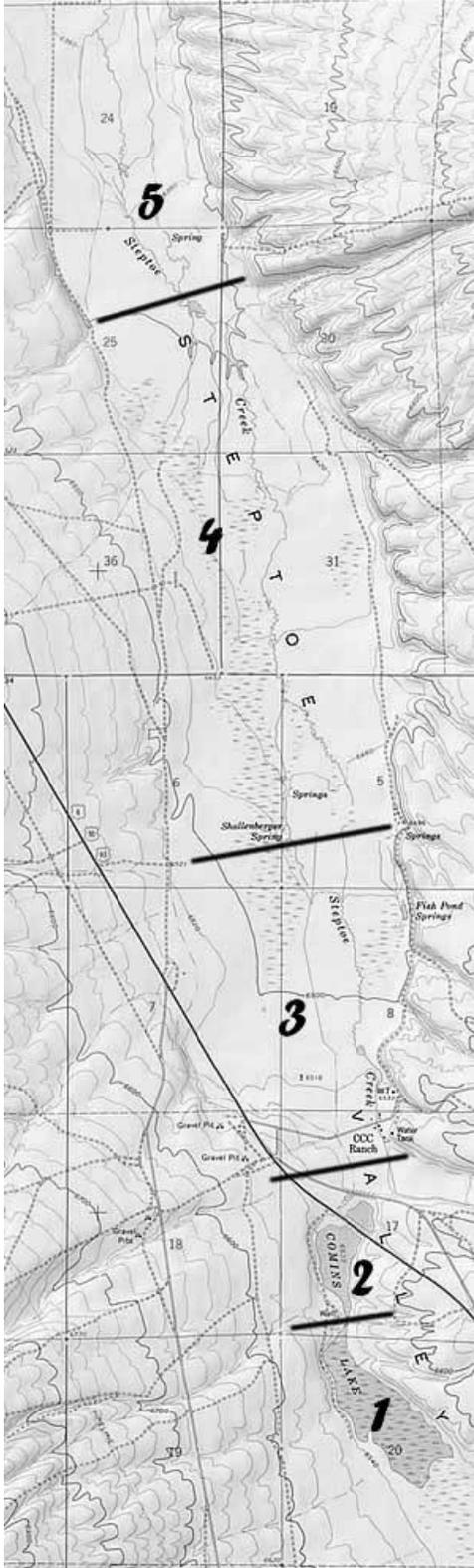


9. Steptoe WMA



Boundaries and Ownership

All WMA lands are managed by NDOW.

West: From north boundary of T.16N, R. 63E, S. 24 southeast in jagged line to southern boundary of T.15N, R.64E, S. 33

South: Southern boundary of T.15N, R.64E, S. 32-33

East: From east boundary of T.15N, R.64E, S. 33 northeast in jagged line to north boundary of T.16N, R.63E, S. 24.

North: North boundary of T.16N, R.63E, S. 24

Focal Species

Sandhill Crane

Long-billed Curlew

Wilson's Phalarope

Short-eared Owl

Northern Harrier

Location of Type I Habitat

Meadows north of WMA headquarters

Comins Lake and associated marshes

Meadows south of Comins Lake

Location of Type II Habitat

Uplands adjacent to meadows

Access and Visibility of Birds

The site is about 10 minutes from Ely and about 6 hours from the Reno/Carson area. All areas are accessible due to public ownership, and maintenance roads make logistics fairly simple. Some shores of Comins Lake have emergent vegetation which may affect bird visibility. Also, the wet meadow north of the headquarters is subject to a wetland enhancement project after having been used for agriculture. It is expected that ground and shrub vegetation will increase as a result, making visibility of birds an increasing issue.

Past and Current Surveys

All sites have been surveyed regularly during NDOW's aerial waterfowl counts since 1966.

Potential Survey Methods

Description

Aerial and ground surveys are probably the best approach because none of the sites are large enough to warrant boat surveys. All birds can be viewed from the shorelines, except where views are obstructed by vegetation.

Selection bias

None

Measurement error and bias

Visibility obstructed by emergent vegetation around the lake and, likely in the future, at the wetland enhancement project. The restoration project itself

introduces a “bias” in that habitat is actively created and other habitats may decrease as a result. This will affect the presence and abundance of several species. Also, an overall increase in ground vegetation, therefore visual obstruction, is expected as a result of partially retiring the ranching operation.

Pilot Studies Needed

None

Contacts with Local Knowledge: Larry Neel, Jason Williams, and Scott ___?___ of NDOW. Scott is one of the WMA managers and lives on site.