

Northern Pintail

Anas acuta



Photo by Chris Nicolai

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Marsh Open Water (Great Basin Lowland Riparian (oxbows))	
Key Habitat Parameters •	
Plant Composition	Cattail, bulrush, sedges, rushes, saltgrass, submerged aquatic vegetation, agricultural crops
Plant Density	<u>Spring-Fall</u> : Patches of varying emergent stem densities and ample aquatic vegetation; <u>Winter</u> : sparse emergent vegetation ¹
Mosaic	Shallow marsh or water body with patches of emergent vegetation interspersed with open water, buffered by shrubland, grassland, or agriculture ^{1,2}
Water Depth	< 30 cm [12 in] for foraging ¹
Hydrology	Large variety of water regimes tolerated ¹
Response to Vegetation Removal	Probably negative in breeding habitat ^{EO}
Area Requirements •	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown, but uses moderately small water bodies ^{EO}
Recommended Patch Size	> 15 ha [37 ac] for water body, buffered by > 3 km [1.9 mi] of uplands ^{EO}
Home Range	Up to 500 ha [1,240 ac] ¹

Conservation Profile

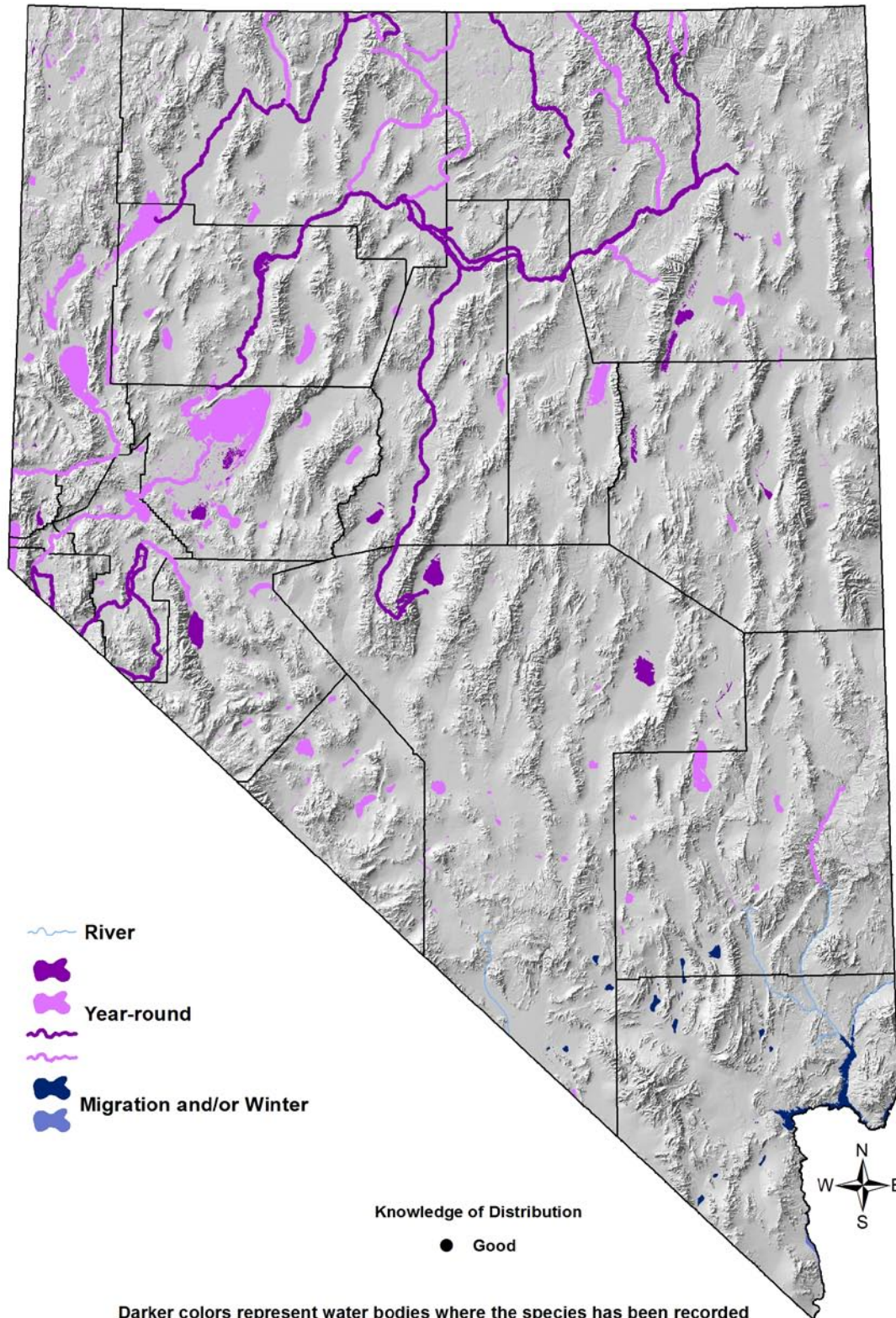
Priority Status	
Conservation Priority Species	
Species Concerns	
Historical and recent population declines Habitat threats	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S5
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	Conservation Priority, Gamebird
Pacific Flyway Council	High Priority
Trends	
Historical •	Rangewide declines of 50% ^{1,8}
Recent •	Continuing declines ^{1,8}
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada •	5,000 (breeding), annually variable ⁴
Global •	3,000,000, annually variable ^{1,8}
Percent of Global	< 1%
Population Objective	
Increase by 100% ^{EO}	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NDOW aerial surveys, NWR and WMA counts, NDOW harvest counts, NV Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV	Good
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Lahontan and Ruby valleys, Humboldt River system
Restoration	Degraded marsh and open water

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Year-round (northern Nevada) Winter (southern Nevada) Fall (migration, statewide, October peak) Spring (migration, statewide, March peak)	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
Late April – mid-August ³	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	On ground in dense upland vegetation up to 3 km [1.9 mi] from water ¹
Site Fidelity	High for post-breeding habitat; ¹ moderate for wintering ⁶
Food Habits	
Basic	Dabbler
Primary Diet	Aquatic invertebrates and plant material ¹
Secondary Diet	N/A

Northern Pintail

Anas acuta



Darker colors represent water bodies where the species has been recorded within the past 12 years. Lighter colors represent water bodies where the species could potentially occur. Smaller water bodies may be difficult to visualize on the map.

Northern Pintail

Anas acuta

Overview

The Northern Pintail is one of the west's most conspicuous and numerous ducks, but it has suffered sustained declines for several decades. Pintails are popular gamebirds, but current harvest rates are not believed to impact population trends.^{5,6} The underlying causes of ongoing declines are not fully understood, but probably involve habitat issues on the main breeding grounds far to the north. The current North American population objective is 5.6 million birds,⁸ approximately twice the current number.

In Nevada, numbers of Northern Pintails swell greatly during spring and fall migration, and winter populations also appear to exceed summer populations by a noticeable margin (www.ebird.org), although specific seasonal population estimates are currently not available. The main seasonal difference in the habitat requirements of Northern Pintails is that during the breeding season, they require a sizable buffer of upland vegetation or other suitable habitat (such as traditional agricultural fields) around waterbodies for nesting.¹ Despite our traditional focus on the breeding season, Nevada's main contribution to Northern Pintail conservation probably occurs during migration and wintering seasons. As with other waterfowl, population trends are closely monitored and harvest limits adjusted as needed by NDOW and the Pacific Flyway Council.

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- Breeding density positively correlated with wetland acreage¹

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

No information

Main Threats and Challenges

Habitat and Other Threats

- Loss and degradation of marsh and open water habitat due to water diversions, declines in water quality, or development¹
- Haying and other inadvertent agricultural disturbances in upland breeding sites during the nesting period¹
- Predation on nesting females can be substantial in some areas¹
- Susceptibility to avian botulism and cholera¹

Northern Pintail

Anas acuta

Research, Planning, and Monitoring Challenges

- Causes of sustained declines are not well understood
- Migration and wintering sites may need additional study to estimate Nevada population sizes, habitat threats, and habitat requirements

Conservation Strategies

Established Strategies

- Annual harvest rates are set by NDOW in consultation with the Pacific Flyway Council

Habitat Strategies

- Marsh (p. Hab-9-1) and Open Water (p. Hab-15-1) habitat conservation strategies benefit this species
- Disturbances and disruptive land uses should be minimized within a 3 km [1.9 mi] wide upland strip surrounding marshes and lakes used by breeding pintails during the nesting period (15 April – 15 July)
- Pintails readily use restored marshes and other wetlands, so restoration projects should benefit the species during all seasons

Research, Planning, and Monitoring Strategies

- Winter and migration habitat use, specific habitat threats, and population size estimation may be addressed in additional studies
- Continue post- and pre- breeding season banding studies conducted by NDOW in cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Waterfowl Association, and the Yukon Delta NWR

Public Outreach Strategies

- In areas where pintails nest on privately owned agricultural areas, encourage landowners to avoid haying or other disruptive activities during the nesting period (15 April – 15 July)

References: ¹Austin and Miller (1995); ²Fleskes et al. (2003); ³GBBO unpublished Atlas data; ⁴Nevada Wildlife Action Plan Team (2006); ⁵Nicolai et al. (2005); ⁶Rice et al. (2010); ⁷Robertson and Cooke (1999); ⁸USFWS (1998); ^{EO} Expert opinion