### Eared Grebe
*Podiceps nigricollis*

#### Natural History Profile

**Seasonal Presence in Nevada**
- Spring – summer (breeding)
- Winter (far southern Nevada)

**Known Breeding Dates in Nevada**
- May – August [p1]

**Nesting Habits**
- Floating nests attached to emergent vegetation
- Nests may be placed either beneath overhead cover, or in a relatively open situation [p1, p4]
- Usually breeds colonially, but in Nevada colonies are typically small [p1, p4]
- Moderate fidelity to breeding locations, if consistently available [p1]

**Food Requirements**
- Variety of aquatic invertebrates, less commonly small aquatic vertebrates [p1]
- Forages in water column (up to 4 m depth) or on shallow bottoms [p1]

#### Conservation Profile

**Priority Status**
- Conservation Target

**Reasons for Priority Status**
- Threats
- Small population size

**Other Rankings**
- Continental PIF: None
- Audubon Watchlist: None
- Natural Heritage: S4B
- USFWS: Bird of Conservation Concern (Great Basin); Migratory Bird
- BLM: None
- NDOW: Conservation Priority
- IM West Waterbird: High Concern

**Trends**
- Historical: Unknown
- Recent: Stable or increasing [IWWCP]

**Population Size Estimates**
- Nevada: 400 [IWWCP]
- Global: 4,100,000 [NAWCP]
- Percent of Global: < 1 %

**Population Objective**
- Maintain breeding population of 400 birds

**Monitoring Coverage**
- Source: Refuge and WMA counts; Aquatic Bird Count
- Coverage and Adequacy: Good

**Key Conservation Areas**
- Ruby Lakes NWR, Lahontan Valley, Walker Lake, Pyramid Lake

#### Habitat Use Profile

**Main Habitats Used in Nevada**
- Open Water
- Marsh

**Key Habitat Use Parameters**
- Prefers shallow, alkaline lakes, ponds, and marshes with emergent vegetation and very productive macroinvertebrate communities [p1]

**Minimum Patch Size**
- Uses water bodies of a variety of sizes [p4]

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Photo by Jacque Lowery
Eared Grebe
*Podiceps nigricollis*
**Eared Grebe**  
*Podiceps nigricollis*

**Temporary Map Key**

Pink: Breeding range  
Hot pink / magenta: For some birds, breeding data was limited, and was supplemented by extrapolation to include likely breeding range. In these cases, hot pink represents known breeding range, and lighter pink the extrapolated breeding range.  
Blue: Winter range  
Yellow: Important migration stopover areas  
Purple: Year-round range  
Green: In some maps, wetlands mapped by SWReGAP are shown in green for interpretational purposes  
Dot symbols: In cases where breeding records were isolated or very restricted in extent, they are represented by a pink dot symbol rather than a shaded area.  
Arrows: Major migration routes. These are shown only for birds for which there are migration-associated conservation issues.

**OVERVIEW**

The Eared Grebe is distinct in several respects from Nevada’s two other conservation priority grebe species. Most notably, it is strongly associated with saline wetlands, though less so during breeding season [p1]. Immediately after breeding, most birds from Nevada and surrounding areas appear to wander into either Mono Lake or Great Salt Lake, where they congregate in very large numbers to feed on brine shrimp prior to fall migration [p1]. Compared to the Western and Clark’s grebes, the Eared Grebe appears to engage in little, if any, significant staging activity within Nevada itself, but is abundant throughout the migration season. Additionally, this grebe feeds primarily on invertebrates, while the other grebes are primarily fish-eaters. All three grebes share in common a fairly widespread breeding presence in the state, but overall a relatively small breeding population, and seemingly stable population trends. Relatively few clear-cut species-specific conservation threats have been identified for any of the grebe species, apart from general concerns about conserving and protecting open water and marsh habitats.

**ABUNDANCE AND OCCUPANCY BY HABITAT**

- High counts as follows:  
  - 600 breeders recorded at Ruby Lake in 1983 (Alcorn 1988)  
  - Several hundred nests recorded at both Carson Lake and Stillwater NWR in mid-1990’s (Chisholm and Neel 2002)

**NEVADA-SPECIFIC STUDIES AND ANALYSES**

- None

**MAIN THREATS AND CHALLENGES**

- Conversion or dewatering of alkaline marshes and lakes  
- No significant species-specific threats identified
CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

Habitat Strategies

- General marsh and open water conservation strategies

Research, Planning, and Monitoring

- Conduct additional research to better determine specific habitat needs and threats in Nevada, and whether Nevada provides any important pre-migration staging habitat

PRIORITY SPECIES WITH SIMILAR CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

- Cinnamon Teal
- American Avocet
- Black-necked Stilt

FURTHER READING

- [TBD pending literature review]

Temporary codes for standard references
[p1] Birds of N. America account for this species
[p7] Pacific Flyway reports
[p8] Shrubsteppe Landscapes in Jeopardy (Dobkin and Sauder 2004)
[s1] NBC-based population size estimates
[s2, s3] NBC-based habitat relationship analysis
[s4] Breeding Bird Atlas breeding phenology data
[i1] BBS trends analysis (Sauer et al 2005)
[i2] NV Upland Game Management Plan (Espinosa et al in prep.)
[i3] Western Quail Management Plan (Zornes et al 2008)
[i4] NDOW Shorebird and Waterbird monitoring data (Neel)
[i5] Brad Andres IMJV Shorebird / Waterbird data set
[EO] Expert opinion from NVPIF group members
[IWWCP] Intermountain West Waterbird Conservation Plan
[NAWCP] North American Waterbird Conservation Plan
[LBCUSACP] Long-billed Curlew Status Assessment and Conservation Plan
[USSCP] U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan
[WHSRN] Western Hemispheric Shorebird Regional Network