



Oregon Coordinated Aquatic Bird Monitoring:
Description of Important Aquatic Bird Site



Alvord Lake

BCS number: 48-2

Site description author(s)

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Site location (UTM)

Datum: NAD 83, Zone: 11, Easting: 368655, Northing: 4697400

General description

Alvord Lake is a seasonal, alkali lake. The Alvord Lake playa is about eight miles north of Fields. It is approximately four miles long and one and three-quarters miles wide. Wet meadows and salt desert vegetation on its western edge and dunes and salt desert vegetation along its eastern edge define the margins. The Kueny Ranch abuts its northwest side. Waters from Wildhorse Creek and other streams draining the east side of Steens Mountain occasionally feed into Alvord Lake, as does the outflow from Borax Lake at its southeastern corner and Trout Creek along the eastern edge. Most of the immediate area draining into Alvord Lake from the south is characterized by white, crusty, highly alkaline soils.

Boundaries and ownership

Boundaries: Alvord Lake is bounded by Steens Mountains to the west, the Alvord Desert to the north and east, and has a northern edge 3.8 miles south of Andrews, Oregon, and is about 8 miles north of Fields, Oregon. See Figure 1 for map of Alvord Lake (Google Earth 2009).

Ownership: Private and Bureau of Land Management, see Figure 2 for BLM Burns District ownership map. Private land is mainly on the West and North sides of Alvord Lake. BLM land is mainly on the southwest, south and east sides of the lake.

Water levels

Focal species use and timing

Focal Guild/Species	Wintering	Breeding	Migration
Secretive Marsh Birds*			
Colonial Nesting Waterbirds			
Ground-based Aquatic Birds			
Migrating Shorebirds			
American White Pelican			
Barrow's Goldeneye			
Black-necked Stilt			
Bufflehead			
Dusky Canada Goose			
Franklin's Gull			
Greater Sandhill Crane			
Long-billed Curlew			
Snowy Egret			
Red-Necked Grebe			
Upland Sandpiper			
Western Snowy Plover		Present	
Yellow Rail			

*The focal species for Oregon's secretive marsh bird monitoring are PBGR, LEBI, AMBI, VIRA, SORA, YERA. In very general terms, the aquatic birds present at this site include waterfowl, waterbirds, and shorebirds.

Below is a list of species observed by year at Alvord Lake during the snowy plover surveys. In 2004, which was a low water year, the fewest species were observed due to lack of water on the lake. The years 2005 and 2006 were high water years. Water levels such as those in 2004 reflect normal water years.

Bird Species	Alvord Lake		
	2004	2005	2006
Eared Grebe			X
Clark's Grebe			X
Western Grebe			X
Great Egret			X
Mallard		X	X
Gadwall		X	X
American Wigeon		X	
Northern Pintail	X	X	X
Cinnamon Teal		X	
Canvasback			X
Redhead			X
Lesser Scaup		X	X
White-faced Ibis	X	X	X
Northern Harrier			X
Prairie Falcon			X
Sandhill Crane		X	X
Snowy Plover	X	X	X
Semipalmated Plover		X	
Killdeer	X	X	X
American Avocet	X	X	X
Black-necked Stilt		X	
Willet	X	X	X
Spotted Sandpiper			X
Long-billed Curlew	X	X	X
Western Sandpiper		X	X
Baird's Sandpiper	X		
Wilson's Phalarope		X	X
Franklin's Gull		X	
Ring-billed Gull		X	X
California Gull		X	
Black Tern			X
Common Nighthawk		X	
Loggerhead Shrike		X	X
Common Raven		X	X
Horned Lark			X
Sage Thrasher	X	X	X
Sage Sparrow			X
Western Meadowlark			X

Location of Type 1 and 2 habitat within the site

Functional Group	Type 1 Habitat	Type 2 Habitat
Ground Based Aquatic Birds		
Secretive Marsh Birds		
Colonial Nesters		
Migrating Shorebirds		

Access to Type 1 and Type 2 habitats

There is no direct access to the playa edge on BLM administered lands. Hiking from the East Steens Road or Borax Lake would be the nearest access. These hikes are fairly level and would be about a mile to a mile and a half one way. Water levels which vary seasonally and annually will determine species use and abundance. See Figure 3 for general road access to the area (Google Map 2009).

Audibility and visibility of focal species

Conservation issues

None.

Conservation measures taken, in progress, or proposed

Past and current surveys

Surveys during breeding season for inland populations of western snowy plovers were completed at Alvord Lake from 2004 to 2007 as part of two different efforts. From 2004 to 2006 the BLM contracted out surveys to establish some baseline for the extent and size of snowy plover populations in the Alvord Basin from Pueblo Slough to the south to Mickey Basin to the north. This was to repeat work originally done in 1990 throughout eastern Oregon. In 2007, the USGS conducted a range-wide survey which included most areas in the Alvord Basin.

Potential pilot studies

A ground-based survey for all aquatic birds, as well as a migrating shorebird survey, would be valuable. Manning and Hartley (2006) suggest that such surveys might be able to be conducted by volunteers.

Potential survey methods

Surveys completed to date through efforts to document snowy plovers have provided sufficient information on species occurrence so no new surveys are needed at present.

a. Description:

b. Selection bias:

c. Measurement error and bias:

Potential pilot studies

Literature cited

Bureau of Land Management, Burns District.

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/burns/recreation/alvord-mann.php>. Accessed February 2, 2009.

Bureau of Land Management, Burns District ownership map.

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/burns/images/BurnsDetailedMap.jpg>. Accessed March 20, 2009.

Google Earth version 5.0. 2009. Image: Alvord Lake, Oregon. Accessed March 7, 2009.

Google Map. 2009. Map of Alvord Lake, Oregon.

<http://maps.google.com/maps?ll=42.380678,-118.60709&z=13&t=h&hl=en>. Accessed March 7, 2009.

Manning, Ann and Laura Hartley. March 2006. Important sites for aquatic birds in Eastern Oregon. Version 2.0.

Figure 1: Google Earth (2009) map of Alvord Lake.



Figure 2: BLM Burns District ownership map. The red box indicates the Alvord Lake region.

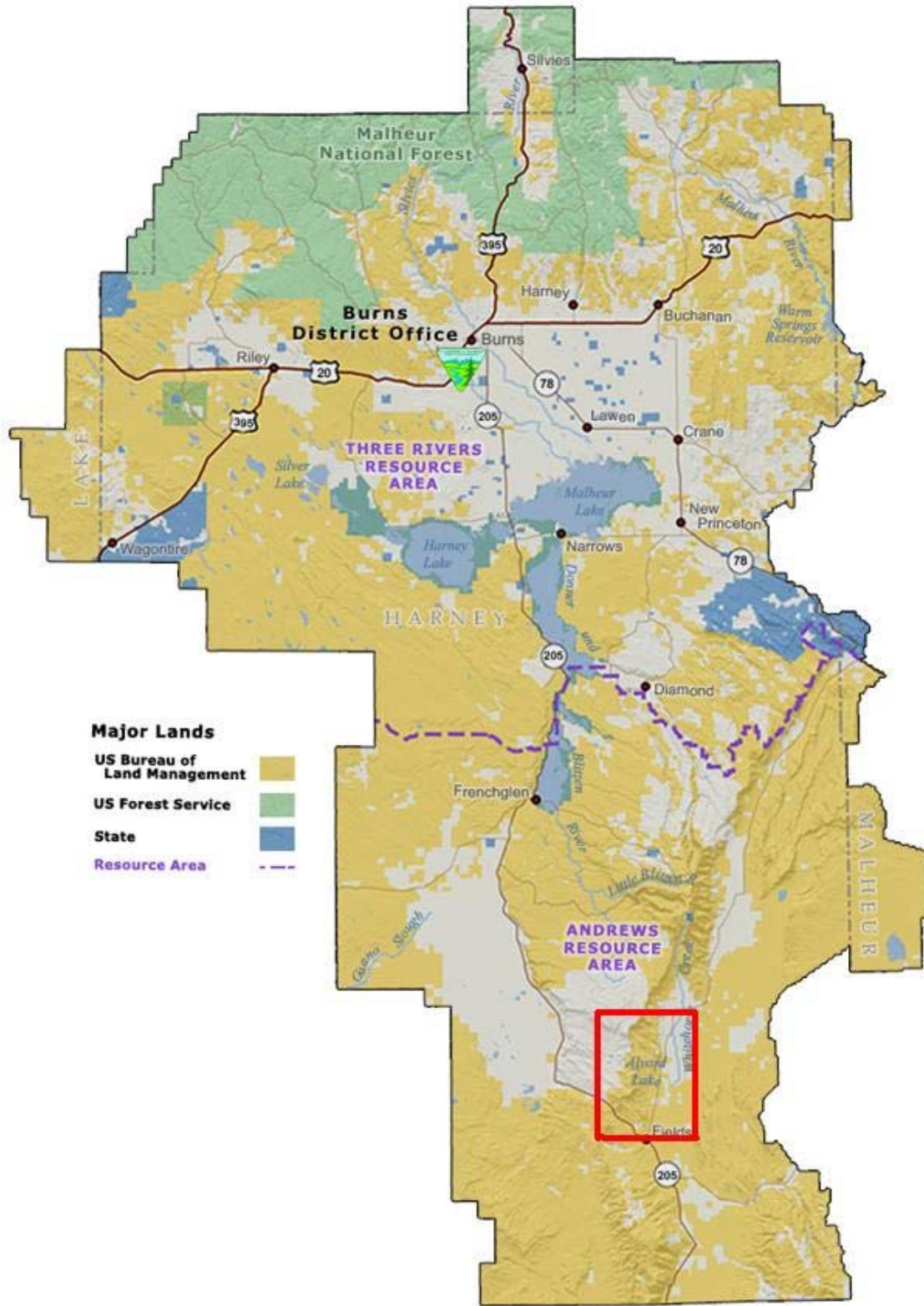


Figure 3: Google Map (2009) road view of Alvord Lake.

