

Common Poorwill

Phalaenoptilus nuttallii



Photo by Will Richardson

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Sagebrush Pinyon-Juniper Montane Shrubland (Salt Desert Scrub) (Mojave Scrub)	
Key Habitat Parameters ◦	
Plant Composition	Sagebrushes, mountain mahogany, juniper, pinyon pine and associated shrubs ^{E0}
Plant Density & Size	Low, sparse vegetation ⁴
Mosaic	Interspersion of physiographic elements, including dry washes, sloping uplands, and rocks ⁴
Distance to Water	Unknown
Response to Vegetation Removal	Unknown, possibly positive ^{E0}
Area Requirements ◦	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown
Recommended Patch Size	Unknown
Home Range / Territory Size	Unknown

Conservation Profile

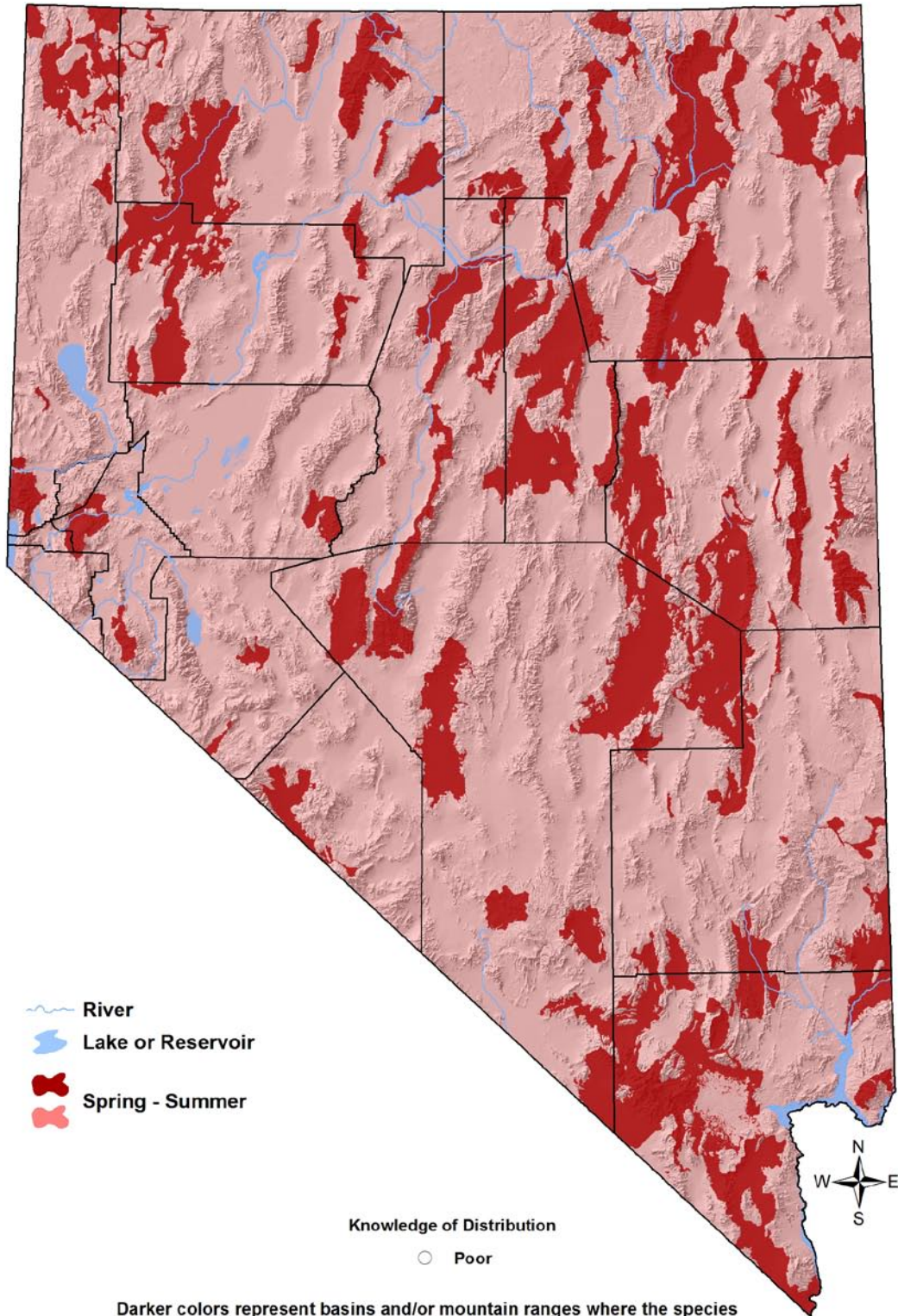
Priority Status	
Stewardship Species	
Species Concerns	
High stewardship responsibility Possible recent declines	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S5B
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	None
Trends	
Historical ◦	Unknown
Recent ◦	Unknown, but possible declines ³
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ◦	Unknown
Global ◦	3,000,000 ²
Percent of Global	Unknown
Population Objective	
Maintain ^{E0}	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	Nevada Bird Count, Breeding Bird Survey
Coverage in NV	Poor
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Unknown
Restoration	Unknown

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring – Summer, possibly Year-round in Mojave	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
May – August ⁴ , possibly earlier ^{E0}	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	On bare ground, often partially shaded by rock, low shrub, or prickly pear cactus ⁴
Site Fidelity	Unknown
Food Habits	
Basic	Aerial forager
Primary Diet	Nocturnal flying insects ⁴
Secondary Diet	n/a

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Darker colors represent basins and/or mountain ranges where the species has been recorded within the past 12 years. Lighter colors represent the broader area within which the species is presumed to occur in appropriate habitat types.

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Overview

Because of its nocturnal habits and extreme inconspicuousness during daylight hours, very little is known, or even conjectured, about the habitat use requirements and conservation status of the Common Poorwill. It is apparent, though, that Nevada has a relatively large proportion of the global population of Common Poorwills, despite representing a much smaller fraction of the bird's geographical range. Common Poorwills are therefore regarded as a Stewardship Species in this plan.

Common Poorwills are most commonly detected in open scrublands, especially those dominated by sagebrush or salt desert shrubs. One recent study in the Sonoran Desert found that poorwill abundance was positively associated with presence of washes, uplands, and rocky substrate, and negatively associated with low grass cover,¹ and similar patterns appear to hold in Nevada.^{EO} Improving our understanding of this cryptic bird will require implementation of a species-appropriate nocturnal survey and monitoring program in representative locations throughout the state.

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- A new 32 km [20 mi] night-driving survey route in far northern Nevada documented 34 Common Poorwills, or 1 poorwill / km [1.7 poorwill / mi] (Pete Bradley, pers. comm.)

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

No information

Main Threats and Challenges

Habitat Threats

- Nothing definitive is known about the impacts of typical land uses in Sagebrush, Pinyon-Juniper, or Salt Desert habitats
- Habitat-destroying fire and invasion of exotic plants are likely to be detrimental, but no data exist to confirm this

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Research, Planning, and Monitoring Challenges

- The dearth of any reliable information about conservation status, threats, or trends make it difficult to manage Common Poorwills effectively

Conservation Strategies

Habitat Strategies

- It is likely that Sagebrush (p. Hab-17-1), Pinyon-Juniper (p. Hab-16-1), and Montane Shrubland (p. Hab-14-1) habitat conservation strategies benefit this species

Research, Planning, and Monitoring Strategies

- Implement night survey / monitoring programs at strategic locations throughout state to better determine distribution, trends, population density, and habitat requirements
- Standard protocols for the United States Nightjar Survey Network are available at: <http://ccb-wm.org/nightjars.htm>
- Encourage research projects on the species to better understand habitat, mosaic, and area requirements

Public Outreach Strategies

- None identified

References: ¹Hardy et al. (1998); ²Rich et al. (2004); ³Sauer et al. (2008); ³Woods et al. (2005); ^{EO} Expert opinion