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Birds of the Lahontan Valley: A Guide to Nevada's Wetland Oasis
by Graham Chisholm and Larry A. Neel

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BOOK REVIEW

Birds of the Lahontan Valley: a Guide to Nevada's Wetland Oasis. Graham Chisholm and Larry A. Neel. University of Nevada Press, Reno and Las Vegas. 2002. \$21.95, paperback; 256 pages + 60 illustrations, 5 maps, 2 appendixes. ISBN 0-87417-479-1.

Beyond J. Linsdale's early publication of Nevada's avifauna, *The Birds of Nevada* (1936), and then the much latter *Birds of the Great Basin* by F. Ryser (1985) that included Nevada, and finally *Birds of Nevada* by R.J. Alcorn (1988), most other works dealing with Nevada's birds tend to be somewhat regional in nature. So it is with this book. But, indeed, it is an excellent review and summary of bird records that have occurred in this wonderful wetlands in far western Nevada's Lahontan Valley.

The geography encompassed by the book covers that region surrounding Reno and Carson City, thence eastward a bit beyond Fallon and Stillwater. It is primarily a book on wetlands, including such locations as Walker, Pyramid, Winnemucca, Humboldt, and Carson lakes plus the Stillwater Marshes, Carson Sinks, and Lahontan Reservoir. These are the remnants, totaling about 10,000 acres, of the 5.5-million-acre Pleistocene Lake Lahontan that covered the region and that by 10,000 years ago had all but disappeared. The authors detail a historical record of the region together with a discussion of contemporary impacts by post-European settlement—all interesting reading. They introduce us to topics such as early Paiute peoples there, irrigation projects that impact(ed) wetlands, problems from mining and agriculture contamination, naturalists and ornithologists that have plied the region, and a brief discussion of a much larger geographic region called the Great Basin and her wetlands.

Not each bird is illustrated, but pen-and-ink drawings by Mimi Hoppe Wolf are liberally scattered throughout the book—and they

are delightful. Most are generally accurate and add a pleasant touch to the reading. Overall, the bulk of the text, pages 33–186, is an annotated account of each species from the region. The authors have used specimen records, literature, and contemporary sight records to round out each account.

The final section consists of birding sites within the Lahontan Valley, including 4 maps. This is followed by an appendix giving a year-by-year individual count, between 1986 and 1999, of colony-nesting wading birds; 1 ibis, 2 heron species, 3 egret species, and a cormorant species. Next come 2 extensive tables giving shorebird and larid counts, by year, during essentially the same time period. Total counts for 26 species varied from 112,103 individuals in 1990 to as few as 10,026 in 1993. Presumably the same methods and same degree of search effort occurred both years.

To me, these tables are somewhat confusing, however. Both tables give the same species, by the same year, and from the same source (U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Nevada Division of Wildlife) based on spring and fall counts, but Table 2 produces different numbers from Table 3. Perhaps Table 2 is spring and Table 3 autumn counts; but, if so, the differentiation is certainly not clear to me. Perhaps it is a problem of table legends.

Regardless, there is a wealth of information for birders. Anyone interested in wetlands and wetland birds could benefit by having this book. I recommend it, not so much for the birds, but for all the other added information and discussion it provides at a time when all wetlands are threatened by human encroachment.

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