

MVVMA 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. Over the last ten years, a number of pairs of osprey have begun nesting and fledging offspring on the area. 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 that regularly nest in or near the area include common yellowthroats, horned larks, marsh wrens, red-winged blackbirds, savannah sparrows, and song sparrows. Other less common passerine birds documented on the area include blue grosbeak, ash-throated flycatcher, black phoebe, and Western bluebird.

### Fish Management

Fish population sampling on MVWMA includes the use of standard mesh gill nets, minnow seines and beach seines to assess the composition and productivity of the fish populations. In late summer, beach seines and/or electroshocking are used to evaluate the recruitment of sport and forage fish, to determine the use of developed fish habitat and to determine the success of fish introductions on MVWMA.

### FISH RESOURCES

Throughout the ponds, ditches and sloughs of the MVWMA, populations of game and nongame fish are present. Largemouth bass are the most sought after game species on the area during the late spring and summer and are found throughout the area including the Walker River. Rainbow trout have been regularly stocked for put and take fishing in Hinkson Slough and North

Pond while brown trout and tiger trout are occasionally stocked. Channel catfish, black bullhead, brown bullhead and bluegill are also found throughout the area. The primary populations of nongame fish species inhabit the Walker River with an occasional migrant into the pond area via the irrigation canals. Asiatic carp and mosquito fish are exotic species that occur within the WMA. Lahontan tui chub, Lahontan redbreast shiner, and Tahoe sucker are some of the nongame fishes found on the area.

### 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 supply water for the hatchery operation and facilities.

NDOW has also utilized a variety of alternative water supplies to support wetlands on MVWMA. The Mason Valley Fish Hatchery provides about 5,500 acre feet of water which is available for reuse on MVWMA for wetland enhancement. In addition, secondary treated effluent is received via pipeline from the City of Yerington Municipal Waste Water Treatment and retained in 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 NV Energy power plant. NDOW, NV Energy, and Ducks Unlimited jointly sponsored the North Pond Pipeline Project to create and enhance a diversity of wetland habitat types.

Water for the MVWMA is obtained primarily from the Walker River via the Walker River Irrigation District's water distribution system with an irrigation season from March 1 to November 1. Upon entering the WMA, water is routed through a series of canal systems to supply water to various ponds. Wise water management is the key to the success of the operation of MVWMA. Water level management is probably the single most important technique in controlling undesirable vegetation and promoting desirable vegetation for wildlife.

### PUBLIC USES

Hunting and fishing are the major public use activities on the area. Road counters, bag checks, check stations, creel censuses and the statewide hunter and angler questionnaires are used to estimate hunter use and harvest and to estimate angler use and catch rates. Hunters and anglers are encouraged to review NDOW's hunting and fishing regulation guides prior to these activities at MVWMA.

### Waterfowl Hunting

Waterfowl hunting is the major hunting activity on MVWMA. During the waterfowl hunting season, hunting is allowed only on Saturdays, Sundays, Wednesdays and specified state holidays. Check stations are operated periodically during waterfowl, upland game and deer seasons. A controlled goose-hunting zone has been established on the MVWMA whereby hunters who are drawn for a permit are allowed to hunt on one of twelve designated Wednesdays and Saturdays each year.

### Upland Game Hunting

Turkey hunting is an extremely popular form of upland bird hunting at MVWMA with participants being selected through a drawing process conducted twice each year. The first Rio Grande turkey season in Nevada began in the spring of 1991. Introduction of the wild turkey to MVWMA has provided considerable recreational opportunity to sportsmen. Quail hunting is also very popular on the area although hunting is very difficult due to the heavy vegetative cover. Pheasant hunters express considerable interest to hunt pheasant even though they know that their chances of success are low. Rabbit harvest is very light on MVWMA and is probably incidental to the pursuit of other game.

### Big Game Hunting

MVVMA is located within NDOW's Unit 203 of Management Area 20. 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. During this time, high-powered rifles are not allowed in Smith and Mason Valleys due to safety reasons, and tagholders usually employ shotguns with slugs.

### Fishing

The fishing season at MVWMA typically runs from the second Saturday in February through September 30th. There are four main fishing waters on the area including Hinkson Slough and Bass, Crappie and North Ponds. All of these waters have good largemouth bass populations while North Pond and Hinkson Slough also have good trout populations. Other fishable waters within or near MVWMA include the Walker River and the eastside wetland ponds that open to fishing on August 16th each year. The Fort Churchill Cooling Pond, which is owned by NV Energy, is a warm-water fishery that lies just off the north boundary of the management area and is open to fishing during the same period as the management area.

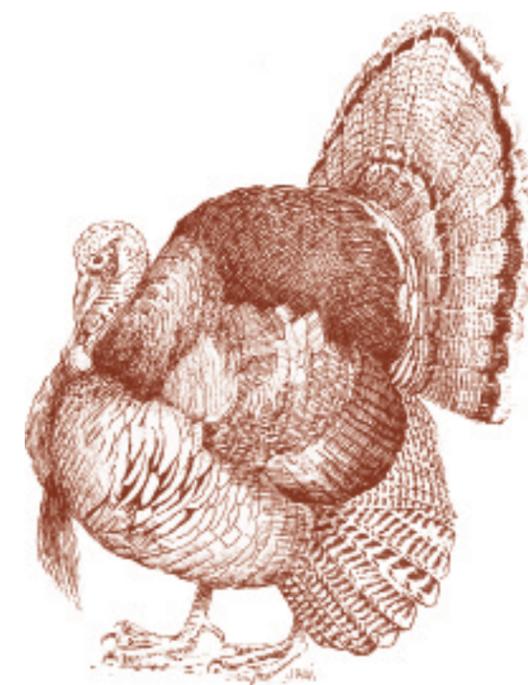


### Wildlife-Related Recreation

Wildlife observation, sightseeing, photography, horseback riding, camping, educational activities, picnicking, and hiking are some of the wildlife-related activities available on the MVWMA. The Mason Valley Fish Hatchery, which produces stockable trout for all of northwestern Nevada and numerous other waters statewide, is located within the boundaries of the management area. Visitors can tour the hatchery between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. seven days a week.

Two primitive campgrounds are located on the WMA. One is near the MVWMA Headquarters and the other on the northeast side of North Pond. Camping is allowed at these sites for up to eight days.

An interpretive nature trail exists west of the fish hatchery that provides access to a variety of habitats, including the riparian habitats along the Walker River and serves to expand education and watchable wildlife potential on MVWMA. Roads throughout the WMA provide excellent viewing of wetland-dependent and upland wildlife.



[www.ndow.org](http://www.ndow.org)

The Mason Valley 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 Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area at (775) 463-2741, or call NDOW's Habitat Division at (775) 688-1569.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area (MVWMA) is located in Mason Valley, Lyon County, Nevada. The area is located about 75 miles southeast of Reno via Interstate 80 and U. S. Alternate 95. The main entrance to the area is about seven miles north of Yerington.

Before European settlement, the Paiute tribe of Native Americans 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 Department of Wildlife (NDOW) has since purchased additional surrounding properties and the area currently totals 15,480 acres.

## HABITAT TYPES

From desert shrub lands to wet meadows and riparian corridors, the habitats of MVWMA support an abundance of fish and wildlife that contribute significantly to the biological diversity of western Nevada. Wetlands on MVWMA include open waters (lacustrine), fresh emergent wetland and wet meadow habitat types. The riverine habitat type consists of the Walker River corridor, which has an extensive shoreline meandering through the area. Desert riparian habitat includes the entire floodplain of the river, while the lacustrine habitat encompasses North Pond Reservoir. Deep-water areas provide habitat for fish, osprey, loons, and pelicans. Shallow shore zones of the reservoir provide feeding areas for waterfowl and shorebirds. Alkali desert scrub is the predominant plant community on MVWMA.

## AREA MANAGEMENT

### Farming

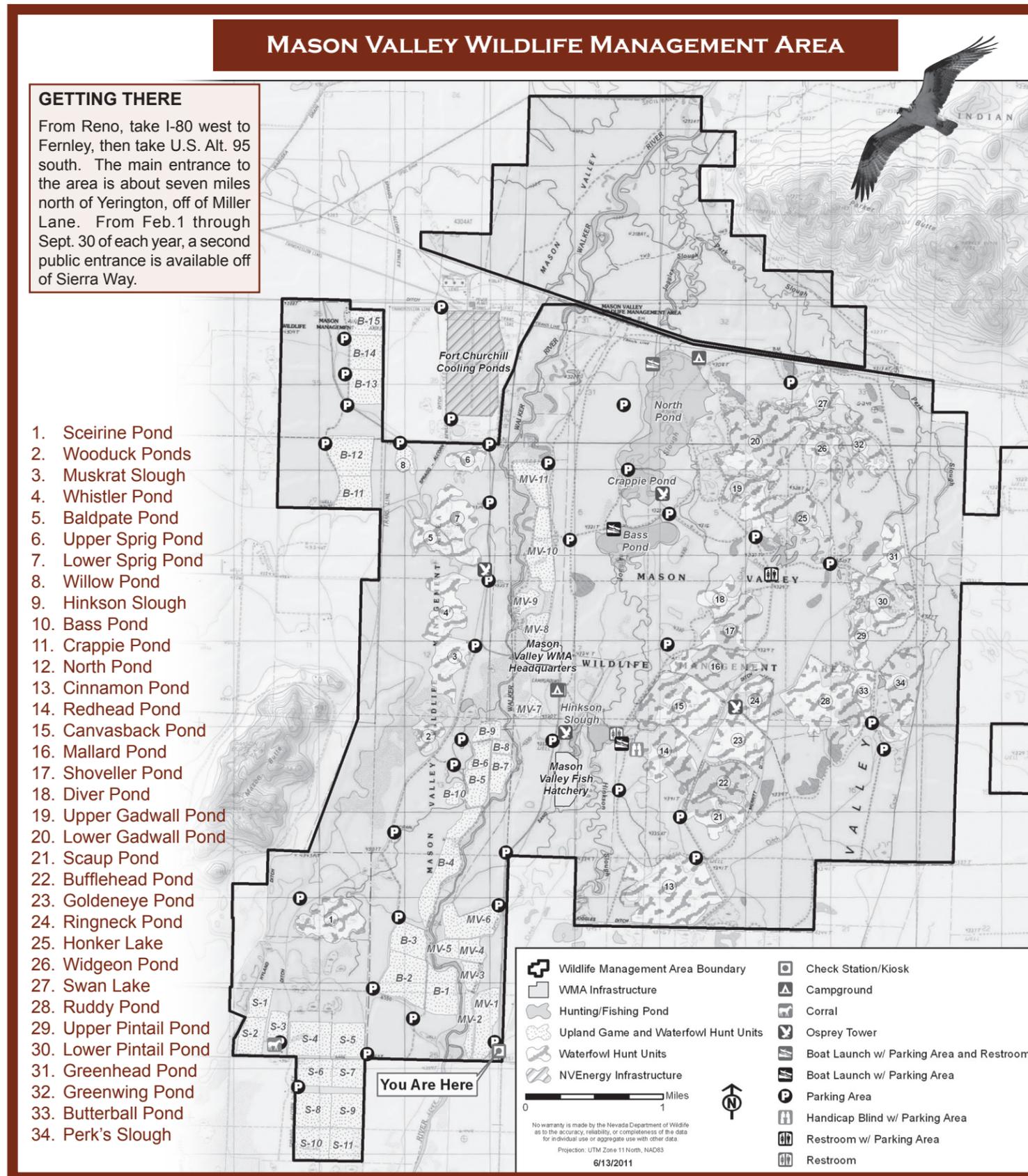
NDOW cooperatively farms about 1,200 acres to enhance and increase wildlife habitat by growing specific grain and hay crops annually. Farming includes production of wheat, barley, corn, sorghum and other grain crops as well as alfalfa hay and alfalfa seed or other leguminous cover type crops of equal value to wildlife. Many species of wildlife have adapted to the croplands on MVWMA including doves, pheasants, waterfowl, deer, turkeys and small mammals.

### Grazing

At the MVWMA, carefully regulated grazing is used as a management tool to remove decadent vegetation, stimulate green-up, provide succulent feed, and open overgrown areas for resting and feeding by waterfowl and other wildlife.

### Prescribed Burning

Area management includes prescribed burning to improve habitat conditions for resting, nesting and feeding waterfowl and other wildlife. Fire removes excess litter and optimizes forage production. Prescribed burns on the management area are typically done in early fall and late winter.



### Herbicide Spraying

Application of herbicides is an effective method to control undesirable vegetation. Aerial spraying is conducted annually 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 invaders like tamarisk, tall whitetop and hoary cress 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.

## WILDLIFE AND FISH

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 can sustain. 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 being mallard, gadwall, Northern pintail, green-winged teal, redhead, ruddy ducks, ring-necked ducks and canvasback. Duck populations generally reach their highest numbers in October and early November and again in March and early April. Up to 12 species of ducks breed and raise their young on the area. The peak of hatch takes place between the first of June and the last of July.

Canada geese are the most common geese in the area and can be observed during all months of the year. Occasionally, snow geese and greater white-fronted geese are also observed during the winter months, but their numbers are usually low. Tundra swan generally use the area from November through April and are typically found on the larger waters including North and Pintail Ponds, Perk's Slough, and Swan and Honker Lakes.

### Upland Game and Mammals

California quail are found in brushland and riparian habitat types on MVWMA. Ring-necked pheasants prefer the cultivated field portion 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 in riparian habitats where cottonwood trees are abundant.

Mule deer on MVWMA prefer the brushland, agricultural and river riparian communities, particularly where habitat types come together forming an edge. Both the black-tailed jackrabbit and the cottontail are found throughout the area. Furbearers on MVWMA include bobcat, coyote, spotted skunk, striped skunk, long-tailed weasel, badger, kit fox and others. Mountain lion presence on the area is occasional.

## NON-GAME WILDLIFE

Although the MVWMA was originally purchased and developed to preserve wetland habitat principally 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. White-faced ibis nesting occurs sporadically in small numbers. A rookery of great blue herons is present in large cottonwood trees on the southern boundary of the area.

Shorebirds found on 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. Emergent habitat necessary for Virginia rails, soras, American bitterns, and least bitterns is provided on the area. American white pelicans and common loons have been more prevalent on the area with the completion of the North Pond Reservoir.