

# Prairie Falcon

*Falco mexicanus*



Photo by Martin Meyers

## Conservation Profile

<b>Priority Status</b>	Stewardship Target
<b>Reasons for Priority Status</b>	High stewardship responsibility Possible declines
<b>Other Rankings</b>	Continental PIF: None Audubon Watchlist: None Natural Heritage: S4 USFWS: Bird of Conservation Concern (Mojave Desert), Migratory Bird BLM: Sensitive Species NDOW: None
<b>Trends</b>	Historical: Unknown Recent: Possible declines in 1980's; currently stable or increasing range-wide, but declines possibly continuing in Nevada [p8, i1]
<b>Population Size Estimates</b>	Nevada (NBC): 11,500 Nevada (PIF): 8,500 Nevada (other): ~ 2,500 (Herron et al 1985) Global: 36,000 [p5], although some estimates much lower (Johnsgard 1990) Percent of Global: 24% or greater
<b>Population Objective</b>	TBD
<b>Monitoring Coverage</b>	Source: Nevada Bird Count, NDOW raptor surveys Coverage and Adequacy: Good
<b>Key Conservation Areas</b>	See Herron et al. (1985) for list of 33 high density areas in Nevada

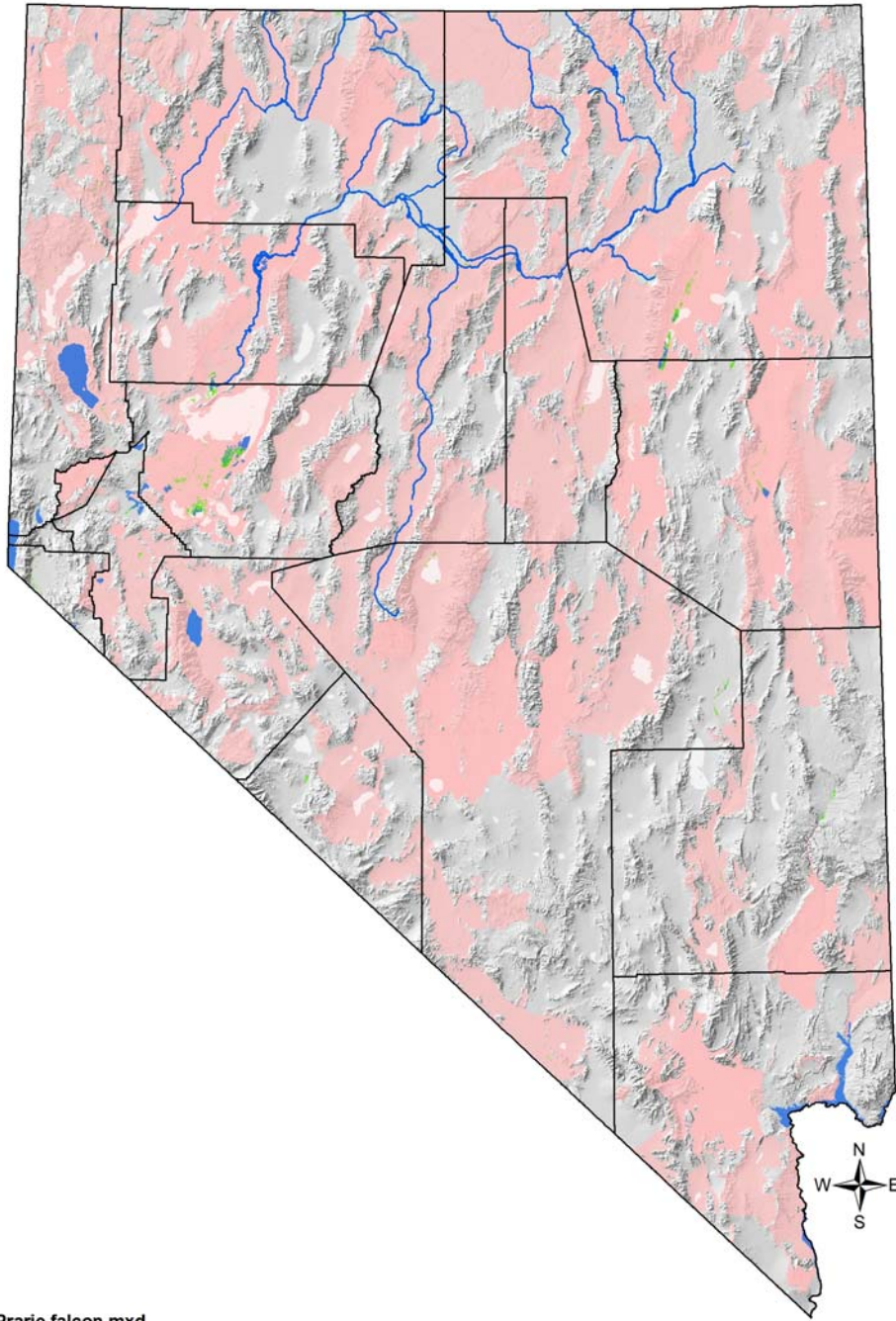
## Habitat Use Profile

<b>Main Habitats Used in Nevada</b>	Sagebrush Mojave Scrub Cliffs
<b>Key Habitat Use Parameters</b>	Wide variety of open, arid habitats in vicinity of cliffs, especially Sagebrush and Mojave Scrub [p1, p8, p9, s] Favor foraging areas with good prey abundance [p8, p9] May be seen foraging over a wide variety of relatively open habitat types [p1, s4] May use agricultural areas for foraging in non-breeding season [p1]
<b>Minimum Patch Size</b>	Typical home range 50 – 75 km <sup>2</sup> [p9], but may be much larger when prey scarce [p1]

## Natural History Profile

<b>Seasonal Presence in Nevada</b>	Year-round, but individual birds often engage in substantial seasonal movements [p1]
<b>Known Breeding Dates in Nevada</b>	February – July [EO, s4]
<b>Nesting Habits</b>	Nest on cliffs, often facing south or east [p9] High fidelity to nest sites [p9]
<b>Food Requirements</b>	Primarily small mammals, especially Townsend's ground squirrels in Nevada [p1,p2, p8, p9] Birds, reptiles when small mammals are scarce [p1] Songbirds may be important winter prey [p1, p9]

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File: Prarie falcon.mxd

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### 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

Approximately one-fourth of the world’s Prairie Falcons inhabit Nevada, where their preferred landscapes (cliffs adjacent to arid valleys with low vegetation) are abundant. Prairie Falcons may forage over a wide variety of open habitat types throughout the year, including agricultural lands during the winter months, but desert uplands such as sagebrush, salt desert, and Mojave scrub during most of the year. Density and home range sizes vary considerably over time and space, depending on prey abundance patterns and the amount of cliffs suitable for nesting. Other than disturbances in close proximity to nesting cliffs, there appear to be few serious threats to Prairie Falcons in Nevada, but continued (and perhaps expanded) monitoring is needed to confirm population stability.

### ABUNDANCE AND OCCUPANCY BY HABITAT

- NBC transects (percent column actually refers to **proportion** of transects occupied)

		% Transects Occupied (Great Basin)	% Transects Occupied (Mojave)
Aspen		0.05 (1/18)	0
Lowland Riparian		0.03 (2/66)	0.03 (1/36)
Montane Riparian		0.02 (2/88)	0
Montane Shrublands		0.11 (1/9)	0
Pinyon-Juniper		0.07 (4/61)	0
Salt Desert		0.04 (1/23)	0

- In good habitat, nests may be spaced as closely as ~ 0.5 km; typically 1 – 10 km [p1]

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- Over a variable landscape, density typically 1 pair for every 95 – 185 km<sup>2</sup>
- In canyons with linear cliff lines, density typically 0.1 – 0.34 pairs per kilometer of cliff line; may be as high as 4 pairs / km in some areas [p1]

## NEVADA-SPECIFIC STUDIES AND ANALYSES

- TBD

## MAIN THREATS AND CHALLENGES

- Human disturbances near nest sites may cause abandonment, especially disturbances above the nest [p9]
- Illegal persecution

## CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

### **Habitat Strategies**

- General Sagebrush, Cliffs, Salt Desert, and Mojave Scrub conservation strategies to address prey populations
- Manage rangelands specifically for healthy ground squirrel populations

### **Research, Planning, and Monitoring**

- Continue and expand monitoring to better determine true population size and trends in Nevada

### **Other**

- If development of any sort is planned in the vicinity of cliffs, survey for presence of Prairie Falcon nests
- Maintain 1 km disturbance-free buffer zones around nest cliffs (Suter and Jones 1981)

## OTHER PRIORITY SPECIES WITH SIMILAR CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

- Swainson's Hawk
- Golden Eagle

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FURTHER READING

- Herron et al 1985

Temporary codes for standard references

[p1] Birds of N. America account for this species  
[p2] NV Bird Conservation Plan ver. 1 (Neel 1999)  
[p3] NV Wildlife Action Plan  
[p4] Nevada Breeding Bird Atlas  
[p5] PIF N. American Landbird Conservation Plan (Rich et al 2004) (NOTE:  
[p6] Intermountain West Regional Shorebird Plan (Oring et al 2003)  
[p7] Pacific Flyway reports  
[p8] Shrubsteppe Landscapes in Jeopardy (Dobkin and Sauder 2004)  
[p9] Birds in a Sagebrush Sea (Paige and Ritter 1999)  
[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  
[i6] GBBO Technical Report 08-01 (2008)  
[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