

Wilson's Phalarope

Phalaropus tricolor



Photo by Steve Ting

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Marsh Open Water Wet Meadows Adjacent terrestrial habitats	
Key Habitat Parameters ●	
Plant Composition	Spikerush, sedges, other short dense vegetation near shore ¹
Plant Density	Variable, but often dense, short vegetation within 100 m (330 ft) of shore ^{1, EO}
Mosaic	Breeds in a variety of large and small marshes with sufficient shoreline vegetation; stopover in larger saline lakes ¹
Water Depth	Variety of depths, but most often < 2 m (6 ft) ^{1, EO}
Hydrology	Large variety of water regimes ^{EO}
Water Quality	Freshwater for breeding, saline lakes for stopover ¹
Response to Vegetation Removal	Neutral ^{EO}
Area Requirements ●	
Minimum Patch Size	Often highly gregarious, with nests as close as 5 m (16 ft) apart; may be more solitary in NV ^{1, EO}
Recommended Patch Size	≥ 10 ha (22 ac) ^{EO}
Home Range	Unknown

Conservation Profile

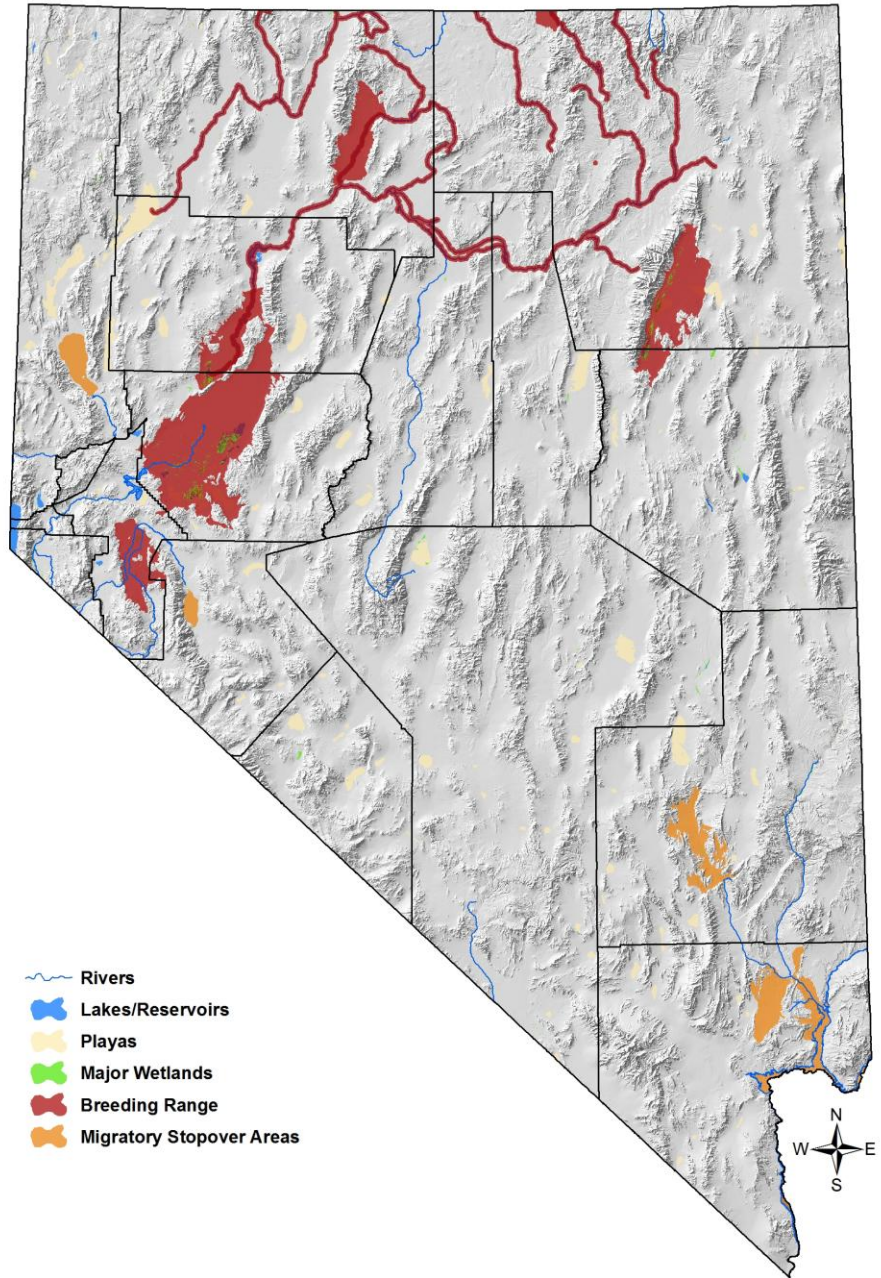
Priority Status	
Conservation Species	
Species Concerns	
Habitat threats Stewardship of staging habitat	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S2S3B
USFWS	Migratory Bird
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	None
IW Shorebird Plan	Critically Important
Trends	
Historical ●	Probable declines ¹
Recent ●	Probably declining in Nevada ^{2, 3, EO}
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ●	3,000 breeding, 12,000 staging; highly variable ^{EO, 4}
Global ●	1,500,000 ^{1, 5}
Percent of Global ●	< 1%
Population Objective	
Maintain / increase ^{EO}	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	WMA and NWR counts, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV ●	Fair in WMAs and NWRs, Poor elsewhere
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	For breeding, Lahontan Valley, Humboldt system Ruby Lake NWR; for staging, Lahontan Valley, Pyramid Lake, Walker Lake
Restoration	Same as above

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring – Summer breeding, Fall staging	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
May – July ^{1, 6}	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	Ground nests in marshy / wet areas with vegetation cover, ≤ 100m (330 ft) from water ¹
Site Fidelity	Unknown
Other	Gregarious nester ¹
Food Habits	
Basic	Invertebrates; dabbler and benthic prober
Primary Prey	Invertebrates from water column or sediment ¹
Secondary Prey	Terrestrial invertebrates ¹

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References: ¹ Colwell et al. (1994), ² Brown et al. (2001), ³ Chishom and Neel (2002), ⁴ B. Andres, unpub. data (better citation?), ⁵ Morrison et al. (2006), ⁶ Floyd et al. (2007)
^{EO} expert opinion

Overview

Wilson's Phalarope is well known for the huge flocks that congregate just outside Nevada's borders at Great Salt Lake and Mono Lake prior to its long-distance fall migration. Although the bird's presence in our state is more modest, Nevada does contain important staging sites, particularly a variety of wetland complexes in Lahontan Valley, where a peak staging abundance of 67,000 birds was recorded in 1987 (Neel and Henry 1996). Wilson's Phalaropes also breed fairly widely across the northern part of the state. While Nevada's staging population has been reasonably well characterized, little information has been collected on the breeding population. This is unfortunate, because indications are that Wilson's Phalarope, though still numerous, has been declining rather steadily within Nevada and the greater region for some time. Better identifying the threats to this bird, both during the breeding season and the staging period, is critical to identifying effective conservation strategies.

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- Although staging population is typically ~ 12,000 (most at Stillwater NWR), peak numbers of staging birds has reached 67,000 in Lahontan Valley alone in 1987 (Neel and Henry 1996)
- Very large numbers of breeders were reported in Lahontan Valley in 1970's, but not since that time (Chisholm and Neel 2002).

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

- To be added

Main Threats and Challenges

Habitat Threats

Threats to Marshes and Wet Meadows apply to this species (see habitat accounts), and the following specifically:

- General loss or degradation of wetlands
- Possible negative impacts of livestock grazing on wet terrestrial habitats used for nesting

Other Threats

None known

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Species with Similar Conservation Strategies

- Red-necked Phalarope

Further Reading

Shuford, W.D., Page, G.W., and L.E. Stenzel. 2002. Patterns of distribution and abundance of migratory shorebirds in the Intermountain West of the United States. *Western Birds* 33(3):134-174.

Conservation Strategies

Habitat Strategies

1. Habitat strategies for Marshes and Ephemeral Wetlands will benefit this species (see habitat accounts)

Research, Planning, and Monitoring

1. Better monitor and characterize the breeding population in terms of size, habitat requirements, threats, and trends