

Wet Meadows



Wet meadow in south Steptoe Valley, White Pine County. Photo by Elisabeth Ammon.

Key Bird-Habitat Attributes

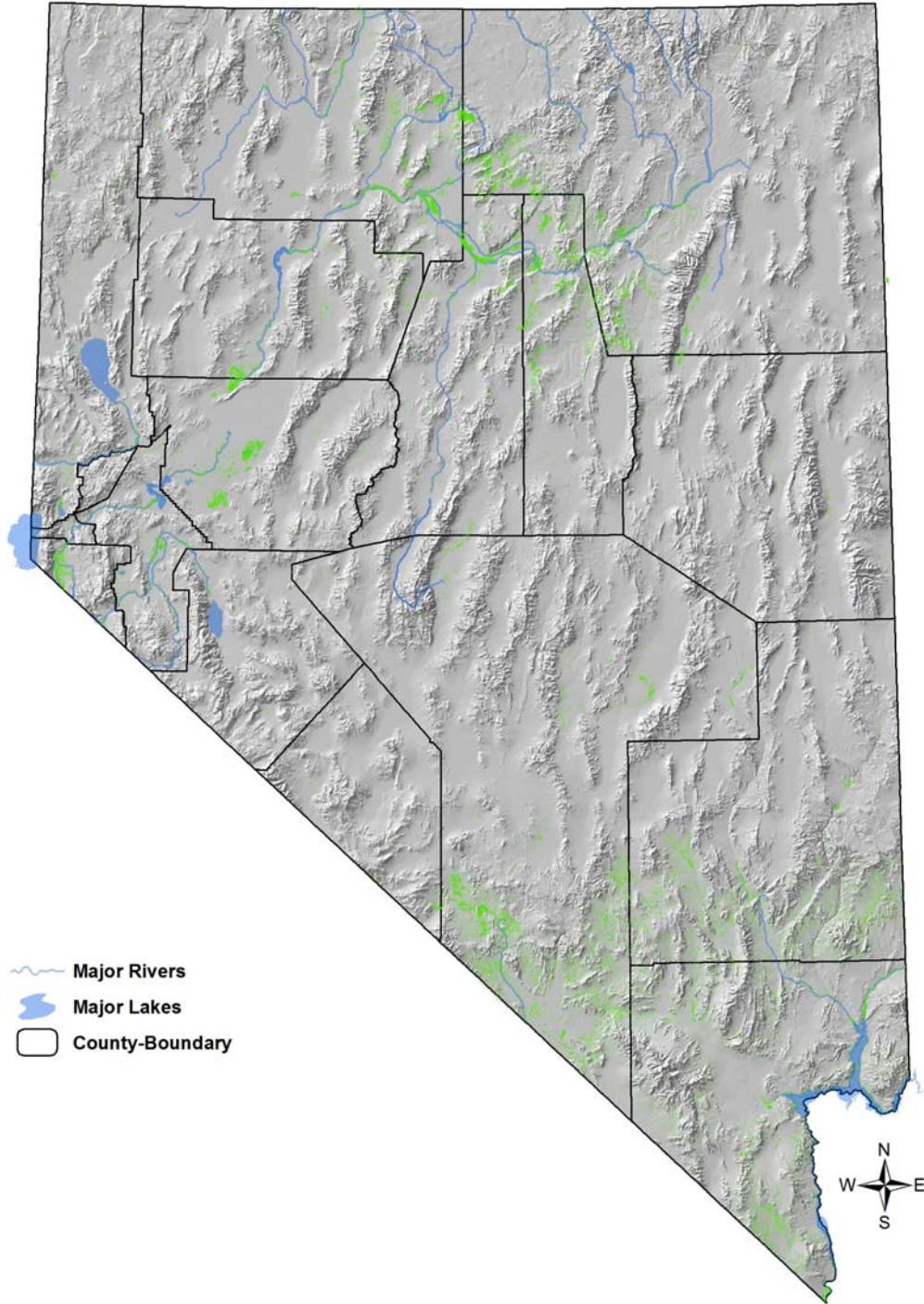
Plant Species Composition	multi-species mixtures ideal for herbaceous cover, including graminoids and forbs
Ideal Scale for Conservation Action	whole meadow and border habitats
Land Uses	Haying schedules that avoid the main breeding season (May – mid-June) most suitable; flush-bars on agricultural equipment extremely beneficial; grazing practices that avoid creation of bare soil
Windbreaks and Hedgerows	Rows of native willows, alders, and other shrubs along ditches and streams particularly suitable for some species
Other Features	Protection of nearby streams, springs, rivers from chemical and livestock impacts enhances overall wildlife value; Establishment of feral cats should be discouraged

Conservation Profile

Estimated Cover in Nevada	222,100 ha (549,000 ac) 0.8% of state
Landownership Breakdown	BLM = 46% Private = 43% Other = 11%
Priority Bird Species	Swainson's Hawk Bald Eagle White-faced Ibis Long-billed Curlew Sandhill Crane Short-eared Owl (Greater Sage-Grouse) (Golden Eagle) (Prairie Falcon)
Indicator Species	Bobolink (in northern and NE Nevada)
Past Impacts	Livestock Surface Water Diversions
Most Important Current Threats	Habitat Conversion Surface Water Diversions Livestock Climate Change Invasive Plants
Habitat Recovery Time	5-10 years
Regions of Greatest Conservation Interest	northeastern and eastern Nevada
Important Bird Areas	Monitor Valley, Carson Valley, Lahontan Valley, High Rock Resource Area

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Lowland Riparian, Wetland, and Wet Meadow



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Similar to agricultural lands, wet meadows support a number of priority bird species in Nevada, most importantly perhaps the Long-billed Curlew and Sandhill Crane. Greater Sage-Grouse also make use in the summer of meadows that have water and forbs. For the purpose of this plan, we refer to wet meadows as areas fields and natural meadows that are not actively irrigated, but that receive water from runoff, near-surface groundwater, or desert springs. Wet meadows are rare on the Nevada landscape, and most are managed by the BLM and private landowners. Similar to springs and riparian areas, wet meadows provide important foraging habitat for upland birds and support their own small community of birds that require moist grass cover, or the prey items that reside in it. Old, deciduous border trees are rare in native wet meadows of Nevada, but as in agricultural lands, if they are present, they may support raptor nests and roosts. Nearby wetlands are beneficial for a variety of additional birds, as these provide foraging opportunities and a water source. In meadows, high species richness in graminoids and forbs increase habitat value for several species.

The primary threats to wet meadows are habitat conversion for urban and other uses, and locally intensive grazing by both domestic and feral livestock that exposes bare soils. If herbicides, insecticides, and rodenticides are used intensively, they present a threat to birds using agricultural lands and associated wetlands.

Agriculture or Wet Meadow

Not To Scale



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Conservation Strategies

Habitat Strategies

1. Manage at the scale of the whole wet meadow or meadow complex, ideally with each having a buffer of native vegetation, and the entire area having a 100 m (110 yards) buffer of mostly native vegetation (but may include maintenance roads, fences, or trails). Grazing that is light enough to preserve complete vegetation cover and plant species diversity is recommended for areas used by livestock.
2. If wetlands are nearby, any measures to protect water quality are beneficial to birds. Shorelines should also be protected to the extent possible, as ground-nesting species will be attracted to them.
3. Maintain a mosaic of varying native vegetation covers by grazing and haying schedules that allow nesting (March – mid July) in portions of wet meadows, particularly where ground-nesting priority species are present. Rotational use that might facilitate additional use by priority species, including for brood rearing (July – early September), is also encouraged.
4. If wet meadow is supported by groundwater, maintain pumping levels that do not cause habitat conversion.
5. Removal of invasive plants should be followed by active restoration of native vegetation in the removal sites, as weedy species often take advantage of disturbed soils and become more easily re-established in the absence of competition.

Public Outreach

1. Promote pride of landowners in wildlife attracted to their property. Outreach may include tips on agricultural practices and habitat features that enhance habitat value to birds.
2. Provide educational materials on threats from domestic and feral cats to birds, benefits of birds to agricultural operation (control of rodents), and on wildlife-compatible grazing practices, and weed control.

Research, Planning, and Monitoring

1. If losses of wet meadows to other land or water uses are expected, planning for mitigation of habitat loss may be necessary.