

Franklin's Gull

Leucophaeus pipixcan



Photo by Fred Petersen

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Marsh Open Water (Agricultural)	
Key Habitat Parameters ●	
Plant Composition	Bulrush, cattail, sedges, rushes, submerged aquatic vegetation
Plant Density	Patches of emergent vegetation with low-intermediate stem densities ²
Mosaic	Marshes with emergent vegetation patches with low-intermediate stem densities for nesting, open water and nearby agricultural lands for foraging ³
Water Depth	30 – 60 cm [12-24 in] at nest site, surrounded by deeper water ³
Hydrology	Minimal fluctuation in stage during incubation ^{EO}
Response to Vegetation Removal	Probably positive to prescribed burns in upland habitats in overgrown sites ^{EO}
Area Requirements ○	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown, but prefers larger wetland complexes for nesting
Recommended Patch Size	200 ha [494 ac] for total marsh size ^{EO}
Home Range / Territory Size	Unknown

Conservation Profile

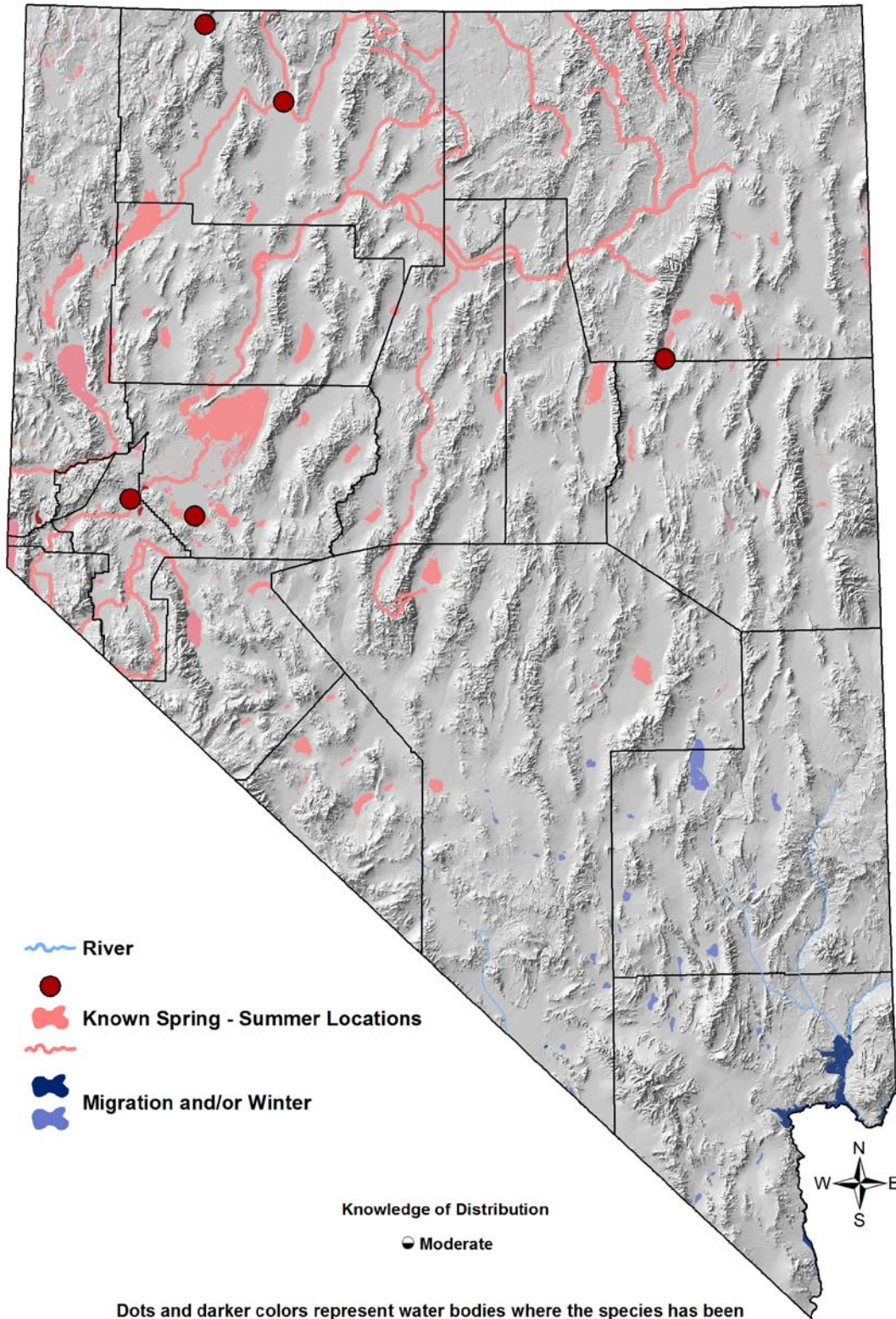
Priority Status	
Conservation Priority Species	
Species Concerns	
Small population size Habitat threats	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S3B
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	Conservation Priority
IW Waterbird Plan	High Concern
Trends	
Historical ●	Slow increases in Great Basin in past 75 years ³
Recent ○	Increasing ⁴
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ●	350 ^{EO}
Global ○	500,000 – 1,000,000 ^{3,4,5}
Percent of Global	< 1%
Population Objective	
Maintain ^{EO}	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NWR and WMA counts, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV	Good in NWR's and WMA's, Fair / Poor elsewhere
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Ruby Valley, Lahontan Valley
Restoration	Degraded marshes

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring – Summer Fall (migration)	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
May – July ³	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	On mats of floating vegetation ³
Site Fidelity	Unknown
Other	Nests colonially ³
Food Habits	
Basic	Dabbles and forages aerially and terrestrially
Primary Diet	Terrestrial and aquatic insects, seeds ³
Secondary Diet	Plant matter ³

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

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Overview

Historical and recent population trends of the Franklin's Gull in the western U. S. are complex and variable across the species' breeding range.³ In Nevada, however, at the southern margins of their breeding range, Franklin's Gulls have slowly increased. Franklin's Gulls were apparently unknown in the Great Basin until approximately 75 years ago, and the first Nevada breeding records date from only 1970 or 1971.^{1, 3, 4} Until recently, Nevada's breeding population was very small (about 20 birds, occasionally peaking at about 50), but beginning in 2006 or 2007, number of breeders began to increase, especially in Ruby Lake NWR, which now hosts most of the state's known breeding pairs. Despite these increases, the Franklin's Gull is still a Conservation Priority species because of its small population size and its sensitivity to human disturbance and changing water levels in the breeding colony sites. Franklin's Gulls engage in significant post-breeding vagrancy prior to southward migration,³ and birds migrating from farther north use a number of stopover sites in Nevada. Additional work is needed to determine whether conservation issues exist for post-breeding or migratory Franklin's Gulls in Nevada.

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- Nest spacing in colonies may be as close as 1 m (more typically ~ 3 m)³
- Although Nevada's numbers have historically been small (< 50 pairs / site), they are increasing, and could potentially become significantly larger, as is the case in Oregon, Idaho, and Utah^{3, 4}

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

No information

Main Threats and Challenges

Habitat and other Threats

- Loss or degradation of marshes due to water diversions, declines in water quality, or development
- Vulnerable to human disturbance during nesting³
- Sensitive to changes in water level during incubation³

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Research, Planning, and Monitoring Challenges

- Additional survey and monitoring efforts in areas other than NWR's and WMA's would be useful to better determine Nevada's breeding population size and identify any significant breeding locations
- The degree to which Franklin's Gulls use Nevada marshes during the post-breeding and fall migration periods needs to be better understood

Conservation Strategies

Habitat and Other Strategies

- Marsh (p. Hab-9-1) and Open Water (p. Hab-15-1) habitat conservation strategies benefit this species
- Manage marshes to provide the preferred vegetation composition and density (see Habitat Use Profile table, above). More specifically, alkali bulrush and emergent narrowleaf pondweed are desirable vegetation components as they provide ideal material for nest platforms^{EO}
- Maintain water at a consistent stage throughout the breeding season (1 May – 15 July), or at least during the incubation period (1 May – 15 June)³
- Limit human disturbance at colony sites

Research, Planning, and Monitoring Strategies

- Conduct additional surveys and monitoring to identify any significant breeding locations outside NWR's and WMA's
- Conduct additional surveys to better determine the extent to which post-breeding birds and fall migrants use Nevada marshes
- Monitor water quality in important breeding sites

Public Outreach Strategies

- None identified

References: ¹Alcorn (1988); ²Burger (1974); ³Burger and Gochfield (2009); ⁴Ivey and Herziger (2006); ⁵Kushlan et al. (2002); ^{EO} Expert opinion