

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, aquatic (submerged) vegetation
Plant Density	Patches of low stem densities required for nesting ¹
Mosaic	Marsh patches with low stem densities for nesting, ideally surrounded by agricultural and open water habitat ¹
Water Depth	30 – 60 cm (1-2 ft) at nest site, deeper waters surrounding ¹
Hydrology	Minimal daily fluctuation in stage during nesting ^{EO}
Response to Vegetation Removal	Probably positive to prescribed burns in overgrown sites ^{EO}
Area Requirements ●	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown; but prefers large wetland complexes for nesting
Recommended Patch Size	200 ha (450 ac) for marsh/open water ^{EO}
Home Range	Unknown

Conservation Profile

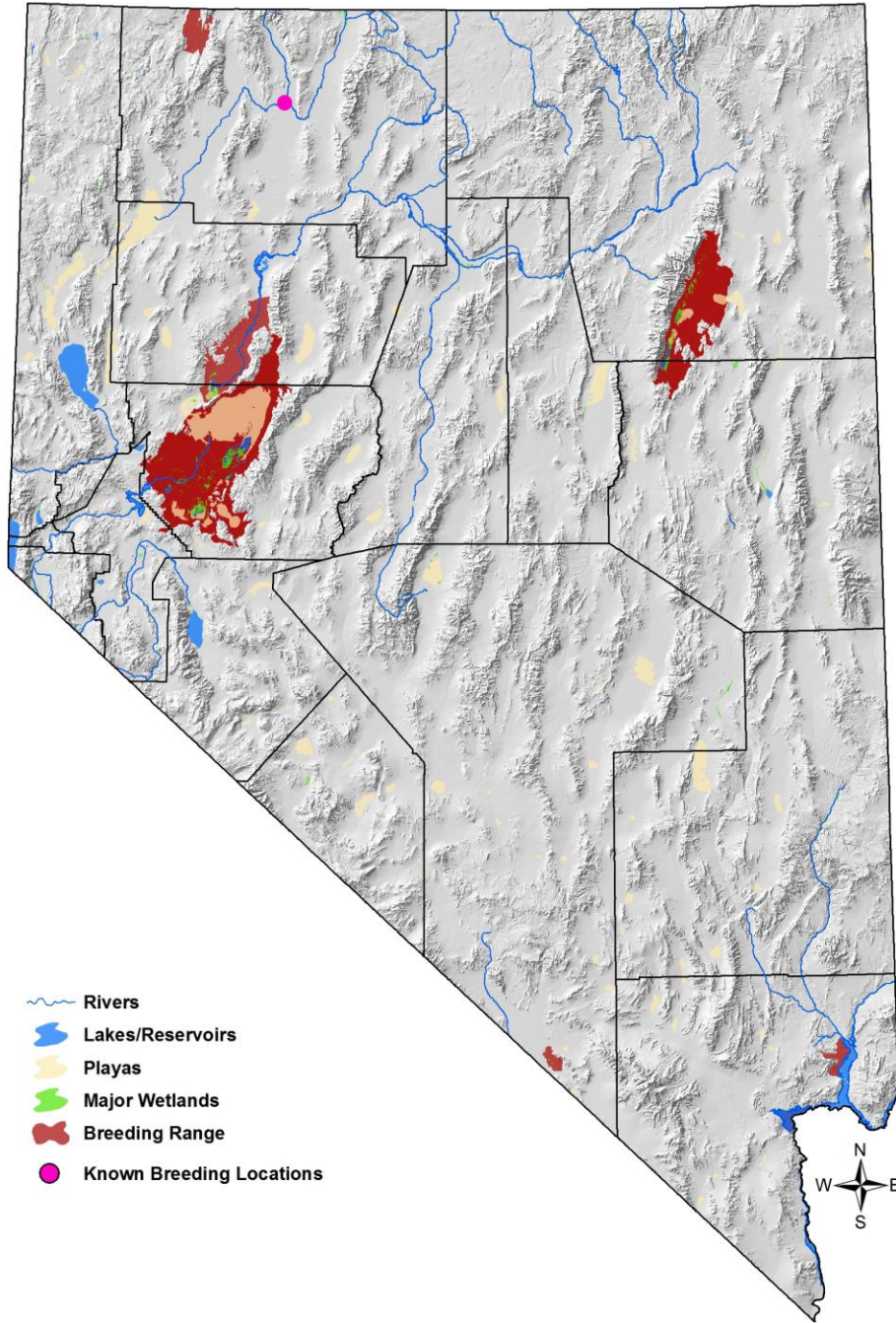
Priority Status	
Conservation Species	
Species Concerns	
Small population size Habitat threats	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S3B
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	Conservation Priority
IW Waterbird Plan	High Concern
Trends	
Historical ●	Increase in Great Basin in past 75 yrs ¹
Recent ●	Increasing ²
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ●	350 ^{EO}
Global ●	600,000 – 1,000,000 ^{3,1}
Percent of Global ●	< 1%
Population Objective	
Maintain ^{EO}	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NWR and WMA counts, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV ●	Very good in NWRs, Fair/Poor elsewhere
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Ruby Valley, Lahontan Valley
Restoration	Ruby Valley, Lahontan Valley

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring - fall	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
May – July ¹	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	On mats of floating vegetation ¹
Site Fidelity	Unknown
Other	Nests colonially ¹
Food Habits	
Basic	Omnivorous; terrestrial, aerial, dabbling
Primary Prey	Terrestrial and aquatic insects, seeds ¹
Secondary Prey	Plant matter ¹

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References: ¹ Burger and Gochfield (1994), ² Ivey and Herziger (2006), ³ Kushlan et al. (2002), ^{EO} expert opinion

Overview

Historical and recent population trends of the Franklin's Gull in the west are complex and regionally varied across the species' breeding range. 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 did not occur until 1970 (Alcorn 1988, Burger and Gochfield 1994). Until recently, our 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 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 sites. Franklin's Gulls engage in significant post-breeding vagrancy prior to southward migration (Burger and Gochfield 1994), 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 (Burger and Gochfield 1994)
- Colonies can become very large; Nevada's have historically been small (< 50 pairs / site) but are recently increasing in size at Ruby Lake NWR (Burger and Gochfield 1994, EO)

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

- None

Main Threats and Challenges

- Vulnerable to human disturbance during nesting (Burger and Gochfield 1994)
- Sensitive to changes in water level during nesting (Burger and Gochfield 1994)

Species with Similar Conservation Strategies

- Black Tern

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Conservation Strategies

Habitat Strategies

1. Marsh and Open Water conservation strategies benefit this species (see habitat accounts)
2. Manage wetlands with either sufficiently dense alkali bulrush or emergent narrowleaf pondweed to provide nest platform opportunity.
3. Maintain flooded conditions at a consistent water stage throughout the breeding season (1 May – 15 July).
4. Limit human disturbance of colony sites.

Research, Planning, and Monitoring

1. Conduct additional research and monitoring to determine role played by Nevada in providing stopover habitat for migrants.