Red-necked Phalarope

Phalaropus lobatus

Photo by Larry Neel

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Open Water Marsh	
Key Habitat Parameters ●	
Plant Composition	Cattail, bulrush, sedges, rushes, aquatic (submerged) vegetation
Plant Density	Very low density of emergent plants [1]
Mosaic	Variety of open water wetlands with a variety of water depths; no other habitat features known to be important [1]
Water Depth	No relationship known
Water Quality	Tolerates variety of salinities [EO]
Response to Vegetation Removal	Neutral [EO]
Area Requirements ●	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown; small wetlands used
Recommended Patch Size	50 ha (110 ac) [EO]
Home Range	Unknown

Conservation Profile

Priority Status	
Conservation Species	
Species Concerns	
Nevada stewardship for migration Habitat threats	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S4M
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	Conservation Priority
IW Shorebird Plan	Very Important
Trends	
Historical ●	Probable declines [1]
Recent ●	Possibly declining [2,1]
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ●	3,000; highly variable [3]
Global ●	2,500,000 [4,1]
Percent of Global ●	< 1%
Population Objective	
Maintain/Increase [EO]	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NDOW shorebird counts, NWR and WMA counts, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV ●	Very good in Lahontan Valley, Fair/Poor elsewhere
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Lahontan Valley (incl. Big Soda Lake), Humboldt Sink, Walker Lake
Restoration	Lahontan Valley (incl. Big Soda Lake), Humboldt Sink, Walker Lake

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring and fall migrations (May and August peaks)	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
Not a breeder	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	n/a
Site Fidelity	Unknown
Food Habits	
Basic	Invertebrates; dabbler
Primary Prey	Small aquatic invertebrates [1]
Secondary Prey	Some flying insects [1]

Confidence in Available Data: ● High ● Moderate ● Low

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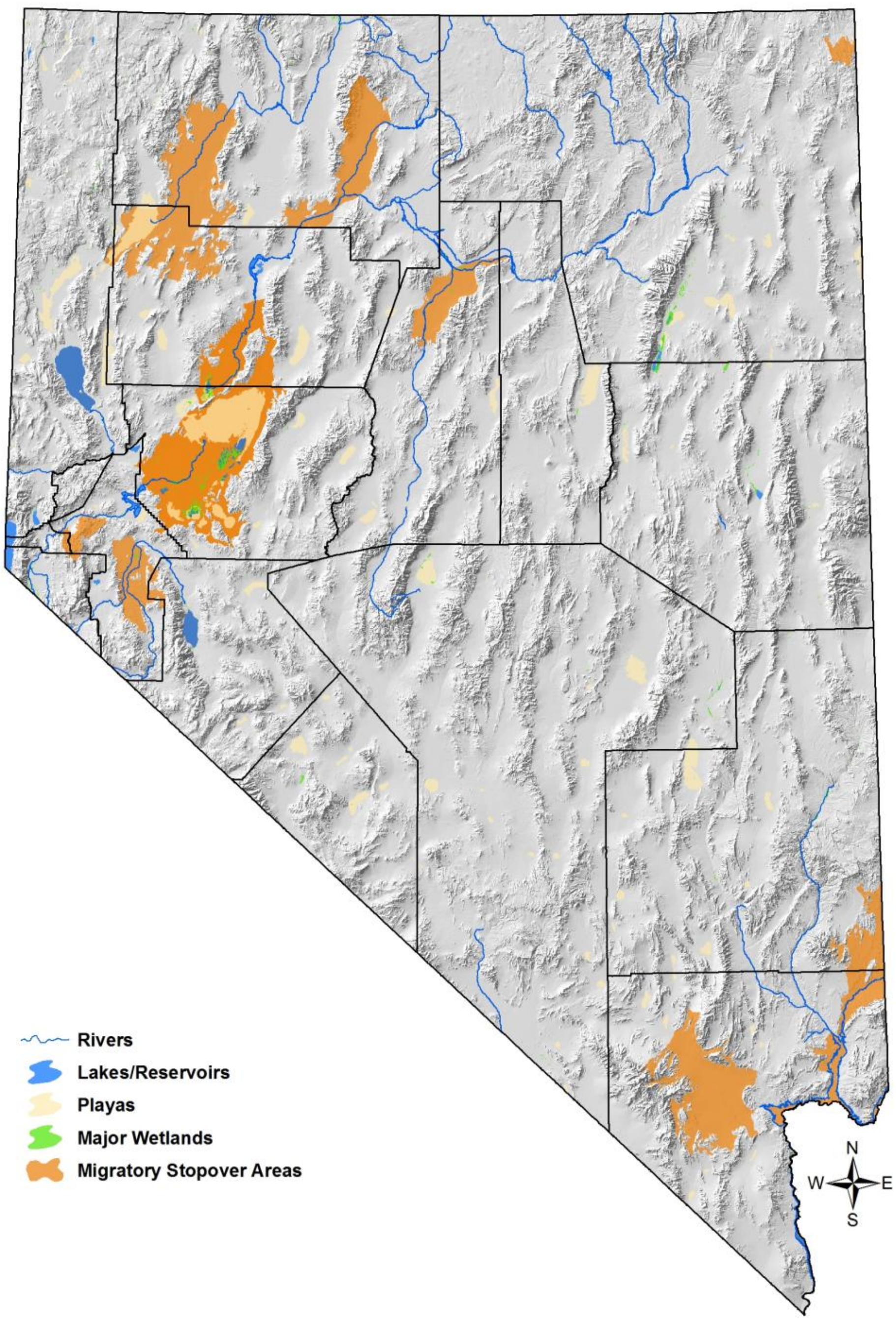

Note: Las Vegas Valley patch really only refers to Henderson wetlands; not seen elsewhere in the valley – will change it to a dot on Las Vegas Wash

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References: [1] Rubega et al. (2000), [2] USSSCP, [3] Andres spreadsheet, [4] WHSRN, [EO] expert opinion

Overview

Although technically a shorebird, Red-necked Phalaropes actually spend most of their life at sea. Significant numbers of these long-distance migrants, however, stop over in Nevada during their spring and fall migration. Although much larger congregations are typical of nearby areas such as Great Salt Lake and Mono Lake (Rubega et al. 2000), the species has reportedly been observed with up to 30,000 birds in Lahontan Valley's Big Soda Lake (L. Neel pers. comm.). Phalarope numbers are difficult to assess during migration, as their migration peaks are short, and their timing is variable (mid-April through May); fall migration also occurs earlier (late July) than for most other shorebirds (L. Neel pers. comm.). For this reason, our population size estimates for Nevada need to be confirmed with further research and monitoring. The Red-necked Phalarope is a conservation species because Nevada is likely critical for migration stopover habitat for several thousand birds each year.

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- Although 3,000 birds on average are estimated to stopover in Nevada, peak numbers of 16,200 have been observed in Lahontan Valley as recently as 1987 (Alcorn 1988), and 30,000 in the late 1980s (L. Neel pers. comm.).
- Present in Nevada during both spring and fall migration, but numbers typically higher in fall [Andres]

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

- None

Main Threats and Challenges

Unknown

Species with Similar Conservation Strategies

- Wilson's Phalarope
- Black-necked Stilt
- American Avocet

Further Reading

- Shuford et al. 2002

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Conservation Strategies

Habitat Strategies

1. Open Water and Marsh conservation strategies benefit this species (see habitat accounts)
2. Manage water in saline and other wetlands to produce invertebrates (brine shrimp, brine flies, and others) during the migration seasons (April 1 – June 15; and July 15 – August 30).

Research, Planning, and Monitoring

1. Develop a statewide shorebird monitoring program that takes birds of ephemeral wetlands and variable migration seasons into account.