

Western Grebe

Aechmophorus occidentalis



Photo by Fred Petersen

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Marsh Open Water	
Key Habitat Parameters ●	
Plant Composition	Cattail, bulrush, sedges, pondweeds and other aquatic (submerged) plants
Plant Density	Patches of dense emergent or floating vegetation required for nesting; otherwise open water ³
Mosaic	Deep wetlands, but with clumps of dense emergent or floating vegetation; for migration, no vegetation required ³
Water Depth	Variety of moderate to deep water depths that support small fish ³
Water Quality	Sufficient to support fish ³
Response to Vegetation Removal	Negative in breeding sites; otherwise neutral ^{EO}
Area Requirements ●	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown
Recommended Patch Size	≥150 ha (370 ac) ^{EO}
Home Range	Unknown

Conservation Profile

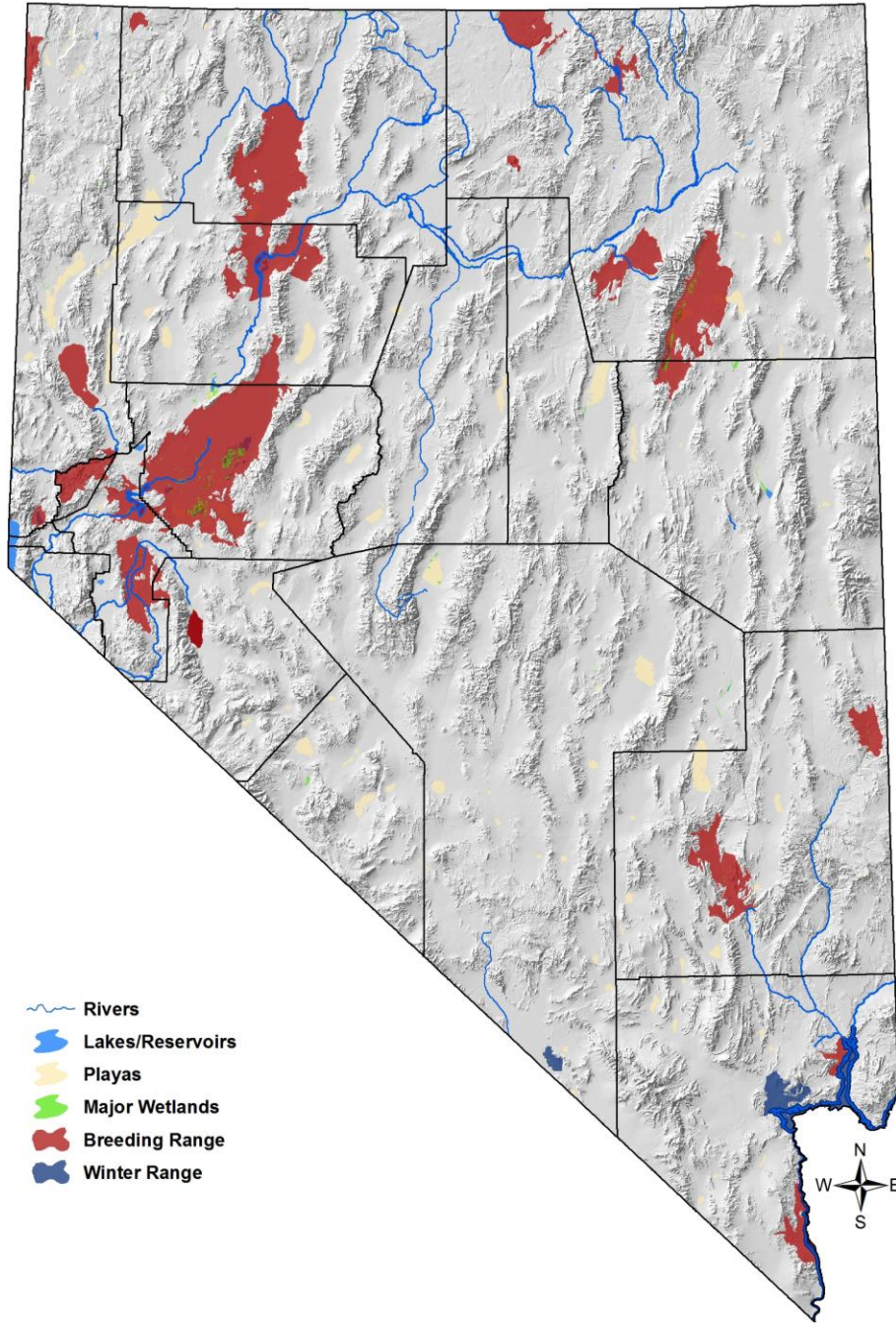
Priority Status	
Conservation Species	
Species Concerns	
Small population size Habitat threats Unknown population trends	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S4B
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	Conservation Priority
IW Waterbird Plan	High Concern
Trends	
Historical	Unknown
Recent	Unknown
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ●	50 (breeding) ¹
Global ●	110,000 ²
Percent of Global ●	< 1%
Population Objective	
Maintain/Increase ^{EO}	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NWR and WMA counts, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV ●	Fair
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Lahontan and Ruby valleys, Pyramid and Walker lakes (migration)
Restoration	All open water (migration)

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring – summer	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
April – December, peak May – August ^{EO,4}	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	On mound of matted down emergent or floating vegetation ³
Site Fidelity	Moderate for colony sites ³
Other	Colonial nester, but NV colonies small (< 10 pairs) ^{3,EO}
Food Habits	
Basic	Piscivorous; diver
Primary Prey	Small fish ³
Secondary Prey	n/a

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References: ¹ Ivey and Herziger (2006), ² Kushlan et al. (2002), ³ Storer and Nuechterlein (1992),
⁴ GBBO unpubl. atlas data, ^{EO} expert opinion

Overview

The Western Grebe often co-occurs with Clark's Grebe in Nevada. The two species are very similar in many respects, and little information exists that on their respective conservation issues and differences in conservation strategies. Therefore, they are probably best managed as if they were members of a single species until differences in their ecology and conservation needs are elucidated. In addition to their breeding presence across much of the state, Western Grebes are also known to stage prior to migration in our larger, fish-rich water bodies such as Walker and Pyramid Lakes. It is also possible that Lake Mead regularly supports wintering birds, though this requires additional clarification. Although Nevada's population of breeding Western Grebes is fairly small, it appears to be stable. Most of the possible species-specific threats that were identified in preparation of this plan were characterized as having a low impact, with the possible exception of the projected loss or degradation of the Walker Lake fishery.

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- Unknown

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

- None

Main Threats and Challenges

- Generalized loss of appropriate Marsh or Open Water habitat with sufficient fish populations
- Increasing salinity in Walker Lake, and associated projected decline of fishery
- Disturbance from close approach of motorized watercraft (WAP Team 2006)

Species with Similar Conservation Strategies

- Clark's Grebe
- Common Loon

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Conservation Strategies

Habitat Strategies

1. Open Water and Marsh conservation strategies benefit this species (see habitat accounts)

Public Outreach

1. Educate recreationalists to minimize disturbance of nesting areas and migration stopover hotspots with watercraft
2. Continue to support efforts to halt or reverse the dewatering of Walker Lake

Research, Planning, and Monitoring

1. Add survey coverage to better assess trends and resource use in Walker Lake and other terminal lakes