

Long-billed Dowitcher

Limnodromus scolopaceus



Photo by Larry Neel

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Marsh Open Water	
Key Habitat Parameters ●	
Plant Composition	Cattail, bulrush, sedges, rushes, aquatic (submerged) vegetation
Plant Density	Generally in low stem densities or open water ¹
Mosaic	Shallow marsh with areas of low stem densities, interspersed with mudflats and shallow open water ¹
Water Depth	≤ 16 cm (7") for foraging ¹
Water Quality	Tolerates variety of salinities ¹
Response to Vegetation Removal	Probably neutral ^{EO}
Area Requirements ●	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown
Recommended Patch Size	≥ 50 ha (110 ac) ^{EO}
Home Range	Unknown

Conservation Profile

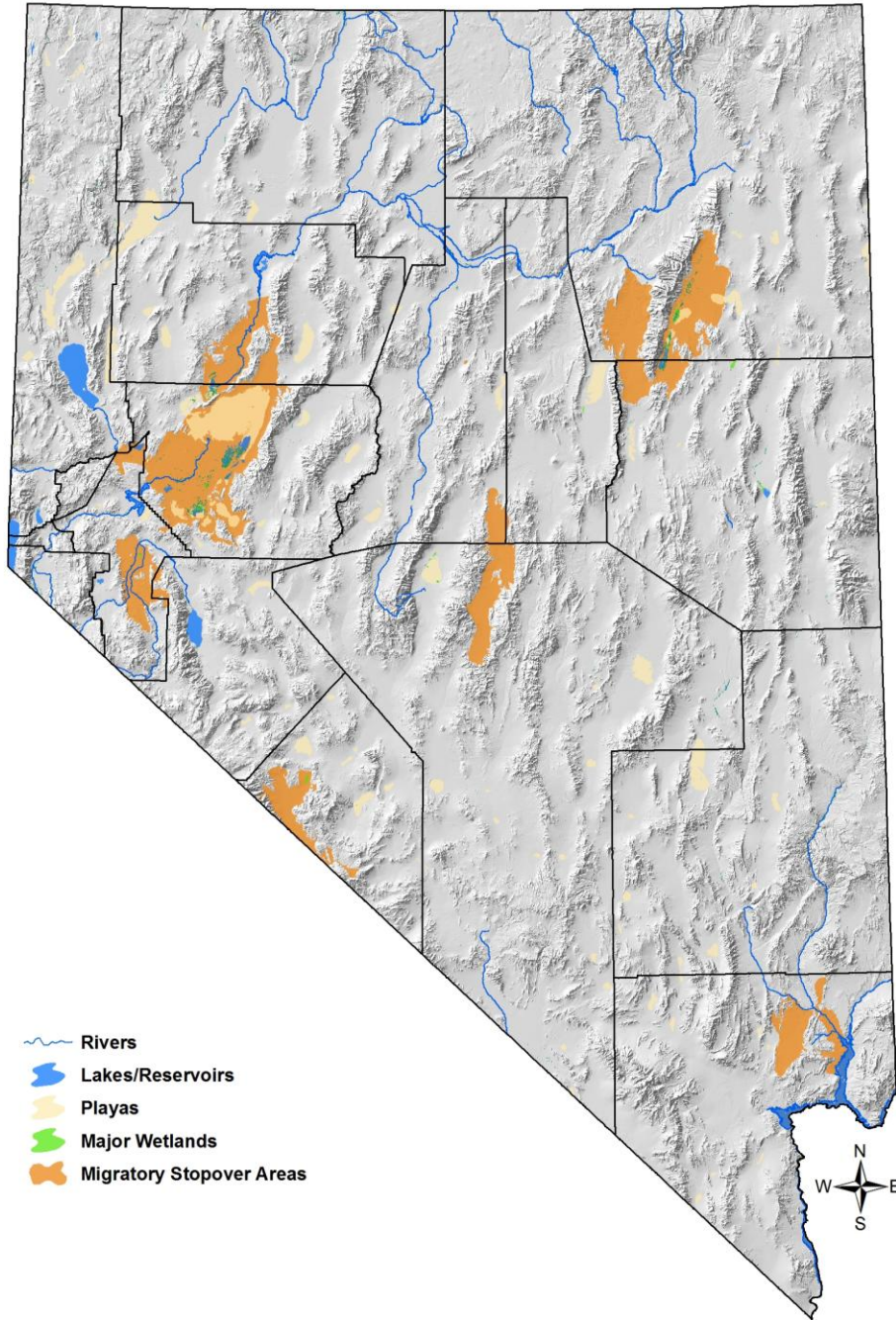
Priority Status	
Conservation Species	
Species Concerns	
Habitat threats	
Important stopover habitats	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S4N
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	Conservation Priority
IW Shorebird Plan	Critically Important
Trends	
Historical ●	Rangewide declines ¹
Recent ●	Stable ²
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ●	14,000, highly variable ³
Global ●	500,000 ⁴
Percent of Global ●	3%
Population Objective	
Maintain/Increase ^{EO}	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NDOW shorebird counts, NWR counts, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV ●	Very good in Lahontan Valley and NWRs, Fair elsewhere
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Lahontan and Ruby valleys
Restoration	All Great Basin marshes and open water

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring and fall migration (May and September peaks)	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
Not a breeder	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	n/a
Food Habits	
Basic	Invertebrates; benthic prober
Primary Prey	Benthic and soil invertebrates ¹
Secondary Prey	n/a

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Confidence in Available Data: ● High ● Moderate ● Low

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NOTE TO REVIEWERS: There was almost no group feedback on this bird during the threats and strategies sessions.

References: ¹ Takekawa and Warnock (2000), ² Morrison et al. (2006), ³ Andres spreadsheet, ⁴ WHSRN, ^{EO} expert opinion

Overview

Long-billed Dowitchers are one of the most numerous migrant shorebirds in the big wetland complexes of western Nevada, particularly in Lahontan Valley (Neel et al. 2000). In 1984-1986, NDOW and USFWS conducted an inventory of Lahontan Valley that revealed the possibility that up to 30% of the global population stopped over during migration (Neel and Henry 1997). Peaks in excess of 100,000 birds were recorded in Lahontan Valley in two years during the late 1980s (L. Neel pers. comm.). Considering the drought cycle that followed this period, it is assumed that 30,000 is the overall average for Lahontan Valley. The ability to provide water during the migration seasons is the most critical conservation measure for this species, and other demands on water during these seasons have likely caused the decrease in population levels to 14 – 20,000 birds in Lahontan Valley (L. Neel pers. comm.). The species typically uses moderate water depths in marsh habitat that has ample amounts of shallow open water, where it probes for invertebrates in wading depth (Takekawa and Warnock 2000). While wetland availability has increased in Lahontan Valley since the 1980s, dowitcher populations have not rebounded as would be expected (NDOW pers. comm.).

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- Lahontan Valley likely accounts for ~ 90% of Nevada's stopover migrants, with the rest occurring at other scattered sites
- Peak migratory population of 100,000 observed in Lahontan Valley in 1990 (Neel and Henry 1996)

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

- None

Main Threats and Challenges

- TBD

Species with Similar Conservation Strategies

- Western Sandpiper
- Least Sandpiper
- Marbled Godwit

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Further Reading

- Shuford et al. (2002)
- Neel and Henry (1997)
- Oring and Reed (1996)

Conservation Strategies

Habitat Strategies

1. Marsh conservation strategies benefit this species (see habitat accounts)
2. Maintain shallow shorelines of waterbodies or mudflats by flooding to ≤ 4 inches water depth with sparse or no emergent vegetation to produce maximum numbers of benthic invertebrates during spring (20 April – 10 May) and fall (1 – 30 August) migration.