

Marbled Godwit

Limosa fedoa



Photo by Larry Neel

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Marsh Open Water (shorelines) (Ephemeral Wetland and Playa)	
Key Habitat Parameters ◦	
Plant Composition	Bulrush, sedges, rushes, cattail ¹
Plant Density	Variable ²
Mosaic	Variety of types and sizes of marshes, lakes, and ephemeral wetlands, with emergent vegetation, open shoreline, and mudflats; availability of aquatic plant tubers especially important during migration ²
Water Depth	≤ 13 cm [5 in] ²
Hydrology	Unknown
Water Quality	Unknown
Response to Vegetation Removal	Unknown
Area Requirements ◦	
Minimum Patch Size	Unknown, but often seen at smaller marshes and water bodies ^{EO}
Recommended Patch Size	> 10 ha [25 ac] ^{EO}
Home Range / Territory Size	Unknown

Conservation Profile

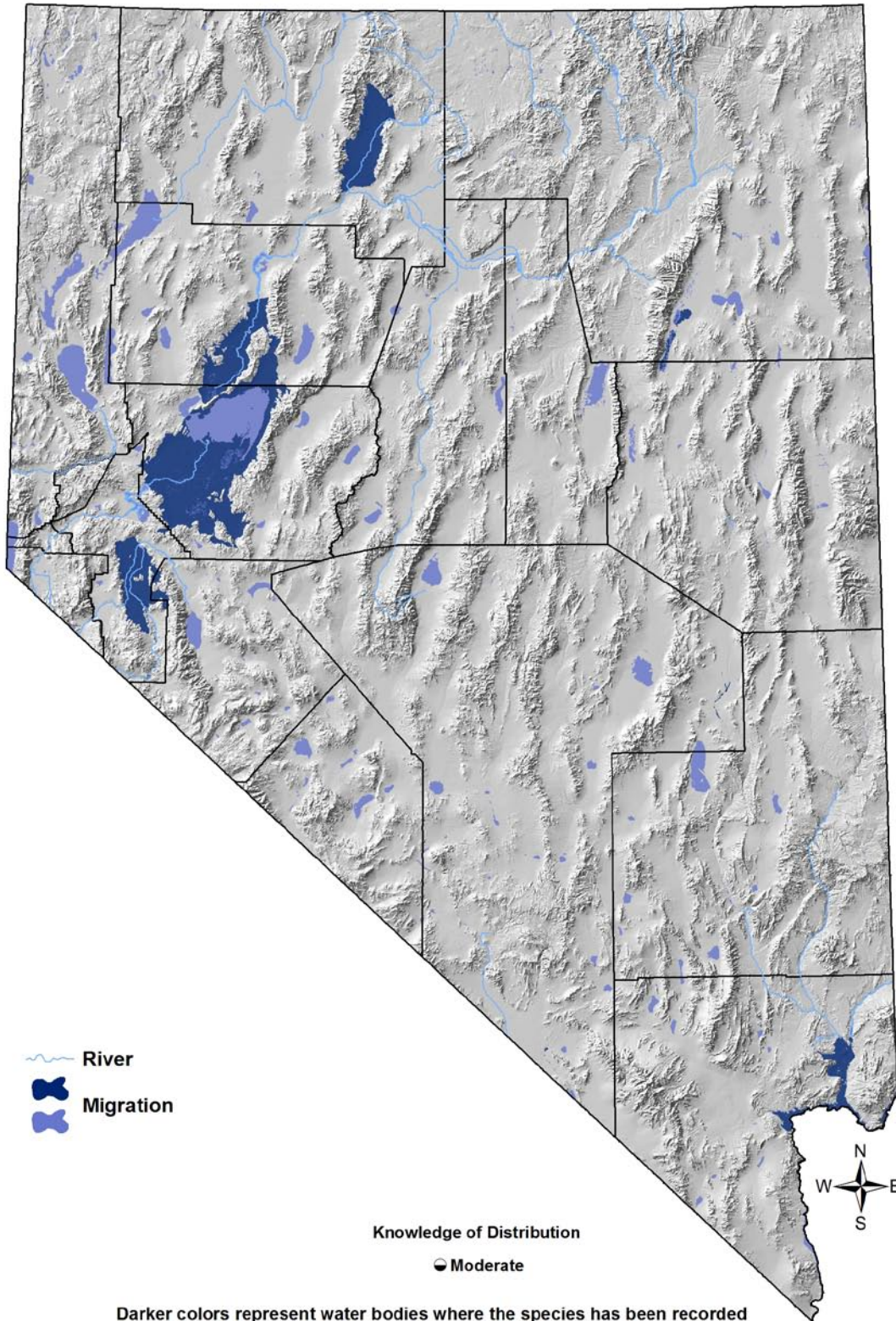
Priority Status	
Conservation Priority Species	
Species Concerns	
Habitat threats Historical and recent declines Insufficient knowledge of habitat requirements	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	None
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	S3M
USFWS	Migratory Bird; Bird of Conservation Concern
BLM	None
USFS	None
NDOW	Stewardship
IW Shorebird Plan	Very Important
Trends	
Historical ◐	Declines ²
Recent ◐	Probably declining in Nevada ^{1, EO}
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ◐	350 ^{EO}
Global ◐	175,000 ⁴
Percent of Global	< 1%
Population Objective	
Maintain / Increase ^{EO}	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	WMA and NWR counts, Aquatic Bird Count
Coverage in NV	Fair in WMA's and NWR's; Poor elsewhere
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Lahontan Valley, Upper Walker River
Restoration	Unknown

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Spring (migration, May peak) Fall (migration, late June – August peak)	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
N/A	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	N/A
Site Fidelity	Unknown
Food Habits	
Basic	Prober
Primary Diet	Invertebrates, usually from sediment ²
Secondary Diet	Plant tubers, especially during migration ²

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Darker colors represent water bodies where the species has been recorded within the past 12 years. Lighter colors represent water bodies where the species could potentially occur. Smaller water bodies may be difficult to visualize on the map.

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Overview

These large shorebirds are only present in Nevada during migration stopovers, more commonly in the spring than in the fall, although it is possible that fall migrants are under-reported because godwits begin their southward migration several weeks earlier than other shorebirds. There are nearby wintering areas in California's Sacramento Valley, and there have been reports of wintering birds in western Nevada, although there are no recent records. At migration stopover sites, Marbled Godwits tend to be seen around smaller water features where they forage on mudflats or in shallow water with or without emergent vegetation. Although godwits are fairly conspicuous during migration, there is not much information about their habitat use, their conservation needs, or any threats. For instance, it is not clear whether or not birds migrating through Nevada primarily eat aquatic plant tubers, which has been reported as a general characteristic of migrating populations.² In fact, the Marbled Godwit is a poorly studied bird in general,² which is particularly unfortunate given that it appears to be declining.

Apart from simply protecting the water supplies of marshes and ephemeral wetlands during the migration periods, the main conservation need for this species is to collect better information on nearly every aspect of its biology, ecology, and conservation status. The Marbled Godwit's early fall migration pattern could pose management challenges in situations where its seasonal needs may not correspond to other shorebirds on a more "normal" migration schedule.

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

- High counts recorded in Lahontan Valley were 1,000 birds in 1947, and 465 birds in 1989⁵

Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

No information

Main Threats and Challenges

Habitat Threats

- Diversion of water, causing shrinking or drying of marshes, ponds, or lakes before the fall migration peak
- Enhancing water availability will also help diminish the deleterious effects of contaminants³

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Research, Planning, and Monitoring Challenges

- Very little is known about the Marbled Godwit's biology, ecology, or conservation needs
- We need a better understanding of habitat quality at stopover sites, as indicated by a) length of stay and turnover rates, and b) body condition³
- Monitoring coverage is inadequate

Conservation Strategies

Habitat Strategies

- Marsh (p. Hab-9-1) and Open Water (p. Hab-15-1) habitat conservation strategies should benefit this species
- Protect / maintain inflows into key stopover areas that are sufficient to provide water through the migration peaks³
- Marshes and lakes with broad muddy shorelines may be preferred by Marbled Godwits and should receive priority management consideration

Research, Planning, and Monitoring Strategies

- Supplement current monitoring programs, especially during the fall migration period (21 June – 31 August) to collect better information on distribution, trends, and habitat use
- A significant program of research is needed to gather information about the Marbled Godwit's biology, ecology, habitat use, threats, and conservation status³

Public Outreach Strategies

- None identified

References: ¹ Brown et al. (2001); ²Gratto-Trevor (2000); ³Melcher et al. (2010); ⁴Morrison et al. (2006); ⁵Neel and Henry (1996); ^{E0} Expert opinion