

## Redhead - *Aythya americana*

Abundance: Common

Status: NSS3 (Bb)

NatureServe: G5  
S4N,S5B

Population Status: population size and distribution are restricted but extirpation is not imminent

Limiting Factor: Habitat: limiting factor is severe; breeding habitat is disjunct and secure breeding sites are limited in distribution

Comment:

### Introduction

The redhead breeds from Alaska and central Canada southward to southern California, New Mexico, Nebraska, and Minnesota, with occasional breeding further east. The species winters from the southern part of its breeding range from Washington eastward to the Middle Atlantic States and south to the Gulf coast, Mexico and Guatemala. Approximately 80% of all redheads in North America winter in the western Gulf of Mexico with the Laguna Madre of Texas and Tamaulipas. The species' range in Wyoming is widespread being found throughout the state during fall and spring migrations, nesting has been documented for most of western two-thirds of the state. The estimated continental breeding population for redheads has varied from about 350,000 to nearly 1 million over the last 50 years. The population is presently about 3% below its long-term average. The redhead is moderately abundant in Wyoming and considered a common summer resident. Breeding has been documented in 75% of the latilongs in the state. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) classifies the redhead as a Species of Special Concern with a Native Species Status of 3 (NSS3) because its breeding population in Wyoming is restricted in numbers, habitat is restricted and vulnerable with no recent or on-going significant loss.

### Habitat

On the prairies and in the intermountain West, redheads use two types of permanently and semipermanently flooded palustrine wetlands for breeding; During the prelaying period redheads feed in large, deep, open areas (>1 acre) with submersed aquatic vegetation; They use smaller, shallower permanent to semipermanent wetlands with blocks of dense emergent vegetation for nesting (laying and incubating eggs); wetlands that redheads use during prelaying and brood rearing are similar; essential elements include a good supply of preferred foods (invertebrates and submersed aquatic plants), ample water depth for escape (> 4 feet), and large open areas where approaching predators are visible. Wetlands that are 5 acres or larger and not farther than 0.25 miles from large permanent or semipermanent lakes provide optimum nesting habitat. The presence of water seems more important than specific vegetation for nesting; Stable water levels are important to nesting success. Redheads usually nest over shallow water in dense emergent vegetation, usually bulrushes and cattails; Use of permanent and semi-permanent wetlands for breeding provides some buffer from the negative effects of drought; Redheads don't exhibit strong fidelity to breeding sites, enabling them to make opportunistic use of periodically available suitable water conditions. Redheads may also inhabit cropland ponds, alkali lakes, sewage ponds, reservoirs, streams and oxbows.

### Problems

- h Population status and trends are not well-known in Wyoming, but the continental population appears stable.
- h Species is impacted by fish stocking in ponds and wetlands -- fish compete for invertebrate food resources.
- h Species is susceptible to impacts from energy development and other large-scale projects that destroy or impair suitable habitats.
- h Species may be susceptible to impacts caused by climate change.
- h There are no ongoing efforts to delineate important habitats in Wyoming.

### Conservation Actions

- h Conserve grassland habitats by minimizing the conversion of native prairie to croplands, fragmentation, roads, urban development, exotic plants, and a shift in community ecology characteristics.
- h Delay haying in locations where this species nests until after July 15.
- h Identify and delineate important habitats.
- h Integrate habitat management for this species and other wetland obligates to the extent possible.
- h Monitor population status and trends.
- h Protect important wetland areas on private lands through conservation easements.
- h Restore and create wetland habitats through available funding and mitigation programs.
- h Work cooperatively with land management agencies and others to protect and manage key habitats.

#### Monitoring/Research

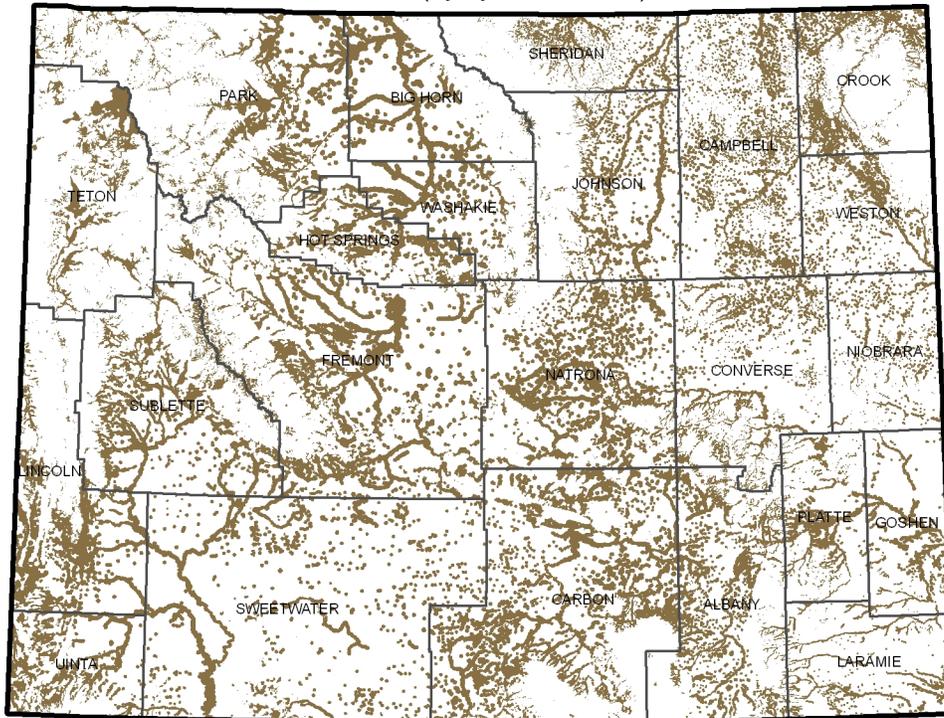
No ongoing monitoring or research in Wyoming.

#### Recent Developments

None.

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SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution of the species; heavy black lines indicate outermost boundaries of possible occurrence.