

INTRODUCTION

Overton Wildlife Management Area (OWMA) lies in the lower extremes of the Moapa and Virgin river valleys where they flow into the north end of the Overton Arm of Lake Mead. The history of human existence in the Moapa Valley dates back more than 10,000 years. The ruins of the Pueblo Anasazi culture in the Moapa Valley are found along the Muddy River drainage. In the nearby Valley of Fire State Park, many petroglyphs are present, primarily from the Anasazi or Lost City People. The first documented visit by European man in the Overton area occurred in 1826 when Jedediah Smith traveled through the area for trapping activities. The town of Overton was settled in 1865 by Mormons to grow cotton and to establish towns along the Mormon Road to California. Following the construction of the Hoover Dam and inundation by Lake Mead, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service created the Boulder Canyon National Wildlife Refuge in 1940, which included the southern most portion of Moapa Valley now known as OWMA. In 1953, the Nevada Fish and Game Commission entered into an agreement with the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation and the National Park Service to establish OWMA, which now totals 17,657 acres.

Western Kingbird



HABITAT TYPES

Located in the Mojave Desert, OWMA supports an abundance of fish and wildlife that contributes significantly to the biological diversity of southern Nevada. Desert riparian habitat, associated with the floodplain of the Muddy and Virgin rivers, is extremely important to wildlife populations. The dense shrubbery of desert wash habitat provides food and shelter for small mammals and many species of birds. Numerous wet meadows and ponds dot the landscape, providing food, cover, and water for birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. The deep water of Lake Mead provides habitat for fish and diving ducks, while water near the shoreline provides feeding areas for puddle ducks and shorebirds.

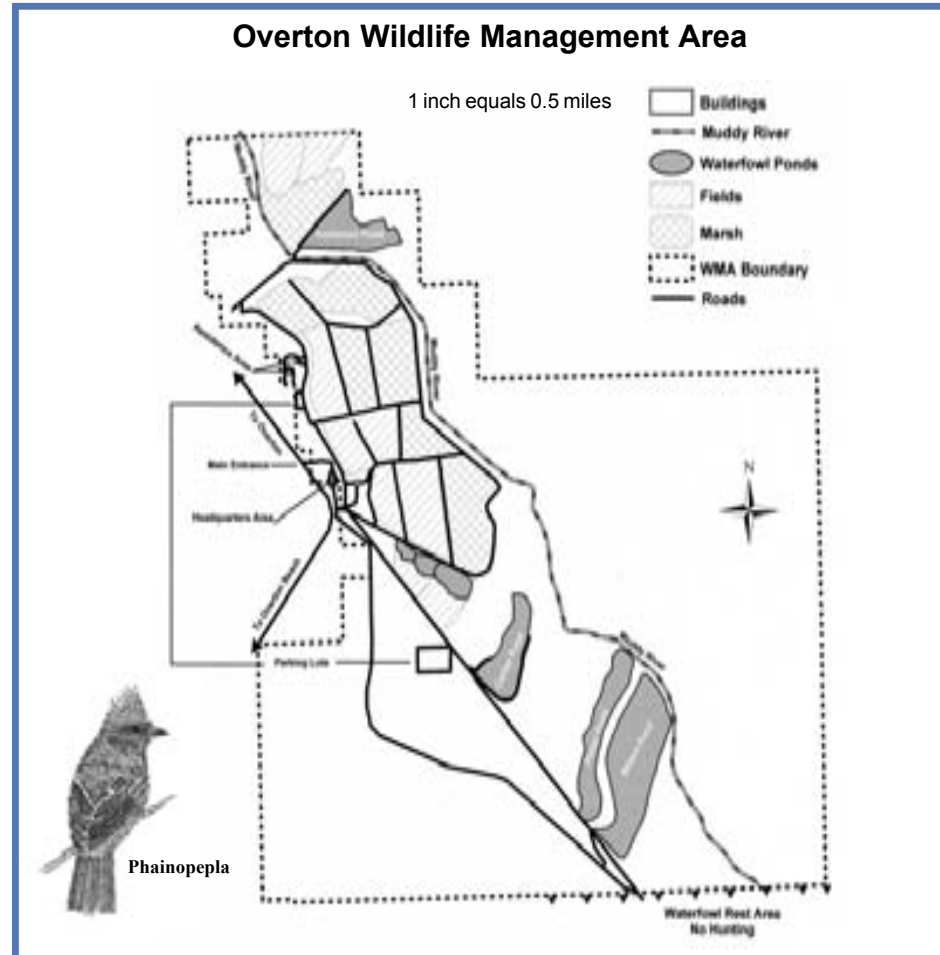
AREA MANAGEMENT

Farming

A variety of agricultural crops totaling about 165 acres are grown on OWMA to provide forage, shelter, and escape cover for a variety of wildlife. Barley is planted in October and November and used by migrating geese through February and early March. Alfalfa is grown as a rotation crop since it is high in nitrogen and when disked into the soil, helps with soil fertility. All planting is done on a schedule most advantageous to crop production and other wildlife use.

Alkali Bulrush Plots

About 200 acres of alkali bulrush are presently managed under farming and water management programs. The fields are flooded in the fall and become shallow ponds throughout waterfowl season, providing the main food source for waterfowl that visit OWMA. The fields are drained and allowed to dry through the summer months, allowing water for summer crops.



Phainopepla

Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning is conducted on OWMA periodically to improve habitat and for maintenance along pond edges and agricultural drainage ditches. Following burning, the regrowth creates a green-up of sprouting plants that provides a tender, succulent feed for upland game, waterfowl and other wildlife.

Herbicide Spraying

Chemical application is an effective method to control undesirable vegetation. Spraying is conducted to open up dense stands of cattail and hardstem bulrush to make them

more desirable for waterfowl and other wetland species.

Invasive Plant Management

The invasion of non-native plants has become a major threat to the native habitats on OWMA. 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 wildlife on OWMA. Invasive species on OWMA include Russian knapweed and tamarisk or saltcedar, which has invaded the Virgin and Muddy river corridors, creating a vast monoculture with few wildlife benefits.



WILDLIFE AND FISH

The wildlife of OWMA is extremely diverse due to the mosaic of habitat types present and Nevada Division of Wildlife's habitat developments. The exceptional diversity in such a relatively small area emphasizes the WMA's biological importance. There are 265 species of birds, 47 species of mammals, 22 species of fish and 28 species of reptiles and amphibians found on OWMA.

Waterfowl

Over 22 species of ducks have been recorded on OWMA. The most common species include northern pintails, green-winged teal, mallards and ruddy ducks. Duck populations generally build during late-September with peaks in January. Cinnamon teal and redheads are generally early migrants. Canada geese are the most commonly found goose species at OWMA; white-fronted, snow and Ross geese are infrequent visitors. Tundra swans visit Overton, but are relatively uncommon.



Getting There:

From Las Vegas (about 65 miles), take I-15 north to Glendale, then take SR169 south to Overton. The main entrance to OWMA is located about two miles south of the town of Overton.

Upland Game Birds and Mammals

Mourning doves begin arriving in the vicinity during July and early August. By late August, the fall migration has begun and normally by mid- to late-September, all but a few stragglers have left southern Nevada. White-winged doves also occur infrequently on the area. NDOW began releasing pheasants on OWMA in the 1960s and the present population size is described as remaining at low levels. Gambel's quail are common on OWMA. Rio Grande turkeys were introduced to OWMA in 1991; the current estimate of turkeys in Moapa Valley is 350-500. Mammals regularly observed on OWMA include desert cottontail, bobcat, kit fox, beaver, coyote, striped skunk, spotted skunk and long-tailed weasel.

NONGAME WILDLIFE

Nongame Wildlife

Nongame wildlife on OWMA are represented by a myriad of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish. The Colorado River system serves as a corridor for many species of birds migrating from nesting grounds to wintering areas as far south as Central and South America. The lower Colorado system is a rich area for avian life, supplying easy travel routes and the necessary cover, food and water.

A variety of wading birds frequent OWMA, which is an important stopover during fall and spring migrations. Some common species include great blue herons, snowy egrets and black-crowned night herons. Other wading birds include white-faced ibis and great egrets.



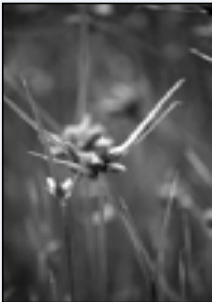
Long-billed curlew

Shorebirds on OWMA, including black-necked stilts, American avocets, Wilson's phalaropes, spotted sandpipers, and killdeer, are common transients on the area. Examples of uncommon transients are greater yellow legs, lesser yellow legs, marbled godwits and long-billed curlews. Breeding shorebird species include killdeer and spotted sandpipers.

Other marsh-dependent birds on OWMA include western, Clark's, pied-billed, and eared grebes, ring-billed gulls, Forster's terns and white pelicans. Marsh birds that occur on OWMA include the endangered Yuma clapper rail, as well as the Virginia rail, western least bittern, and sora.

OWMA is visited by a variety of raptors during all seasons. Nesting species of raptors on the area include the great horned owl, red-tailed hawk, northern harrier and American kestrel. Golden eagles and prairie falcons use the area for foraging. Peregrine falcons breed nearby and also use OWMA year-round for foraging. Bald eagles are regular winter visitors to OWMA. Ospreys and merlins also use the area seasonally.

Songbirds on OWMA include flycatchers, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, swallow, thrashers, vireos, blackbirds, and sparrows. Songbird populations generally peak during the spring migration period. Songbirds associated with willow/cottonwood habitats on OWMA include Bell's vireo, yellow warbler, song sparrow, yellow-breasted chat and blue grosbeak, and the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher. Songbirds associated with mesquite habitat include phainopepla, Lucy's warbler, western kingbird, and verdin. Songbirds regularly nesting in or near OWMA include marsh wrens, loggerhead shrikes, crissal thrashers, black phoebes, Abert's towhees, and black-tailed gnatcatchers.



FISH RESOURCES

The Virgin River and Muddy River inflows are very important to the primary production of Lake Mead. These areas provide rich nutrient inflows into the reservoir that support game fish species such as channel catfish, largemouth bass, striped bass, rainbow trout and black crappie. Species once common along the Virgin River such as the woundfin, the Virgin River chub, the flannelmouth sucker, the Colorado River desert sucker, and the Colorado River speckled dace, are now rare but can be found on occasion within the Virgin River portion of the OWMA. Of the "big river" fishes, only the razorback sucker still remains in Lake Mead.

WATER RESOURCES

The two major sources of water for OWMA come from the Muddy and Virgin rivers. Virgin River flows provide relatively natural habitat while Muddy River flows are diverted at the north end of the WMA for beneficial use on the developed portion of the area. The Muddy River has a long his-

tory of periodically flooding the lower Moapa Valley resulting in extensive damage in the valley and on OWMA. NDOW owns preferred and common shares of the Muddy Valley Irrigation Company. Water from the Muddy River is diverted from the river channel to OWMA by raising the water level behind a diversion structure.

PUBLIC USES

Wildlife-Related Recreation

Wildlife observation, horseback riding, photography, hiking, and educational activities are some of the wildlife related recreation available on OWMA. Roads throughout the area provide excellent viewing of wetland-dependent wildlife and upland wildlife.

Hunting

Numerous hunting opportunities are available on OWMA. Waterfowl hunting is the most popular hunting activity on the area. Due to crowded conditions, a reservation and assigned hunt location system was developed for the WMA. During the waterfowl season, hunting is allowed on the developed Moapa Valley portion of the WMA every other day. Hunters on the developed portion are confined to assigned blind locations. Hunting activity is allowed every day on the Virgin Valley portion of the area. Hunters are also attracted to OWMA for dove, quail, rabbit and turkey. Mourning dove and occasionally white-winged dove are pursued. Hunters are encouraged to review current regulation brochures prior to hunting at OWMA.

Fishing

The Overton Arm and that portion of OWMA inundated by Lake Mead support some of the heaviest angler use on any reservoir in the state of Nevada. Along the WMA border in the area inundated by Lake Mead, anglers typically have a fishing preference of largemouth bass, striped bass, black crappie, and channel catfish. Anglers are encouraged to review current fishing regulations prior to fishing at OWMA.

Boats are prohibited on ponds within the OWMA but are allowed on that portion of the area inundated by Lake Mead.



Overton 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 Overton Wildlife Management Area at P.O. Box 400, Overton, NV 89040, or call (702) 397-2142, or NDOW's Habitat Bureau at (775) 688-1569. This publication was developed by the Nevada Department of Wildlife's Habitat and Conservation Education Bureau, 1100 Valley Road, Reno, NV 89512.

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