

# White-faced Ibis

## *Plegadis chihi*



Photo by Larry Neel

### Habitat Use Profile

<b>Main Habitats Used in Nevada</b>	Marsh Agricultural Wet Meadow
<b>Key Habitat Use Parameters</b>	Most likely in shallow marshes dominated by cattail and / or bulrush, which provide breeding and foraging habitat [p1] Also often forages in flooded hayfields, wet meadows [p1] During breeding season, most birds remain within a few kilometers of the nest site (< 6 km) [p1] Outside of breeding season, may fly 10's of kilometers from foraging areas to night roosts [p1]
<b>Minimum Patch Size</b>	Breeds colonies tend to occur in larger marshes, but foraging is frequently observed in smaller marshes as well [p1, p4]

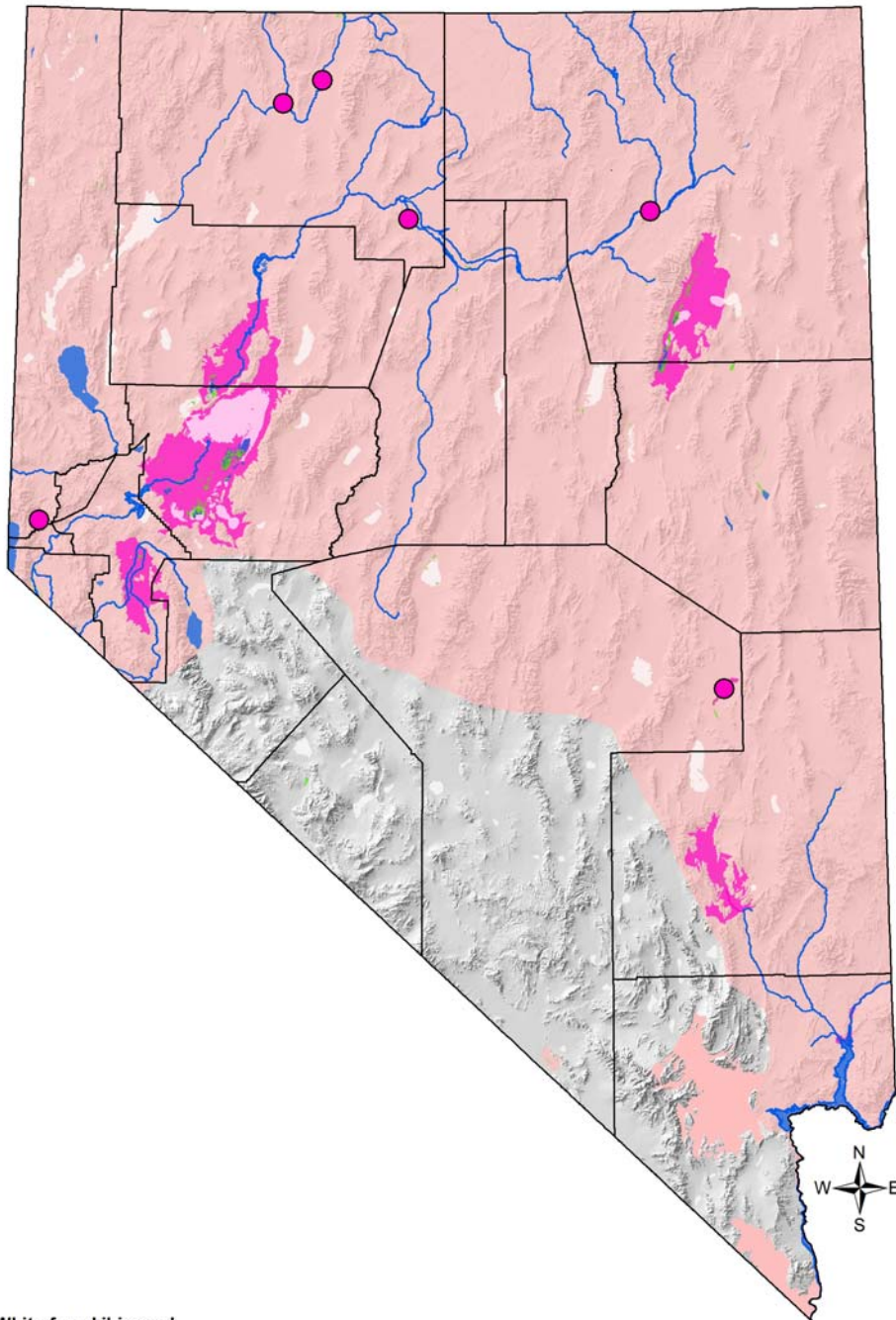
### Conservation Profile

<b>Priority Status</b>	Conservation Target
<b>Reasons for Priority Status</b>	Threats Moderate stewardship responsibility
<b>Other Rankings</b>	Continental PIF: None Audubon Watchlist: None Natural Heritage: S3B USFWS: Migratory Bird BLM: None NDOW: Conservation Priority IM West Waterbird: Moderate Concern
<b>Trends</b>	Historical: Recent: Declining [NDOW]
<b>Population Size Estimates</b>	Nevada: 5,000 [NDOW], with substantial annual variation Global: ≥ 100,000 [NAWCP] [p10] Percent of Global: 5 %
<b>Population Objective</b>	Increase rolling ten-year average breeding population to 6,000
<b>Monitoring Coverage</b>	Source: NDOW aerial colonial waterbird surveys, refuge and WMA counts, NBC, Aquatic Bird Count Coverage and Adequacy: Very Good - Excellent
<b>Key Conservation Areas</b>	Lahontan Valley Ruby Lake NWR Humboldt River system

### Natural History Profile

<b>Seasonal Presence in Nevada</b>	Spring – summer (breeding)
<b>Known Breeding Dates in Nevada</b>	May – July [s4, EO]
<b>Nesting Habits</b>	Nests colonially in emergent vegetation or low woody vegetation over shallow water [p1] Nest height above water level usually 20 – 50 cm [p1] High fidelity to breeding marshes [p1]
<b>Food Requirements</b>	Aquatic and moist-soil invertebrates, small vertebrates [p1] Forages in flooded meadows, agricultural fields, or wetland margins [p1]

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File: White-faced ibis.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

Determining the current conservation status of the White-faced Ibis in Nevada recently became somewhat more problematic. The species suffered significant historical declines due to habitat loss and pesticides [p1], but staged a somewhat dramatic recovery beginning in the 1980s [p1, p10]. Until recently, it appeared that ibis numbers were fairly stable in Nevada (apart from normal annual fluctuations) [p3], but more recent data suggests the possibility of a renewed declining trend. Evidence for these possible declines comes primarily from Lahontan Valley, the White-faced Ibis's breeding stronghold in the state. Specifically, the current ten-year average for Lahontan Valley (4,200) is substantially lower than the three-year average reported in 1999 (12,200) [IWWCP], and lower than the five-year average reported in 2000 (11,300) [NDOW]. In the 1980s, peak populations of 16,000 were recorded in Lahontan Valley [p1], and in 1985 a population objective for Nevada was defined as maintaining a breeding population of 10,000 birds [USFWS]. If the species is declining in Nevada as these data indicate, it contrasts with the regionally-reported trend towards increases or stability over the past few decades [p1]. Clearly, it is important to confirm apparent declines and their causes in Nevada (as opposed to population cycles driven by annual precipitation variations), and if confirmed, to develop counteractive management strategies.

### ABUNDANCE AND OCCUPANCY BY HABITAT

- Current population estimate based on 10-year average of Lahontan Valley counts; does not include data for Ruby Lake NWR, but breeding birds there and elsewhere around the state are estimated at ~ 800.
- Peak count for Nevada in recent history was 8,200 birds throughout northwestern Nevada, including Lahontan Valley, in 1997 [NDOW]
- Population goals based on population estimates from 1980s and 1990s (Earnst et al. 1998, Sharp 1985)
- Densities of 75 – 150 nests / ha recorded at Carson Lake, Lahontan Valley [p1]

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- NBC data (percent columns actually refer to **proportion** of transects occupied)

		% Transects Occupied (Great Basin)	% Transects Occupied (Mojave)
Lowland Riparian		0.09 (6/66)	0.03 (1/36)
Wetland		0.40 (12/30)	0

NEVADA-SPECIFIC STUDIES AND ANALYSES

- TBD

MAIN THREATS AND CHALLENGES

- Conversion or dewatering of Marsh habitat and flooded agriculture
- Water level fluctuations during nesting [p1]

CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

**Habitat Strategies**

- General Marsh, Agricultural, and Wet Meadow conservation strategies
- Maintain consistent water levels in breeding sites throughout nesting period

**Public Outreach**

- Encourage traditional agricultural landscapes and practices

**Research, Planning, and Monitoring**

- Determine whether populations in Nevada are systematically declining and possible causes

OTHER SPECIES WITH SIMILAR STRATEGIES

- Sandhill Crane
- Long-billed Curlew

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### FURTHER READING

- Earnst et al. 1998
- Yates et al. 2009

### 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