

Eared Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

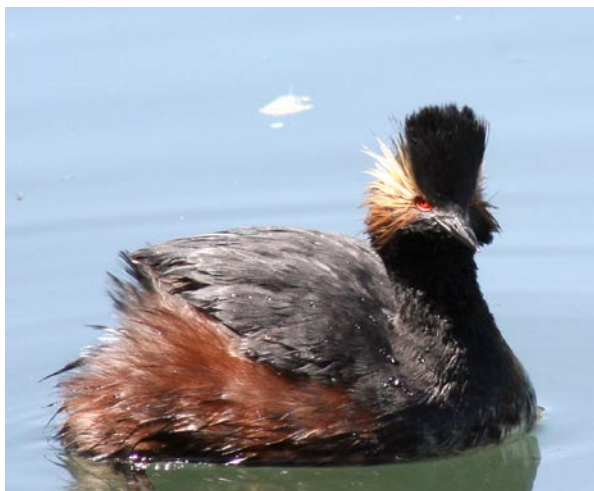


Photo by Jacque Lowery

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Open Water Marsh	
Key Habitat Parameters ◐	
Plant Composition	Cattail, bulrush, sedges, rushes, submerged aquatic vegetation
Plant Density	Unknown
Mosaic	Unknown
Water Depth	Up to 4 m [13 ft] for foraging ³
Water Quality	Tolerant of saline conditions ³
Response to Vegetation Removal	Probably negative for breeding sites ^{EO}
Area Requirements ◐	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown; estimated at 20 ha [49 ac] ^{EO}
Recommended Patch Size	> 50 ha [124 ac] ^{EO}
Home Range / Territory Size	Unknown

Conservation Profile

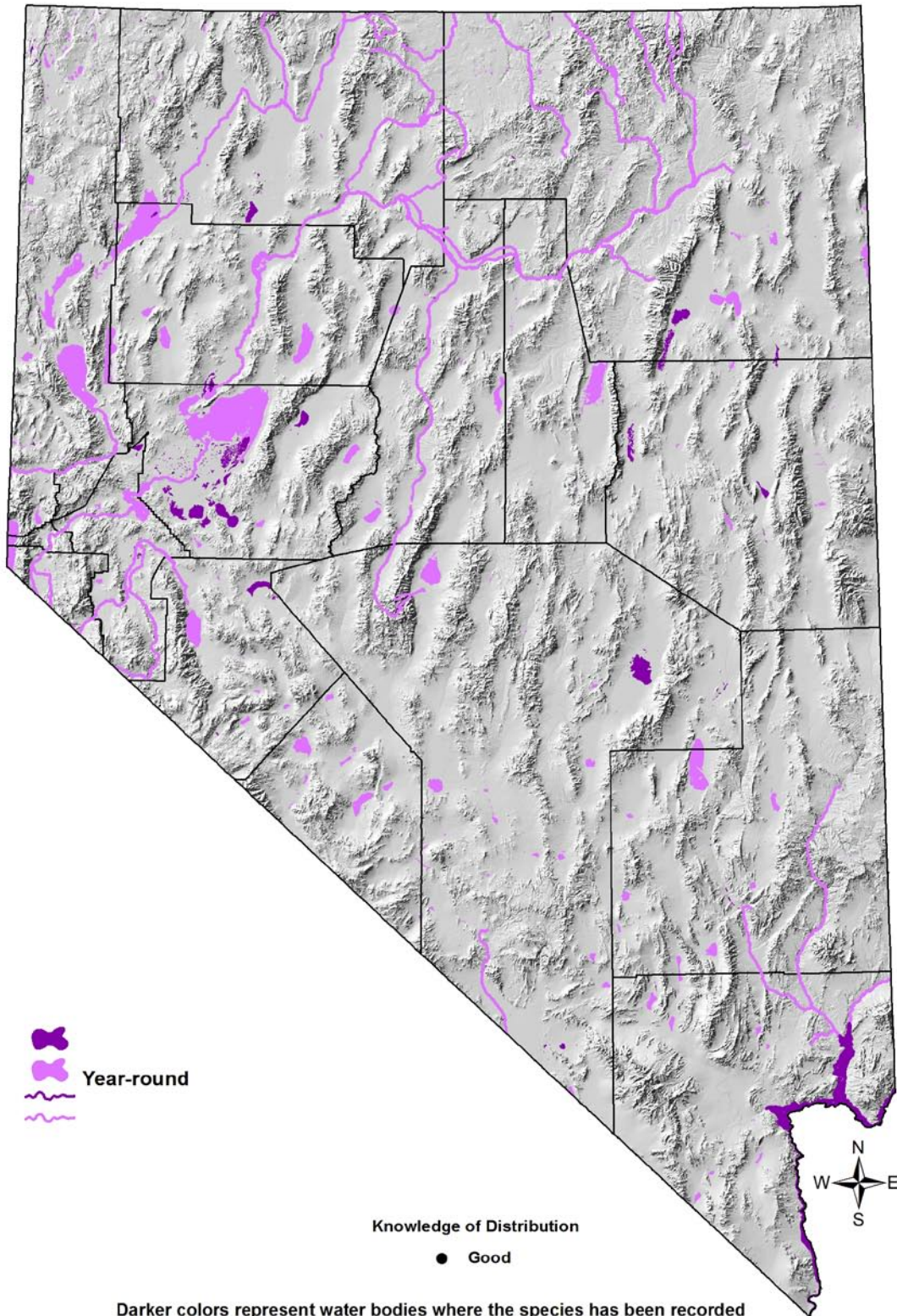
Priority Status	
Conservation Priority Species	
Species Concerns	
Small population size (breeding) Possible habitat threats	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S4B
USFWS	Bird of Conservation Concern, Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	Conservation Priority
IW Waterbird Plan	High Concern
Trends	
Historical ◐	Unknown
Recent ◐	Stable or increasing ⁵
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ◐	400 (breeding); ⁵ more migrants ^{EO}
Global ◐	4,100,000 ⁶
Percent of Global	< 1%
Population Objective	
Maintain / Increase ^{EO}	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NWR and WMA counts, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV	Good / Fair
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Ruby Valley, Lahontan Valley, Walker and Pyramid Lakes
Restoration	Degraded and at-risk marshes

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Year-round	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
May – August ³	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	Floating, attached to emergent vegetation ³
Site Fidelity	Moderate for breeding territory ³
Other	Nests colonially, but Nevada colonies usually small ^{3,4}
Food Habits	
Basic	Diver
Primary Diet	Aquatic invertebrates ³
Secondary Diet	Small fishes and other vertebrates ³

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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 Eared Grebe is distinctive in at least two ways from Nevada's other Conservation Priority grebes (the Clark's and Western). First, Eared Grebes feed primarily on invertebrates, while Clark's and Western Grebes are primarily fish-eaters. Secondly, unlike the other grebes, Eared Grebes are strongly associated with saline / alkaline wetlands, though primarily so during the non-breeding season.³ Immediately after breeding, most Eared Grebes from Nevada and surrounding areas wander to either Mono Lake or Great Salt Lake, where they congregate in very large numbers to feed on brine shrimp prior to fall migration.³ Compared to the Western and Clark's grebes, the Eared Grebe appears to engage in little, if any, significant staging activity within Nevada itself, but they are abundant here throughout the subsequent migration season, and are also present throughout the winter in more modest numbers. Thus while the Eared Grebe has a year-round presence in Nevada, its seasonal cohorts are largely comprised of different birds. The number of migrating Eared Grebes found in Nevada is far larger than the breeding population,^{EO} and more attention needs to be devoted to studying the distribution, abundance, habitat use, and conservation needs of these migrants. As a case in point, Lake Mead reportedly hosted 50,000 – 100,000 non-breeders annually as recently as 1972, but shortly thereafter these numbers fell precipitously.³ Apparently, no definitive explanation for this large decline was ever found.

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- High counts for breeding population are as follows:
 - 600 breeders recorded at Ruby Lake in 1983¹
 - Several hundred nests recorded annually at both Carson Lake and Stillwater NWR during wet years in the mid-1990's²
- Nevada's migrant population is "much larger"^{EO} than the breeding population, but has not been quantified

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

No information

Main Threats and Challenges

Habitat Threats

- Loss or degradation of marshes (particularly alkaline marshes) due to water diversions, declines in water quality, or development

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Research, Planning, and Monitoring Challenges

- The distribution, abundance, habitat use, and conservation needs of migrating and wintering Eared Grebes have not been well studied

Conservation Strategies

Habitat Strategies

- Open Water (p. Hab-15-1), and Marsh (p. Hab-9-1) habitat conservation strategies benefit this species
- Maintaining healthy populations of aquatic invertebrates is probably important year-round, but especially so in alkaline marshes during the fall migration period

Research, Planning, and Monitoring Strategies

- Conduct additional surveys and monitoring to better document the Eared Grebe's distribution, abundance, habitat use, and conservation needs during the post-breeding, migration, and winter seasons
- Monitor water quality in occupied sites

Public Outreach Strategies

- None identified

References: ¹Alcorn (1988); ²Chisholm and Neel (2002); ³Cullen et al. (1999); ⁴Floyd et al. (2007); ⁵Ivey and Herziger (2006); ⁶Kushlan et al. (2002); ^{EO} Expert opinion