

Nongame Wildlife

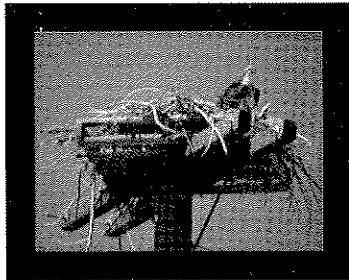
Although the MVWMA was originally purchased and developed to preserve wetland habitat for waterfowl, many other wildlife species including wading birds, shorebirds, and raptors have benefited from this project.

Many wading birds utilize the emergent vegetation in the pond areas for nesting including great blue herons, black-crowned night herons, egrets, and bitterns. Small numbers of white-faced ibis nest sporadically in the area. A rookery of great blue herons is present in large cottonwood trees on the southern boundary of the area.

Shorebirds on the MVWMA include American avocets, black-necked stilts, common snipe, sandpipers, yellowlegs, dowitchers, plovers, phalaropes and others. Other marsh dependent birds present on the area include nesting eared grebes, pied-billed grebes, and Forster's terns. American white pelicans and common loons have become more prevalent on the area with the completion of the North Pond Reservoir.

MVWMA is visited by a variety of raptors during all seasons. Nesting species of raptors on the area include great horned owl, short-eared owl, Cooper's hawk, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, Swainson's hawk and northern harrier. A pair of osprey has nested and successfully fledged offspring on a man-made nesting platform erected near the fish hatchery. Golden eagles and prairie falcons use the area primarily for feeding. Peregrine falcons and merlins use the area seasonally during the spring and fall migration periods. Bald eagles, ferruginous hawks, and rough-legged hawks use the area for winter feeding.

Songbirds regularly nesting in or near the area include common yellowthroats, horned larks, marsh wrens, red-winged blackbirds, savannah sparrows, and song sparrows.



The Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area is open year-round, without hourly restrictions. There is no charge for use of the area, but hunters and anglers are asked to complete visitor cards before leaving. For more information contact the Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area at (775) 463-2741 or NDOW's Habitat Bureau at (775) 688-1569. This publication was developed by the Nevada Division of Wildlife's Habitat and Conservation Education Bureaus, 1100 Valley Road, Reno, NV 89512.

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FISH RESOURCES

Populations of both game and nongame fish are present throughout the ponds, ditches and sloughs of the MVWMA. Largemouth bass are the most sought after game species on the area during the late spring and summer and are found in every water on the area, including the Walker River. Rainbow trout, brown trout, and tiger trout are regularly stocked for put and take fishing in Hinkson Slough and North Pond. Channel catfish, black and brown bullheads, white crappie and bluegill are found throughout the area. Native fish species that inhabit the Walker River include Lahontan tui chub, Lahontan redbreast shiner and Tahoe sucker.

WATER RESOURCES

The Walker River is the most important water source for MVWMA. The east and west forks of the Walker River originate in the Sierra Nevada, come together in Mason Valley, and empty into Walker Lake, a deep desert lake of increasing salinity. Because precipitation and snow pack vary tremendously from year to year, annual flows in the river are highly variable and the actual amount of water delivered to the MVWMA varies considerably.

MVWMA also has numerous wells that draw upon underground water supplies for crop and wetlands irrigation, and water for hatchery operations and facilities.

NDOW has utilized a variety of alternative water supplies to support wetlands on MVWMA. The Mason Valley Fish Hatchery provides about 5,000 acre-feet of drain water that is available for reuse on MVWMA for wetland enhancement. In addition, secondarily treated effluent is received via pipeline from the City of Yerington Municipal Waste Water Treatment Plant and retained in the Cinnamon Pond on the southern boundary of MVWMA. Another alternative water source on the MVWMA is the cooling pond water which is piped from the adjacent Sierra Pacific Power Company (SPPC) power plant. NDOW, SPPC, and Ducks Unlimited jointly sponsored the North Pond Pipeline Project to create and enhance a diversity of wetland habitat types.

PUBLIC USES

Wildlife-Related Recreation

Wildlife viewing, photography, horseback riding, camping, educational activities, picnicking, and hiking are some of the wildlife-related activities available on MVWMA.

A primitive campground is located next to the MVWMA Headquarters. Camping is allowed at the site for up to eight days. Boats are frequently used on the MVWMA by anglers and waterfowl hunters.

Visitors to MVWMA also have the opportunity to tour the nearby Mason Valley Hatchery. The facility is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, except holidays. A nature trail located west of the fish hatchery provides access to a variety of habitats, including riparian areas along the Walker River.

Hunting

Waterfowl hunting is the major hunting activity on MVWMA. During the waterfowl season, hunting is allowed only on Saturdays, Sundays, Wednesdays and certain observed state holidays. Check stations are operated periodically during waterfowl, upland game and deer seasons. A controlled goose-hunting zone, the Hyland Unit, has been established on the MVWMA. Hunters who are drawn for a permit are allowed to hunt on one of eight Saturdays each year. Some rabbit and quail hunting occurs on the area, and although populations are low, interest in pheasant hunting remains high. Introduction of the Rio Grande turkey to the area has proved popular with area hunters, providing considerable recreational opportunity to Nevada's sportsmen.

MVWMA is located within NDOW's Big Game Unit Management Area 203. Archers are normally provided a 28-day season in August. Tagholders wishing to hunt on the area in November must only hunt on specified hunt days since the deer season runs simultaneously with the waterfowl season. Hunters are encouraged to review current regulation brochures prior to hunting at MVWMA.

Fishing

A variety of warm and cold water fishing is available on MVWMA. North Pond and Hinkson Slough providing quality trout fishing as well as largemouth bass, bluegill, catfish, and crappie fishing. Crappie and Bass ponds are warm water fisheries with opportunities for largemouth bass and bluegill fishing. The Walker River offers limited angling opportunity for channel and bullhead catfish during the spring months. SPPC's Fort Churchill cooling pond, which lies north of the boundary of MVWMA, also offers fishing for largemouth bass, channel and bullhead catfish, bluegill, and sunfish. The cooling pond is available for use by the public through a cooperative agreement between SPPC and NDOW. Anglers are encouraged to review current fishing regulations prior to fishing at MVWMA.

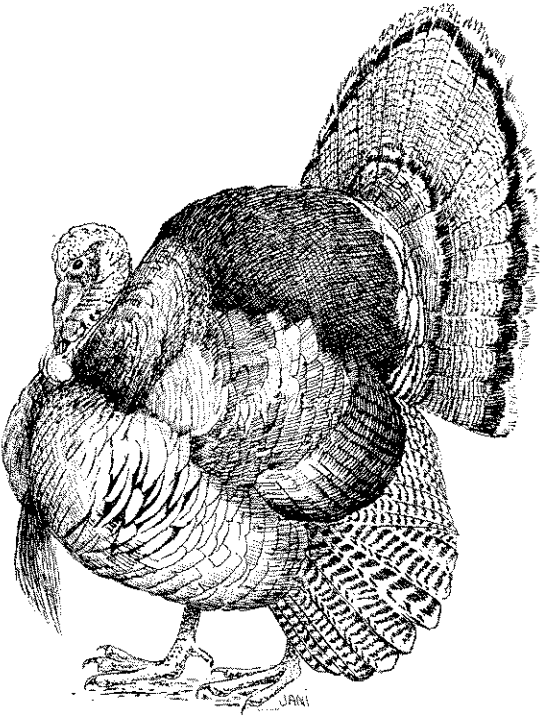


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GETTING THERE

From Reno, take I-80 west to Fernley, then take U.S. Alt. 95 south. The main entrance to the area is about seven miles north of Yerington, off of Miller Lane. From Feb. 1, through Sept. 30 of each year, a second public entrance is available off of Sierra Way.



INTRODUCTION

The Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area (MVWMA) is located in Mason Valley in Lyon County, about 75 miles southeast of Reno via Interstate 80 and U. S. Alternate 95. Before European settlement, the Paiute tribe inhabited Mason Valley. N. H. A. Mason, for whom Mason Valley was named, discovered the value of the valley for grazing while driving cattle to California and built the first house in Mason Valley in 1860. In the early 1900s, the Mason Valley Ranch was owned by Miller and Lux and the Pacific Livestock Company, followed by the Antelope Valley Land and Cattle Company. The Nevada Department of Fish and Game recognized the wildlife potential of the property and purchased it from the Wray Estate in 1955 for the creation of the Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area. The Nevada Division of Wildlife (NDOW) has since purchased additional surrounding properties, and the area now totals 13,375 acres.

HABITATS

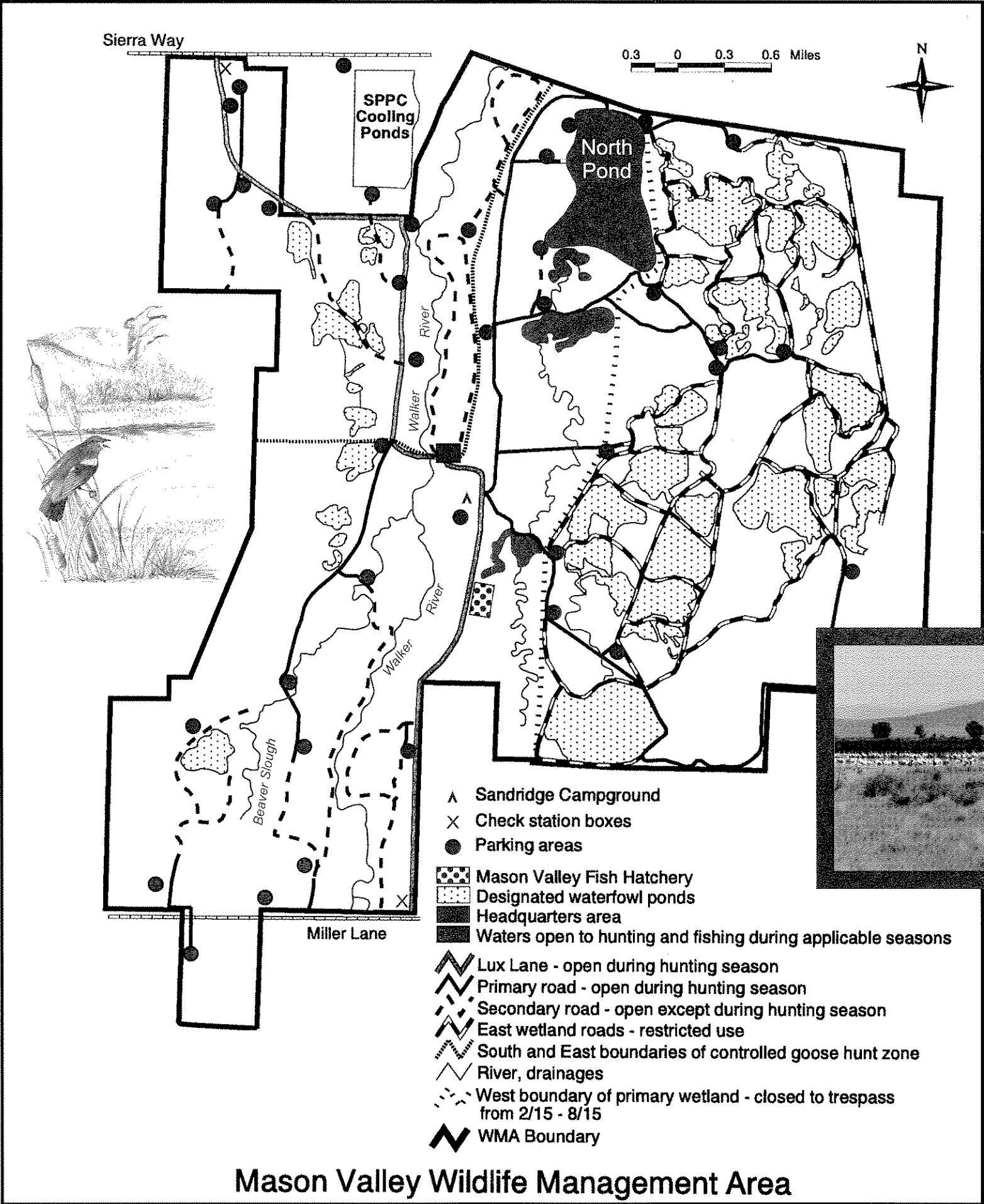
From desert shrub lands to wet meadows, the habitats of MVWMA support an abundance of fish and wildlife that contribute significantly to the biological diversity of western Nevada. The Walker River floodplain meanders through MVWMA, providing food, cover and water for a vast array of wildlife. Numerous wet meadows and ponds dot the landscape, attracting ducks, geese, swan, songbirds and wading birds. The deep-water habitat of the newly constructed North Pond reservoir is home to fish, osprey and pelicans. Alkali desert scrub, an upland plant community, covers an extensive area on MVWMA and gives shelter to many mammals including raccoon and mule deer.

AREA MANAGEMENT

Farming
NDOW cooperatively farms about 1,200 acres to enhance and increase wildlife habitat by growing grain and hay crops annually. Wheat, barley, corn, sorghum and other grain crops as well as alfalfa hay are produced annually, providing both economic and wildlife benefits. Wildlife such as dove, quail, pheasant, waterfowl, deer, turkeys and small mammals have adapted to, and commonly use, the croplands on MVWMA.

Grazing
Livestock grazing has been an integral part of the economy of the area since the early settlement of Mason Valley. On MVWMA, grazing is used periodically to stimulate green-up, provide succulent feed, and open overgrown areas for resting and feeding by waterfowl and other wildlife.

Prescribed Burning
Prescribed burning is used in winter and early spring to remove excessive vegetation and optimize forage production. Controlled burns help to optimize waterfowl habitat by creating mosaic openings and increasing wetland edges. Controlled burns also help clear vegetation from canals to enhance water delivery.



Herbicide Spraying
Chemical application is an effective method to control undesirable vegetation. Aerial spraying is conducted every few years to open up stands of cattail and hardstem bulrush to make wetlands more desirable for waterfowl and other wetland species.

Invasive Plant Control
The invasion of non-native plants has become a major threat to the native habitats on MVWMA. Controlling these invaders is difficult and time-consuming. The competitive nature of these plants and their ability to spread impacts the natural plant diversity and ultimately the diversity of animals on MVWMA. Invasive species on MVWMA include tamarisk, tall whitetop, and hoary cress.

WILDLIFE
The wildlife of MVWMA is extremely diverse due to the mosaic of habitat types present and NDOW's efforts to develop all the wetland habitat the area's water resource could maintain. The exceptional diversity in such a relatively small area emphasizes the biological importance of the area.

Waterfowl
More than 21 species of ducks have been recorded on MVWMA, the most common species including mallards, gadwalls, northern pintails, green-winged teal, redheads, ruddy ducks, ring-necked ducks and canvasbacks. Duck populations generally reach their highest numbers in October, early November, March and early April.

Up to 12 species of ducks breed and raise their young on the area, with the peak of hatch occurring between June and late July. Canada geese are common year round, and low numbers of snow geese and greater white-fronted geese are also observed during the winter months. Tundra swan generally use the area from November through April, and are generally found on the larger ponds including Pintail, Gadwall, North Pond, and Honker Lake.

Upland Game and Mammals
California quail are found in brushland and riparian habitat types on MVWMA. Ring-necked pheasants prefer the cultivated fields adjacent to the river. Rio Grande turkeys were introduced on MVWMA in 1987, marking the first attempt by NDOW to establish this subspecies within the state. Mourning doves are common on the cultivated land and riparian habitat where cottonwood trees are abundant. Mule deer on MVWMA prefer the brushland, agricultural and riparian communities. Both the black-tailed jackrabbit and the cottontail are found throughout the area. Other mammals include bobcat, coyote, spotted skunk, striped skunk, long-tailed weasel, badger, and kit fox. Mountain lions are occasionally seen on the area.