

INTRODUCTION

Key Pittman Wildlife Management Area (KPWMA) is located in the north end of the Pahranaagat Valley between the Pahranaagat Range to the west and the Hiko Range to the east. The WMA is approximately 135 miles south of Ely and 110 miles north of Las Vegas on Highway 318.

Native Americans were the first known inhabitants of Pahranaagat Valley. The Paleo-Indians were believed to inhabit the area 8,000-13,000 years ago. Prior to settlement by Anglo-European immigrants, outlaws used the area due to the fact that the valley was far from other settlements and surrounded by hills, so it made a perfect hideout. When mining became the principal industry to the north, the Valley was used for farming and livestock grazing. In the early 1860s, a mill was established at Crystal Springs and a community developed with a population of several hundred people. In 1865, Crystal Springs was established as the Lincoln County seat and Lincoln County was comprised of Nye, Clark and what is now Lincoln County. In 1867, the county seat moved to Hiko where the mill and the largest population were centered. In 1917, the Nesbitt Brothers bought the ranch, which is now the Nesbitt Lake Unit portion of the management area. In 1945, the Stewart brothers bought what is now the Frenchy Lake Unit. The Nevada Department of Fish and Game recognized the wildlife potential of the property and in 1962 the Nevada Fish and Game Commission purchased what is now the Nesbitt Unit from George Nesbitt. In 1966, the Frenchy Unit was purchased from C.D. Stewart of the Crystal Springs Ranch, Inc.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) currently manages 1,332 acres including Nesbitt and Frenchy Lakes and appropriated water rights totaling approximately 632 acre feet annually from Hiko Springs managed by the Hiko Ditch Company and 580 acre feet annually from Crystal Springs.

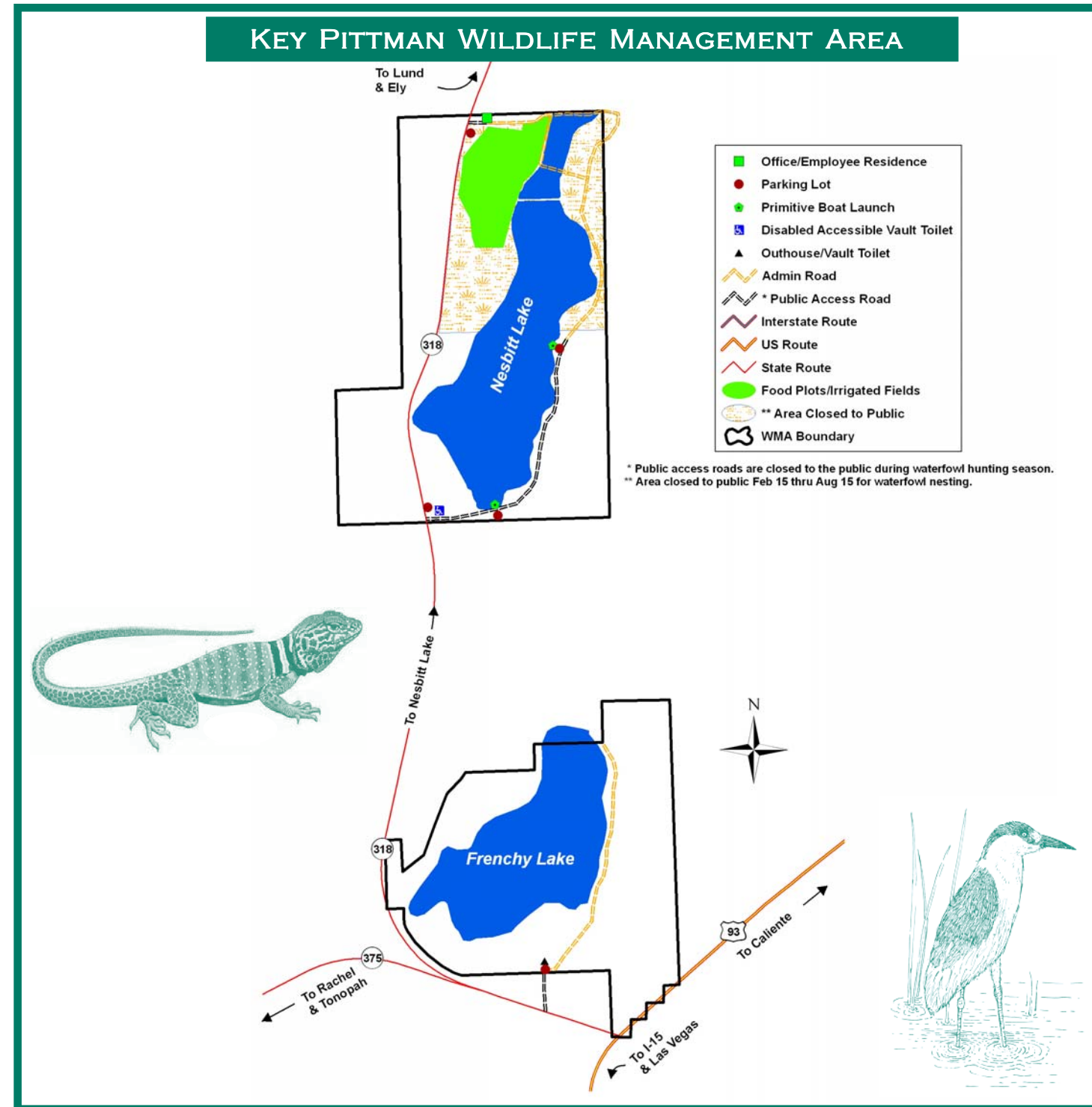
HABITAT TYPES

From wet meadows and fresh emergent wetlands to alkali desert scrub, the habitats of KPWMA support an abundance of wildlife that contribute significantly to the biological diversity of south-central Nevada. KPWMA contains about 632 acres of wetlands and aquatic habitats consisting of lakes, fresh emergent wetlands, and wet meadow areas. Uplands total about 700 acres including alkali desert scrub, desert wash and croplands.

AREA MANAGEMENT

Farming

NDOW cooperatively farms approximately 70 acres to enhance and increase wildlife habitat. Crops such as wheat, barley, corn, sorghum, sunflower, millet and alfalfa are produced and provide significant habitat for the benefit of wildlife such as dove, quail, pheasant, waterfowl, deer, small mammals and a host of non-game species that inhabit the area.



Grazing

Livestock grazing has been an integral part of the economy of Pahranaagat Valley since the time of early settlers. At the KPWMA, grazing is used as a biological management tool to remove decadent vegetation, stimulate vegetative green-up, provide succulent feed, and open overgrown areas to improve the habitat for resting and feeding wildlife and provide improved access for the recreating public.

Herbicide Spraying

The application of herbicides is an effective method to control undesirable vegetation. A tractor mounted sprayer and hand-held sprayers are used to apply herbicides to open up stands of cattail and hardstem bulrush. This mosaic effect makes the wetlands more desirable for waterfowl and other wetland species and improves access for recreational users.

Invasive Plant Control

Invasive and noxious plant species have become a threat to native habitats throughout the county. Control of these invasive species is difficult and time consuming. The competitive nature of these plants and their ability to spread impacts the natural plant diversity and ultimately the wildlife. Problematic species on KPWMA include: tamarisk, Russian olive, hoary cress, Russian knapweed, cocklebur, Canada thistle and puncture vine. A variety of management techniques, including grazing, herbicidal treatment and mechanical manipulation are used to control these invasive and noxious weeds.

Water Management

Currently, water from Hiko Spring is used to irrigate grain crops and supplement Nesbitt Lake during the spring and summer months. During the fall and winter months, water is diverted to the ponds at the north end of the Nesbitt Unit and Frenchy Lake providing optimal habitat for migrating birds as well as resident species that nest on the area. Proper water management enhances the diverse habitat values associated with the area.

WILDLIFE AND FISH

Wildlife

The wildlife of KPWMA is extremely diverse due to the mosaic of habitat types present. This exceptional diversity in such a relatively small area emphasizes the WMA's biological importance. The key to the diverse habitats and wildlife species present are the wetlands and NDOW has strived to develop as much wetland habitat as the area's water resources can sustain.

Waterfowl

More than 24 species of ducks have been recorded on the area. The most common class of ducks (about 70%) is puddle ducks and includes green-winged teal, mallard, pintail and shoveler. Diving ducks make up about 30% of the total waterfowl use on the area with canvasback, redhead and ruddy ducks being the most common species of diving ducks observed. Waterfowl populations generally reach their highest numbers in September and October and remain high until early spring when the birds begin migrating north. Up to 12 different species of ducks breed and raise young on the area with the first ducklings appearing in March. The peak of the hatch occurs from May through July with most nesting completed by late July. Canada geese are the most common geese on the area and can be observed year round. White-fronted, snow and Ross geese are present in low numbers during the winter months. Tundra swan are annual visitors to Pahranaagat Valley with the first migrants usually arriving in late November. Although the swan are highly migratory, a fair number will remain in the valley through the winter. Trumpeter swan have been documented in the valley but are a rare visitor.

Upland Game and Mammals

Gambel's quail can be found throughout the area and are commonly seen along roads and ditch banks. Chukar are commonly found in the hills above the area and may be observed

watering on the area. Ring-necked pheasant prefer the cultivated fields and the buffer areas in and around the fields. Mourning doves are common to the cultivated lands, while white winged doves, although uncommon, are occasionally observed. Both black-tailed jackrabbit and desert cottontail can be found throughout the area. Furbearers known to use the area include bobcat, kit fox, gray fox, beaver, muskrat, coyote, badger, striped skunk, spotted skunk, raccoon and ring-tailed cat. Big game species commonly found on the area include mule deer and desert bighorn sheep.

NONGAME WILDLIFE

Although the area was originally purchased to develop and preserve wetland habitats principally for waterfowl, many other wildlife species including raptors, wading birds, shorebirds, songbirds and other wetland-associated birds have benefitted from the project.

KPWMA is visited by a variety of raptors during all seasons. Nesting species of raptors include the great-horned owl, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, Cooper's hawk and northern harrier. Golden eagles and prairie falcons are frequent visitors to the area and bald eagles are regular winter visitors where they can be seen foraging for prey.

A variety of wading birds use the area as a stopover point during fall and spring migrations with numerous species opting to stay and nest in the emergent vegetation in the pond areas. Common wading bird species using the area include white-faced ibis, great blue heron, black-crowned night heron, snowy egret, great egret and American bittern. Important feeding areas for wading birds include the north portion of Nesbitt Lake as well as the shorelines of Nesbitt and Frenchy Lakes.

As with wading birds, numerous species of shorebirds frequent the area including spotted sandpiper, American avocet, black-necked stilt, willet, least sandpiper and killdeer. Less common transients include Baird's sandpiper, snowy plovers, and marbled godwits.

The Key Pittman Wildlife Management Area is open year-round without hourly restrictions. There is no charge for use of the area, but hunters, anglers and other users are asked to complete visitor cards before leaving. For more information contact the Key Pittman Wildlife Management Area at (775) 725-3521 or NDOW's Habitat Division at (775) 463-7816. This publication was developed by the Nevada Department of Wildlife's Habitat and Conservation Education Divisions, 1100 Valley Road, Reno, NV 89512.

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Songbird (passerine) populations generally peak during the spring migration period. The greatest numbers occur near riparian habitat in close association with willow, cottonwood and marsh areas. Passerine birds that regularly nest at KPWMA include marsh wrens, willow flycatchers, black-chinned hummingbirds, blue grosbeak, Bullock's oriole, yellow-headed blackbird, common yellowthroat, yellow warbler and red-winged blackbird. Visiting migrant species include spotted towhee, Western tanager, indigo bunting, purple finch, Lazuli bunting, phainopepla and vermilion flycatcher.

A number of other water-associated bird species frequent the area where they feed extensively on the fish in Nesbitt Lake. These include gulls, terns, double-crested cormorants, American white pelicans, eared grebe and pied-billed grebe. Greater sandhill cranes can occasionally be observed during the winter and can be seen feeding in the agricultural fields immediately south of the headquarters.

A number of reptiles and amphibians may be observed on KPWMA. Common lizard species include zebra-tailed lizard, long-nosed leopard lizard, desert collared lizard, Western banded gecko, desert spiny lizard, Western fence lizard, sagebrush lizard, side-blotched lizard, desert horned lizard, Western whiptail, desert night lizard. The western skink may inhabit the area from time to time.

Numerous non-venomous snakes occur on the area including ringneck snake, coachwhip, Western blind snake, striped whipsnake, Western patch-nosed snake, gopher snake, glossy snake, common kingsnake, long-nosed snake, Western terrestrial garter snake, ground snake, Western shovel-nosed snake, southwestern black-headed snake and night snake. Venomous snakes also seen include Western rattlesnake, sidewinder, Mojave green rattlesnake and speckled rattlesnake. Several amphibians can be spotted on KPWMA including tiger salamander, great basin spadefoot toad, Western toad, pacific tree frog, northern leopard frog and the introduced bullfrog.

FISH RESOURCES

Historically, the outflow stream from Hiko Spring crossed KPWMA within the drainage that now contains Nesbitt and Frenchy Lakes and eventually connected to the Crystal Spring outflow below the southern WMA boundary. The outflow system likely contained Pahrnagat roundtail chub, White River springfish and other native fish species. However, the permanent outflow stream was eliminated by piping and other agricultural development before acquisition of the property by NDOW and there are no future plans



to restore these permanently altered aquatic habitats. Black bullhead catfish have persisted in Nesbitt Lake since their introduction in 1963 and largemouth bass were first stocked in 1959. Pahrnagat roundtail chub were recently introduced into a pond next to the

headquarters and will provide stock for NDOW's planned re-introduction of that species into various waters. Currently, only one wild population of that species exists in Nevada. White crappie and bluegill were recently introduced into Nesbitt Lake but the population is still very low. Mosquito fish also occur in Nesbitt Lake.

PUBLIC USES

Wildlife-Related Recreation

Popular wildlife-related recreational activities at KPWMA include sightseeing, wildlife viewing, picnicking, photography, hiking and educational activities.

A primitive boat launch site is located on the south side of Nesbitt Lake. Boats are frequently used on KPWMA by anglers and waterfowl hunters.

Hunting

Waterfowl hunting is the most popular activity on KPWMA. During the waterfowl season, hunting is permitted on the opening weekend of the duck season, odd-numbered days throughout the season, opening day of the goose season, and the closing two days of the waterfowl season. The maximum hunter capacity during the hunting season is 55 at any time. All hunters check in and out at the two entrances and park in designated parking areas. Dove hunting, which begins on September 1st each year, is the second most popular hunting activity on KPWMA. A limited amount of rabbit, quail and deer hunting occurs on the area. A recent introduction of pheasant is expected to spur considerable interest in coming years if the release is successful. Hunters are encouraged to review NDOW's hunting regulation brochures prior to hunting at KPWMA.

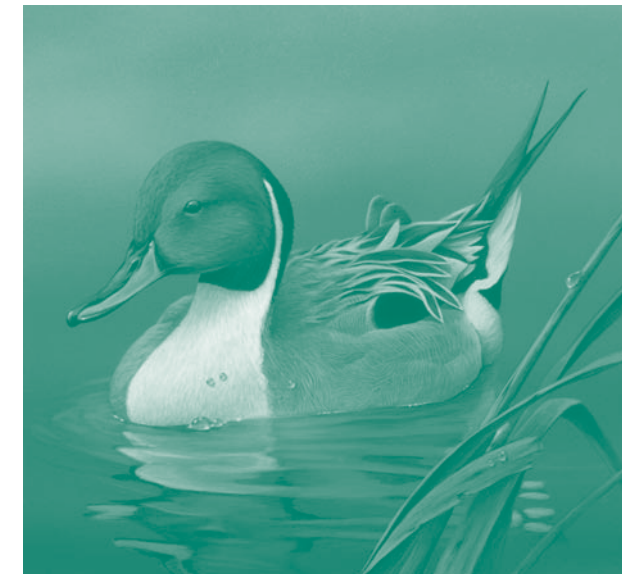
Fishing

Black bullhead catfish and largemouth bass are the only two species of fish available in sufficient quantities for anglers and are pursued in Nesbitt Lake - the only fishable water on the area. NDOW hopes a recent introduction of white crappie and bluegill will increase fishing opportunity and interest. Anglers are encouraged to review NDOW's fishing regulation booklet prior to fishing at KPWMA.

GETTING THERE

The Key Pittman Wildlife Management Area lies approximately 110 miles north of Las Vegas. From Las Vegas, take I-15 north to the intersection of I-15 and Hwy 93. Exit onto Hwy 93 and travel north to the intersection of Hwy 93 and Hwy 375. Exit onto Hwy 375 and immediately exit onto Hwy 318. Travel approximately 4 miles north on Hwy 318 to the Key Pittman WMA.

From Ely, travel south on Hwy 6 for approximately 20 miles to the intersection of Hwy 6 and Hwy 318. Exit onto Hwy 318 and travel approximately 115 miles south to the Key Pittman WMA.



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