

Birds of Nevada

Overview

A total of over 480 species of birds have been recorded in Nevada (Nevada Bird Records Committee, *pers. comm.*), and of these, 300 species have either nested, or are estimated to occur with some regularity, in the state (*Appendix 2*). Of these 300 species, 252 are currently known to nest (Floyd et al. 2007), and 46 are not. The two remaining birds are special cases: the Elf Owl, a historical breeder that is extirpated in Nevada, and the Sharp-tailed Grouse, once extirpated and then reintroduced in Nevada. The majority of Nevada's breeding birds are landbirds, but a large percentage of the Priority species we identified are shorebirds and waterbirds, reflecting the importance of water bodies in a desert state. Nevada's mesic habitats, such as riparian, marsh, open water, aspen, wet meadows, and agricultural areas, support the majority of bird species in Nevada, but a small number of species with urgent conservation issues primarily occur in upland habitats, for example the Greater Sage-Grouse, Bendire's Thrasher, and Pinyon Jay. A complete summary of habitat use by our 78 Priority species in Nevada is provided in *Appendix 5*.

Conservation Profile

Total Number of Regularly Occurring Bird Species	300
Total Number of Birds Recorded To Date	482
Total Number of Priority Species	78
Habitat Types Most Commonly Used by Birds (% of all Nevada species)	Great Basin Lowland Riparian (38%) Mojave Lowland Riparian (33%) Marshes (27%) Open Water (24%) Agricultural (24%) Montane Riparian (22%) Aspen (20%)
Number of Important Bird Areas (IBAs)	40

Priority Species



Bald Eagle. Photo by Wendy Francis

Through our ranking process, we identified 78 Priority species. These were subdivided into 70 Conservation Priority species, five Stewardship species, and three Special Status species (see *Appendix 1: Methods*, and *Appendix 2* for a complete listing, definitions of these categories, and the selection process). The 70 Conservation Priority species were identified primarily by the fact that they were ranked as high priorities in one or more regional bird conservation initiatives. Most Conservation Priority species were designated as such by regional initiatives because of population declines, significant threats, dependence on restricted or threatened habitats, or small population size. Three species that were not ranked by regional initiatives (Northern Goshawk, Ferruginous Hawk, and Golden Eagle) were included as Conservation Priority species based on current concerns in Nevada and agency priorities. These birds were thought by the planning group's expert opinion to have "fallen between the cracks" in previous regional planning efforts.

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Phainopepla, an Indicator species for Mojave Lowland Riparian and Mesquite-Acacia habitats. Photo by Scott Page

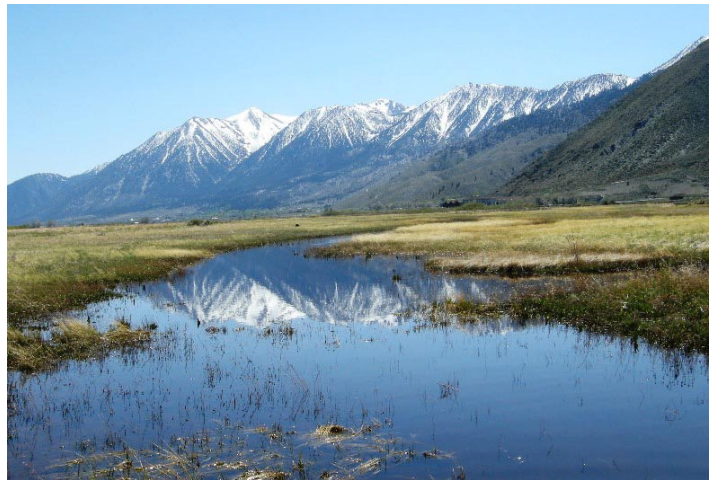
Interestingly, the Conservation Priority species were divided fairly equally between those that tend to occur in clusters as a result of their dependence on restricted habitat types (such as marshes or aspen woodlands) and those that are distributed over large landscapes dominated by shrubland or woodland habitats. Five Stewardship species were identified (Prairie Falcon, Common Poorwill, Gray Flycatcher, Green-tailed Towhee, and Sage Thrasher) because Nevada is estimated to support more than 20% of their global population. Several Conservation Priority species also exceeded this threshold (although most did not), and in these cases, the Conservation Priority ranking took precedence over the Stewardship ranking.

Three birds were designated as Special Status species, either because of their federal recovery status (Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon), or because conservation concerns are suspected, but additional research is needed in Nevada (Burrowing Owl).

Conservation Priority, Stewardship, and Special Status species are all considered to be Priority species in this plan, and all are treated in individual species accounts. Indicator species, in contrast, are not regarded as Priority species and are therefore not treated in individual species accounts. They are instead listed in the pertinent habitat accounts, where they serve the purpose of providing a tool for evaluation of habitat integrity for the habitat types that only have few, rare, or geographically restricted Priority species.

Important Bird Areas of Nevada

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) have been designated by the Audubon Society to highlight the most important conservation landscapes for bird diversity in the state, with emphasis on species of conservation priority. IBA-specific conservation plans, active partnerships, volunteer activities, monitoring, and outreach are being implemented by Audubon to increase public appreciation and participation, and to aid in conservation implementation for these hotspots. Therefore, the IBA program is a key partner in focusing Nevada bird conservation efforts on those landscapes that contain the greatest local densities and diversity of priority species. *Appendix 6* lists the occurrence of priority species in designated IBAs of Nevada.



Carson Valley IBA. Photo by Anne Thomas

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We encourage our partners to take advantage of IBA program services, as well as site-specific conservation planning undertaken by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Nevada's National Wildlife Refuges, Nevada Department of Wildlife for Nevada Wildlife Management Areas and gamebird management, National Park Service for National Parks and Recreation Areas, Bureau of Land Management for Nevada BLM districts, U.S. Forest Service for Forest units and ranger districts, and by other agencies and organizations. These site-specific conservation efforts are extraordinarily useful for birds that tend to occur in clusters within particular sites or restricted habitat types.



Eared Grebe. Photo by Scott Page

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Western Grebe. Photo by Fred Petersen