

# Redhead

## *Aythya americana*



Photo by Larry Neel

### Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Marsh Open Water	
Key Habitat Parameters •	
Plant Composition	Cattail, bulrush, sedges, rushes, submerged aquatic vegetation
Plant Density	Patches of high-density emergent vegetation <sup>8</sup>
Mosaic	Hemi-marsh, with patches of emergent vegetation > 1 m [3.3 ft] high, ~ 75% open water, and some water > 1 m [3.3. ft] deep <sup>6, 8</sup>
Water Depth	20 – 200 cm [8 – 80 in] throughout most of water body, ~ 1 -2 m [3.3 – 6.6 ft] in primary foraging areas <sup>6, 8</sup>
Hydrology	Little fluctuation in stage where nesting <sup>8</sup>
Response to Vegetation Removal	Unknown
Area Requirements ○	
Minimum Patch Size	> 4 ha [9.9 ac] for breeding <sup>6, 8</sup>
Recommended Patch Size	> 100 ha [250 ac] <sup>E0</sup>
Home Range / Territory Size	Unknown

### Conservation Profile

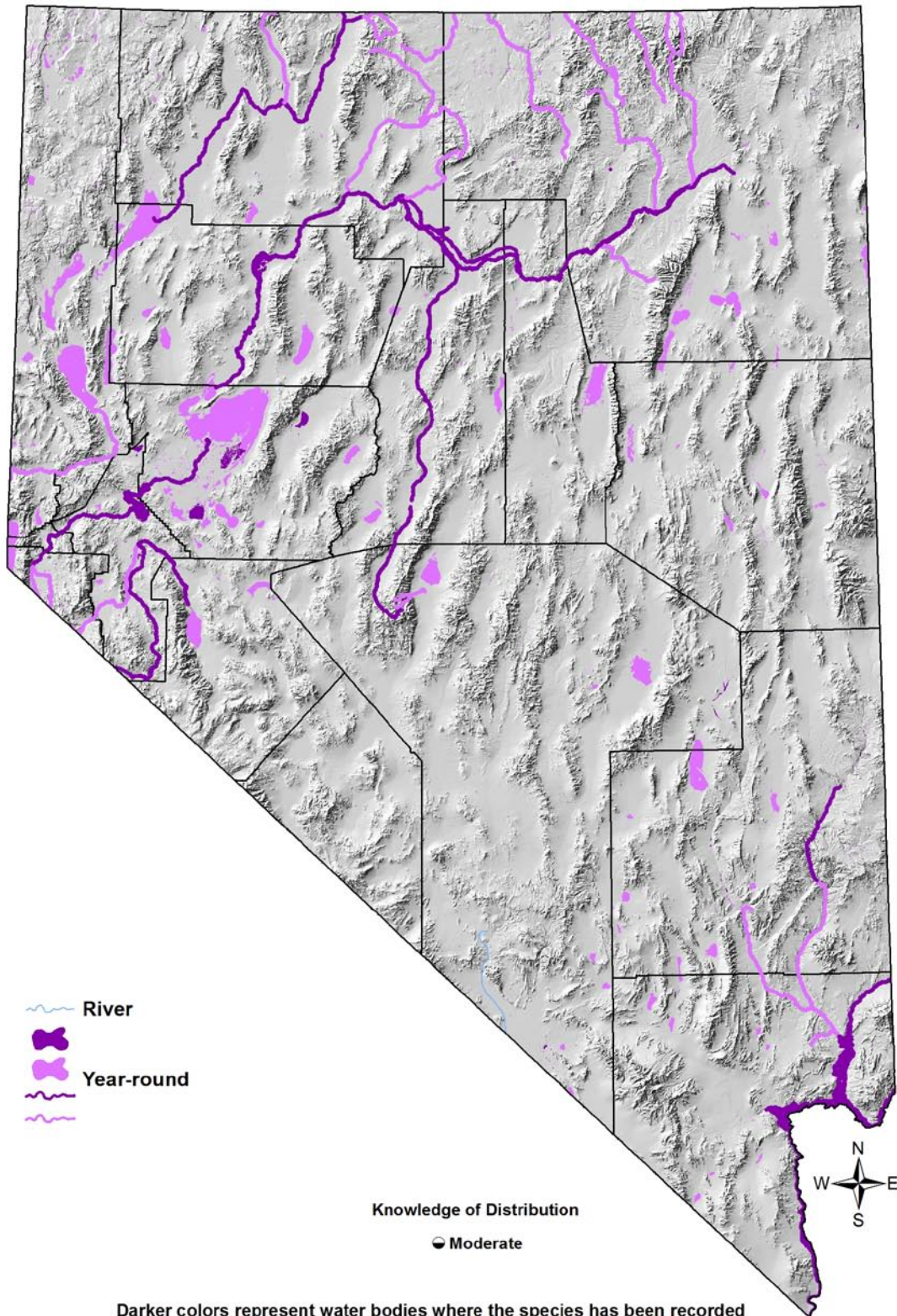
Priority Status	
Conservation Priority Species	
Species Concerns	
Historical declines Habitat threats	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S4b
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	Conservation Priority: Gamebird
Pacific Flyway Council	High
Trends	
Historical •	Rangewide declines prior to 1960's <sup>8</sup>
Recent •	Stable or increasing <sup>7</sup>
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada •	4,500, annually variable <sup>4</sup>
Global •	1,200,000, annually variable <sup>7</sup>
Percent of Global	1%
Population Objective	
Maintain / Increase <sup>E0</sup>	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NDOW aerial surveys, NWR and WMA counts, NDOW hunter surveys, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV	Good
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Lahontan Valley, Ruby Valley, Humboldt system, Pahrangat NWR, Ash Meadows NWR
Restoration	Degraded marshes

### Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Year-round (migration peaks in April, October)	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
Late April – July <sup>2, 8</sup>	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	Over water 20 -50 cm [8 – 20 in] deep, in dense emergent vegetation, or on ground (sometimes islands) within 3 m [10 ft] of water edge <sup>8</sup>
Site Fidelity	Unknown
Food Habits	
Basic	Diver (shallow)
Primary Diet	Submerged aquatic plants <sup>6, 8</sup>
Secondary Diet	Aquatic invertebrates; <sup>6</sup> and fish eggs <sup>5</sup>

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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.

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## Overview

The Redhead has its breeding stronghold in the Prairie Pothole region of central North America, but nevertheless it is reported to be the second most common breeding duck in Nevada (C. Mortimore, *pers. comm.*). Nevada has a small but meaningful stewardship responsibility for the species, particularly during migration, when numbers are substantially higher than in the breeding season ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)). Up to 200,000 Redheads may migrate through the Great Basin region, although the proportion of these passing through Nevada is not known.<sup>3</sup> Redheads are a year-round bird in most parts of Nevada, although the breeding distribution in southern Nevada is much spottier than in the north.<sup>1</sup> Seasonal cohorts are probably different, although this has not been conclusively shown. There is little evidence about differences (if any) in seasonal habitat use patterns, and seasonally-specific population estimates for Nevada are not available.

In a Canadian study, most females nested in small, semi-permanent wetlands and were successful in wetlands with large bands of emergent cover. Success was associated with water depth at the nest and distance between the nest and dry land. Brood-rearing females switched from smaller wetlands used for nesting to larger, semi-permanent wetlands. These results support a landscape approach to wetland management and emphasize the need for plans that reduce impact to wetland margins.<sup>9</sup>

Redhead populations appear fairly stable and close to population targets.<sup>7</sup> Because Redheads are relatively flexible in their habitat use, habitat management strategies that benefit other ducks are likely to benefit Redheads as well. However, their requirement for relatively deep summer water (>1 m; [3 ft]) does make them vulnerable to changes in water levels.<sup>6, 8</sup> As with other waterfowl, population trends are closely monitored and harvest limits adjusted as needed by NDOW and Pacific Flyway Council.

## Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- 6 – 12 pairs / 100 ha [2.4 – 4.8 / 100 ha] in suitable habitat<sup>8</sup>

## Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

No information

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**Main Threats and Challenges**

Habitat Threats

- Loss and degradation of marsh and open water habitat due to water diversions, declines in water quality, or development<sup>6</sup>
- Drought and low water conditions adversely affect breeding success and increase predation pressure<sup>8</sup>

Research, Planning, and Monitoring Challenges

- Key migration and wintering sites need to be better identified

**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
- In breeding marshes, maintain a consistent water level during the nesting period (1 May – 15 July)

**Research, Planning, and Monitoring Strategies**

- Important winter and migration sites need to be better identified, though improved inventory and monitoring efforts

**Public Outreach Strategies**

- None identified

References: <sup>1</sup>Floyd et al. (2007); <sup>2</sup>GBBO unpublished Atlas data; <sup>3</sup>Kadlec and Smith (1989); <sup>4</sup>Nevada Wildlife Action Plan Team (2006); <sup>5</sup>Noyes (1985); <sup>6</sup>Shuford and Gardali (2008); <sup>7</sup>USFWS (1998); <sup>8</sup>Woodin and Michot (2002); <sup>9</sup>Yerkes (2000); <sup>EO</sup> Expert opinion