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Celebrating the wonders of wetlands in Nevada

Wetlands are the link between land and water – where the flow of water, the cycling of nutrients, and the energy of the sun meet to produce highly productive ecosystems with unique plant and animal life. In recognition of American Wetlands Month in May, the [Nevada Natural Heritage Program](#) is providing education on the vital importance of wetlands to Nevada’s ecological, economic, and social health.

Wetlands refer to all wet areas that provide ecosystem services and habitat for plants, wildlife, and aquatic species, including: wet meadows, seeps and springs, playas, riparian areas, perennial streams, and intermittent/ephemeral washes. Often referred to as the “kidneys” of a watershed, wetlands are renowned for their ability to remove toxic substances, excess nutrients, and harmful pollutants from the water. Interestingly, wetlands may not be wet year-round, and some of the most important wetlands are seasonally dry transition zones.

Although wetlands cover a relatively small amount of land in Nevada, the benefits of these biological powerhouses – including improved water quality, increased water storage/supply, reduced flood and storm surge risk, and essential habitat for plants and wildlife – are indispensable to the State. Nevada’s wetlands are home to more than 300 native animal species, such as the American White Pelican and Pond Turtles, as well as nearly 50 native plant species. Additionally, approximately one-third of threatened and endangered species live exclusively in wetlands, while another 20 percent depend on wetlands during migration and/or reproduction.

Unfortunately, in addition to being the driest state in the nation, it is estimated that Nevada has lost approximately 52% of its historic wetland acreage over the years. The remaining wetlands continue to be threatened by numerous factors, such as prolonged drought. The Nevada Natural Heritage Program continues to work closely with its partnering agencies to develop and promote innovative solutions to monitor, preserve, and enhance our natural wetland environments.

“Wetlands serve as a lifeline to many of Nevada’s diverse species, and the Nevada Natural Heritage Program, in collaboration with our partners, is excited to further coordinate efforts in support of these environmental treasures,” said Kristin Szabo, Administrator of the Nevada Natural Heritage Program. “Together, we strive to foster the health and wellbeing of our precious wetland resources, today and for generations to come.”

To learn more about Nevada’s wetlands, please visit <http://heritage.nv.gov/node/310>.

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The **Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**' mission is to protect, manage, and enhance Nevada's natural and cultural resources. Established in 1957, the Department includes ten divisions and programs (Environmental Protection, Forestry, State Parks, State Lands, Water Resources, Historic Preservation, Conservation Districts, Natural Heritage, Sagebrush Ecosystem, and Off-Highway Vehicles) and 11 boards and commissions.