores produced one overall threat score. Only threats that received a “medium” or “high” score have accompanying text in this profile. Threats that have a low spatial extent, are unlikely to occur in the next ten years, or there is uncertainty in the data will be ranked lower due to these factors.

Habitat degradation from the succession of artificial wetlands (Threat Rank: Medium)

Some of the more recent sites for Sora in southern NH have been in artificial wetlands such as unused ponds at wastewater treatment plants or reclaimed borrow pits. While such sites can provide suitable habitat for a number of years, unless vegetation is actively managed they eventually become overgrown to the point that they are no longer quality habitat. Because such sites lack dams or hydrological connections to other wetlands, controlling increased vegetation by regulating water levels is not possible, and the only other alternative – mechanical disturbance – is but expensive and potentially damaging.

Habitat degradation and species impacts from introduced or invasive plants (Threat Rank: Medium)

There are limited data on specific responses by Soras to invasive plants (see Whitt et al. 1999).

List of Lower Ranking Threats:

Habitat conversion and mortality from drawdowns or removal of dams

Habitat degradation from removal or management of vegetation

Habitat conversion from the direct filling of wetlands for development

Actions to benefit this Species or Habitat in NH

Marshbird Monitoring

Objective:

Assess population status of secretive marshbirds

General Strategy:

Conduct standardized wetland bird surveys at sites known to have supported Soras in recent decades. Any broad wetland bird monitoring project should include this species, and should ensure that observers can identify it.

Political Location:

Statewide

Watershed Location:

Statewide

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References, Data Sources and Authors

Data Sources

NH distribution data from NHBR/NH eBird

Data Quality

Many of the wetlands where Soras have been recorded in recent decades are not regularly surveyed, and the species may persist undetected.

2015 Authors:

Pamela Hunt, NHA

2005 Authors:

Literature

Cadman et al. 2007. Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario, 2001-2005. Bird Studies Canada, Environment Canada, Ontario Field Naturalists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Ontario Nature, Toronto, xxii + 706 pp.

Massachusetts Audubon Society. 2014. Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas. Online results at: <http://www.massaudubon.org/our-conservation-work/wildlife-research-conservation/statewide-bird-monitoring/breeding-bird-atlases/bba2/>

McGowan, K.J., and K. Corwin (eds.). 2008. The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

Melvin, S.M. and J.P. Gibbs. 1994. Viability analysis for the Atlantic Coast Population of Piping Plovers. Unpublished report to the USFWS, Sudbury, Massachusetts. 16 pp.

Renfrew, R.B. 2013 (ed.). The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Vermont. University Press of New England, Hanover, NH.

Sauer, J.R., J.E. Hines, J.E. Fallon, K.L. Pardieck, D.J. Ziolkowski, Jr., and W.A. Link. 2014. The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966 - 2013. Version

Whitt, M.B., H.H. Prince, and R.R. Cox, Jr. 1999. Avian use of purple loosestrife dominated habitat relative to other vegetation types in a Lake Huron wetland complex. *Wilson Bulletin* 111: 105-114.