

NON-GAME WILDLIFE

Non-game wildlife on OWMA is 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 rich with avian life and provides easy travel routes and the necessary cover, food and water.

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

Shorebirds that frequently use the OWMA include black-necked stilts, American avocets, Wilson's phalaropes, spotted sandpipers and killdeer. Infrequently observed shorebird species include greater yellow legs, lesser yellow legs, marbled godwits and long-billed curlews. Breeding shorebird species include killdeer and spotted sandpipers.

Other marsh-dependent birds residing on the area 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 the area include Bell's vireo, yellow warbler, song sparrow, yellow-breasted chat, 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 and Muddy River inflows contribute greatly to the productivity of Lake Mead. The waters 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 are 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 history 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.

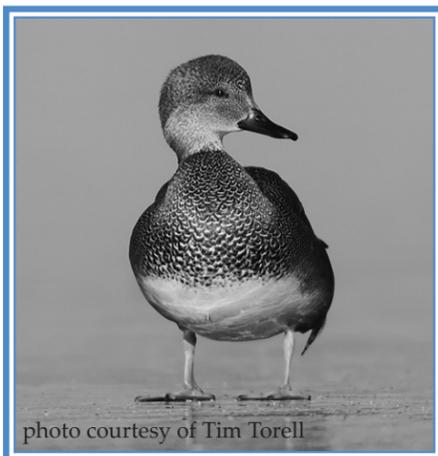


photo courtesy of Tim Torell

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 and upland wildlife. A campground and a picnic area also provide a jumping-off point to explore the area.

Hunting

Numerous hunting opportunities are available on OWMA with waterfowl hunting being the most popular hunting activity on the area. Due to crowded conditions, a reservation and assigned hunt location system was developed for the OWMA. During the waterfowl season, hunting is allowed on the developed Moapa Valley portion of the area 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 NDOW's current regulation brochures prior to hunting at OWMA.

Fishing and Boating

The Overton Arm of Lake Mead, which at times can inundate a portion of the OWMA, supports some of the heaviest angler use on any reservoir in the state of Nevada. When a portion of the WMA is 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 NDOW's current fishing regulations prior to fishing at OWMA and should also check on current water levels to determine if fishing is available on the area.

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



GETTING THERE

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



The 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 the Overton Wildlife Management Area at P.O. Box 400, Overton, NV 89040, or call (702) 397-2142 or NDOW's Habitat Division at (775) 463-7816. This brochure was developed by NDOW's Habitat and Conservation Education Divisions.

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US Fish and Wildlife Service
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4401 North Fairfax Drive
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Arlington VA 22203
or
Director
Nevada Department of Wildlife
1100 Valley Road
Reno NV 89512



www.ndow.org

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, created primarily by 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 subsequent filling of 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 the Overton Wildlife Management Area. 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 17,665 acres.

HABITAT TYPES

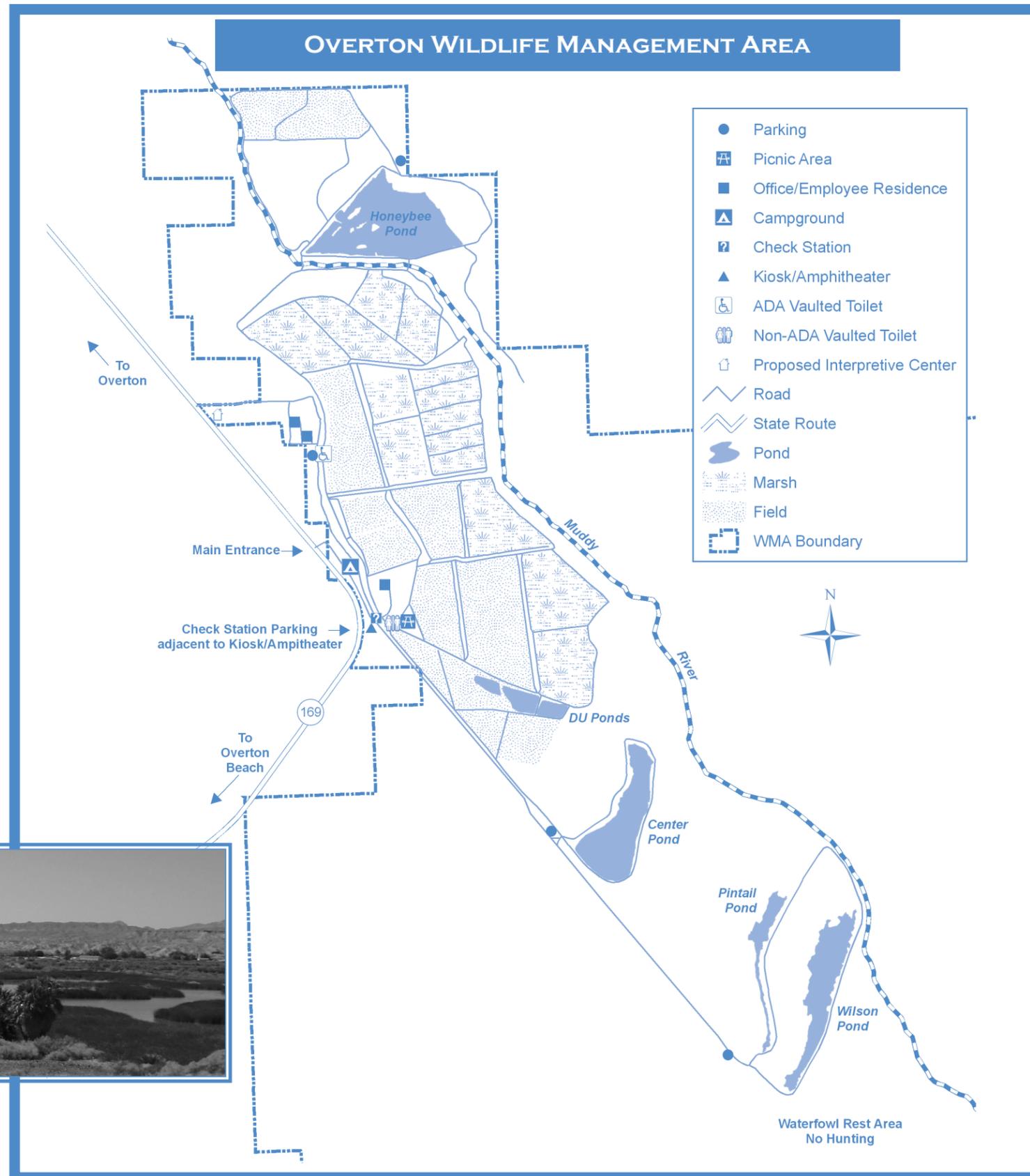
Located in the Mojave Desert, OWMA supports an abundance of fish and wildlife that contributes significantly to the biological diversity of southern Nevada. Desert riparian habitat associated with the floodplain of the Muddy and Virgin rivers is extremely important to wildlife populations. The dense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



AREA MANAGEMENT

Farming

Approximately 165 acres of crops 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 enhances soil nitrogen levels and when disked into the soil it 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 moist soil units are flooded in the fall and provide quality feeding and loafing areas for waterfowl that migrate into the area. The units are drained and allowed to dry through the summer months in an effort to conserve water supplies for summer crops.

Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning is periodically conducted on OWMA to improve habitat and to control vegetation along pond edges and agricultural drainage ditches. Removal of the decadent vegetation results in the production of freshly sprouted plants that provide tender, succulent feed for upland game, waterfowl and other wildlife.

Herbicide Spraying

Application of herbicides is an effective method for controlling undesirable vegetation. Spraying is conducted to open up dense stands of cattail and hardstem bulrush to provide more desirable habitat for waterfowl and other wetland species.

Invasive Plant Management

The invasion by non-native plants has become a major threat to the native habitats on OWMA. Controlling the invasive plants 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 the area. Invasive species on OWMA include Russian knapweed and tamarisk 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 the Nevada Department of Wildlife's habitat development projects. The exceptional diversity in such a relatively small area emphasizes the area'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 begin to build during late-September and peak in January. Cinnamon teal and redheads are generally early migrants. Canada geese are the most commonly found goose species at OWMA while white-fronted, snow and Ross geese are occasional visitors. Tundra swans visit Overton but are relatively uncommon.

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. Gambel's quail are common on OWMA. Rio Grande turkeys were introduced to OWMA in 1991 and the current estimated population in all of Moapa Valley is between 350 and 500 birds. Mammals regularly observed on OWMA include desert cottontail, bobcat, kit fox, beaver, coyote, striped skunk, spotted skunk and long-tailed weasel.

