DRAFT - For Review Only

Lesser Scaup
Aythya affinis

Photo by Larry Neel

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Open Water (non-breeding, foraging) Marsh (breeding) Wet Meadow (breeding)	
Key Habitat Parameters ●	
Plant Composition	Cattail, bulrush, grasses [1]
Plant Density	For breeding, overhead cover of 36 – 45%, height 20 – 60 cm (9 – 27 “) [1]
Mosaic	Water bodies with shallows for foraging and sufficiently dense shoreline or upland vegetation cover [1]
Water Depth	≤ 3 m (10 ft) open-water depth for foraging [1]
Water Quality	Apparently tolerates both fresh and moderately saline water [1]
Hydrology	Unknown requirements
Response to Vegetation Removal	Probably negative for breeding[EO]
Area Requirements ●	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown; often breeds at very small lakes or marshes[1]
Recommended Patch Size	≥ 0.1 ha [EO]
Home Range	Unknown, but probably small during breeding [EO]

Conservation Profile

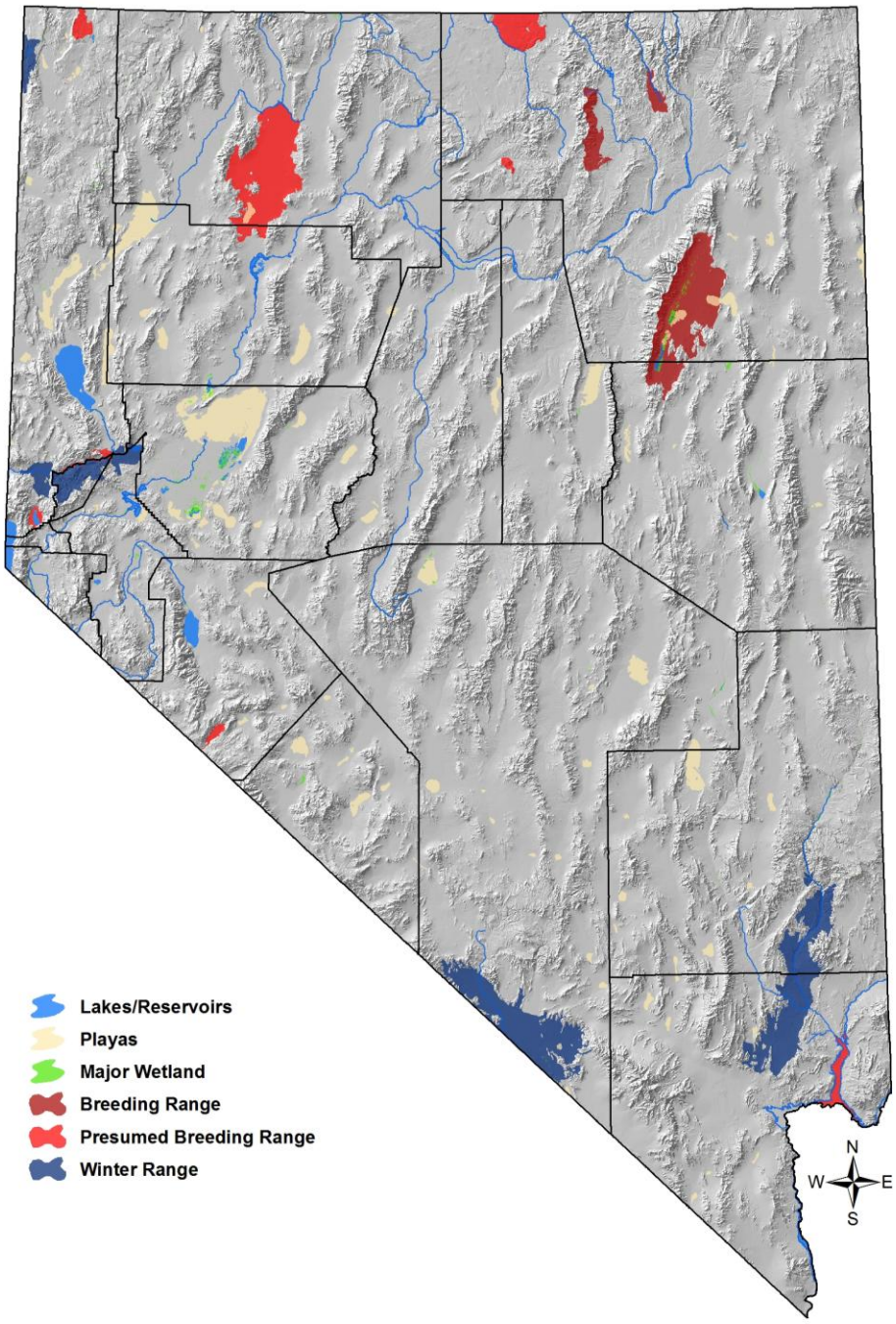
Priority Status	
Conservation Species	
Species Concerns	
Population declines Small population size Habitat threats	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S1B
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	Gamebird
Pacific Flyway Council	High
Trends	
Historical ●	Unknown [1]
Recent ●	Regional declines, Nevada unknown [1, 2]
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ●	~ 600 [EO]
Global ●	4,500,000 1
Percent of Global ●	< 1%
Population Objective	
Maintain/Increase [EO]	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NWR and WMA counts, NDOW aerial surveys, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV ●	Very good
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Ruby Lake NWR
Restoration	Great Basin marshes and open water

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring – summer (breeding in northern Nevada) Possible wintering in southern Nevada [1]	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
May – August 1	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	Usually on ground near water or on uplands ≤ 160 m (500 ft) of water’s edge, under dense vegetation cover[1]
Site Fidelity	Unknown
Food Habits	
Basic	Diver, mostly carnivorous [1]
Primary Prey	Aquatic invertebrates, incl. molluscs [1]
Secondary Prey	Plant material [1]

Confidence in Available Data: ● High ● Moderate ● Low

Lesser Scaup
Aythya affinis



DRAFT - For Review Only

DRAFT - For Review Only

Lesser Scaup
Aythya affinis

References: [1] Austin et al. (1998), [2] Pacific Flyway Council (proper citation?), [EO] Expert opinion

Overview

The Lesser Scaup is the most widespread and abundant diving duck in North America, but in Nevada it is breeding at the far southern margins of its continental breeding range. As such, it is present in small numbers and distributed sporadically across the northern part of the state, with one clear Nevada "hotspot" located at Ruby Lakes NWR in Elko County. Interestingly, Lesser Scaup are either absent or rare as breeders in Lahontan Valley, in contrast to most of our other waterfowl. Lesser Scaup seem to accept a wide range of water conditions and wetland sizes, but for placing the nest, they do require the presence of sufficiently dense vegetation along the shoreline or in the nearby uplands. Ongoing regional declines are a concern, but identifiable threats to the species in Nevada appear to be modest. Protection of key breeding areas, along with an overall policy to conserve smaller wetlands, should be sufficient for this species.

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- 400 birds annual average at Ruby Lake NWR (USFWS 2001)
- Inter-annual variability in number of breeding birds at Ruby Lake NWR, and presumably across state, is high (Austen et al. 1998; USFWS 2001)

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

- To be added

Main Threats and Challenges

Habitat Threats

- Loss and degradation of suitable wetland habitat (Austin et al. 1998)
- Degradation of shoreline or nearby upland vegetation resulting in reduced cover for nesting (Austin et al. 1998)

Other Threats

- Low population size in Nevada, at periphery of breeding range

Species with Similar Conservation Strategies

- Redhead

Lesser Scaup
Aythya affinis

DRAFT - For Review Only

Conservation Strategies

Habitat Strategies

1. Key breeding sites in Nevada are already managed for duck productivity
2. Marsh, Wet Meadow, and Open Water strategies should benefit this species (see Habitat Accounts)
3. Protect / restore shoreline and upland vegetation near wetlands to provide nesting requirements in terms of vegetation height and overhead density

Research, Planning, and Monitoring

1. Obtain better information about population size and trends within Nevada