

6.8 Light-footed Ridgway's Rail (*Rallus obsoletus levipes*) – Category SO

Management Units with Known Occurrences

The light-footed Ridgway's rail (formerly known as the light-footed clapper rail) is one of three subspecies found in California, with the California rail (*R. o. obsoletus*) solely found in San Francisco Bay marshes and the Yuma rail (*R. o. yumaensis*) inhabiting inland wetlands at the Salton Sea and on tributaries along the Colorado River (Zeiner et al. 1990). A federally and state-listed endangered species (FE, CE), the Ridgway's rail is a resident in coastal wetlands and lagoons in southern California and northern Baja California, Mexico (USFWS 2009). This large, hen-like marsh bird is elusive in nature and requires shallow water and mudflats for foraging (Zeiner et al. 1990).

In a collaborative group effort between federal, state, and local government agencies, along with help from the public, annual censuses have been conducted since 1980 among 37 California coastal wetlands (USFWS 2009). In 2016, the 37th annual census showed 357 pair detections in San Diego County, with the highest concentrations found in Tijuana Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, San Elijo Lagoon, and Batiquitos Lagoon (Zemba et al. 2016). Within the MSPA, these rails reside in MUs 1, 2, 6, and 7 (see online map: <http://arcg.is/2iBVOrS>).

Management Categorization Rationale

The light-footed Ridgway's rail should be managed as a Species Management Focus Category SO because persistence of 1 or more significant occurrences in the MSPA is at high risk of loss without immediate management action above and beyond that of daily maintenance activities and because management of coastal wetlands alone will not ensure its persistence.

Factors contributing to this status include a highly limited range affected by the loss and degradation of habitat, disturbances due to altered hydrological conditions, and contaminants from urban runoff (USFWS 2009). Other threats to the Ridgway's rail include potentially low genetic diversity due to small population size, isolation from habitat fragmentation, and disturbances from human recreation. Though this rail is still faced with many threats, Zemba (2016) reports greater evidence of movement between marshes of this species.

Management and Monitoring Approach

The overarching goal for the light-footed Ridgway's rail is to protect, enhance, and restore occupied and historically occupied habitat to create resilient, self-sustaining populations that provide for persistence over the long term (>100 years).

For the 2017–2021 planning cycle, the management and monitoring approach for the light-footed Ridgway's rail is to (1) monitor conserved occurrences annually from 2017 through 2021 to document abundance, record threats and to identify needed management actions based off various wildlife agencies monitoring programs; (2) inspect for necessary management recommendations; (2) implement routine management of vegetation and habitat determined during monitoring,

For details and the most up-to-date goals, objectives, and actions, go to the MSP Portal Ridgeway Rail summary page: http://portal.sdmmp.com/view_species.php?taxaid=176211.

Light-footed Ridgway's Rail References

- USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). 2009. *Light-footed Clapper Rail (Rallus longirostris levipes) 5-Year Review: Summary and Evaluation*. Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, Carlsbad, California, USA.
- Zeiner, D. C., W. F. Laudenslayer, K. E. Mayer, and M. White, eds. 1990. *California's Wildlife: Volume II - Birds*. California Department of Fish and Game. Sacramento, California.
- Zemba, R., S. F. Hoffman, and J. Konecny. 2016. *Status and Distribution of the Light-footed Ridgway's (Clapper) Rail in California*. California Department of Fish and Wildlife, South Coast Region, San Diego, California, USA.