

# Tricolored Blackbird

*Agelaius tricolor*



Photo by Martin Meyers

## Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Marsh (Agriculture (foraging))	
Key Habitat Parameters •	
Plant Composition	Cattail, bulrush, sedges, willows
Plant Density	High-density emergent vegetation <sup>2</sup>
Mosaic	Large patches of emergent vegetation, adjacent to open water and large agricultural areas, pastures, or wet meadow <sup>2, EO</sup>
Water Depth	Unknown, but estimated < 30 cm [12 in] at nest sites <sup>EO</sup>
Hydrology	Permanent wetland or recently flooded wet meadow; requires water through nesting season <sup>1</sup>
Response to Vegetation Removal	Negative <sup>EO</sup>
Area Requirements •	
Minimum Patch Size	> 0.8 ha [2 ac] for wetland <sup>1</sup>
Recommended Patch Size	>1,500 ha [3,700 ac] for colony and surround foraging area <sup>2</sup>
Territory Size	< 0.1 ha [0.2 ac] within colony <sup>EO</sup>

## Conservation Profile

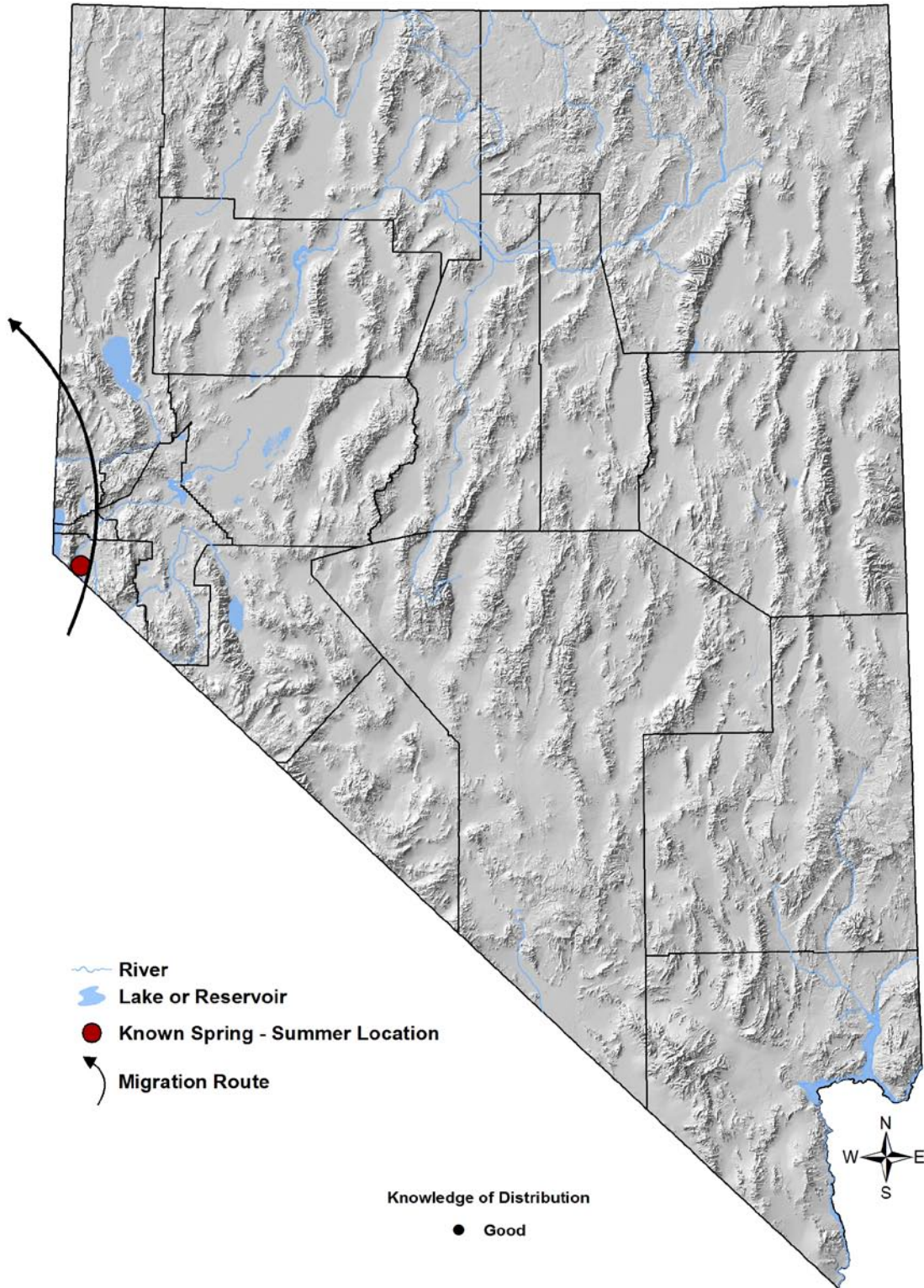
Priority Status	
Conservation Priority Species	
Species Concerns	
Small population size Historical declines Unknown population trend Restricted habitat Habitat threats	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	Watch List
Audubon Watchlist	Red
NV Natural Heritage	S1B
USFWS	Bird of Conservation Concern, Migratory Bird
BLM	Sensitive Species
USFS	None
NDOW	Conservation Priority
Trends	
Historical •	Rangewide declines <sup>2</sup>
Recent ○	Declines slowing rangewide, uncertain in Nevada <sup>4</sup>
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada •	< 100 <sup>1</sup>
Global •	250,000 <sup>3</sup>
Percent of Global	< 1%
Population Objective	
Increase by 100% <sup>3, EO</sup>	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	GBBO special species inventory
Coverage in NV	Good, but future of inventory uncertain
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Carson Valley
Restoration	Carson Valley

## Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring – Summer	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
Late March – July <sup>1</sup>	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	Attached to tall emergent vegetation 0.1 – 1.5 m [0.3 – 4.9 ft] above water or ground <sup>2</sup>
Site Fidelity	High for colony site <sup>1</sup>
Other	Highly colonial <sup>1, 2</sup>
Food Habits	
Basic	Ground forager and shrub gleaner
Primary Diet	Terrestrial invertebrates during breeding <sup>2</sup>
Secondary Diet	Agricultural grains, seeds post-breeding <sup>2</sup>

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Dots represent specific locations where the species has been recorded within the past 12 years.

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## Overview

The overwhelming majority of Tricolored Blackbirds reside year-round in central California, where they have suffered from significant loss of wetland habitats. Nevada's single reliable breeding colony is migratory, and is peripheral and disjunct from the main population of Tricolored Blackbirds, which it rejoins in the winter months. This colony usually breeds in a small privately-owned marsh in Douglas County, in close proximity to both Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.<sup>1</sup> There have also been periodic reports of additional small breeding colonies in other nearby marshes in Carson Valley, but their locations, sizes, and annual regularity of occurrence have not been systematically recorded. The degree to which nearby dairy farming and cattle ranching activities in Carson Valley provide a valuable foraging resource to the breeding colony has not been explicitly documented, but in the core of their breeding range (Central Valley of California), Tricolored Blackbirds forage in similar agricultural lands. The main conservation need in Nevada is to secure some form of protection for the single reliable breeding location and for other nearby (within a minimum radius of 5 km [3 mi]) marshes that may also host breeding colonies. Additional needs are ensuring that population monitoring is continued, and conducting searches for additional breeding sites in Carson Valley or elsewhere in western Nevada.

## Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- Colonial breeder, ~ 20 pairs annually on average in Nevada<sup>1</sup>

## Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

- Ammon and Woods<sup>1</sup> reported on the status of the species in Nevada as of 2008

## Main Threats and Challenges

### Habitat threats

- Nevada's single persistent breeding colony inhabits a small (0.8 ha [2 ac]) marsh located on private land. This site is not managed specifically for wildlife, and thus could be vulnerable to many of the threats described in the Marsh habitat account (p. Hab-9-1); to date, however, no specific habitat threats have been identified

### Research, Planning, and Monitoring Challenges

- The single persistent breeding colony is located on privately-owned land with no management guidelines currently in place
- It is unclear whether additional breeding colonies are present rarely or frequently, and the factors controlling their presence on a year-to-year basis are not known

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## Conservation Strategies

### Habitat Strategies

- The Marsh (p. Hab-9-1) habitat conservation strategy benefits this species

### Research, Planning, and Monitoring Strategies

- Continue monitoring of known persistent breeding colony
- Search for other breeding sites in Nevada, and if found, document their breeding colonies and the annual frequency of breeding
- Attempt to secure some form of protection for the known and possible breeding marshes, through the IBA program or other mechanisms
- Conduct studies of Nevada breeding population(s) and compare habitat use and foraging patterns to those of larger California populations

### Public Outreach Strategies

- Encourage landowners at and around known persistent colony to continue their stewardship
- Explore incentives and assistance programs to secure landowner stewardship

References: <sup>1</sup>Ammon and Woods (2008); <sup>2</sup>Beedy and Hamilton (1999); <sup>3</sup>Rich et al. (2004); <sup>4</sup>Sauer et al. (2008); <sup>EO</sup> Expert opinion