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## Black-necked Stilt

### *Himantopus mexicanus*

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Aves — Charadriiformes — Recurvirostridae

#### CONSERVATION STATUS / CLASSIFICATION

Rangewide: Secure (G5)  
Statewide: Vulnerable breeding (S3B)  
ESA: No status  
USFS: Region 1: No status; Region 4: No status  
BLM: No status  
IDFG: Protected nongame

#### BASIS FOR INCLUSION

Regional declines; Intermountain West primary breeding area.

#### TAXONOMY

There are 3 recognized subspecies: *H. mexicanus mexicanus* (Black-necked Stilt), *H. m. melanurus* (White-backed Stilt; South America), and *H. m. knudseni* (Hawaiian Stilt)

#### DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

The distribution of the black-necked stilt is dependent on suitable local habitats (Robinson et al. 1999). In the U.S., they generally breed along the southern half of the Pacific Coast, throughout much of the Great Basin, scattered areas in the southern Midwest and Atlantic Coast, along the Texas and Louisiana coastlines, and throughout south Florida. There are approximately 150,000 breeding black-necked stilts in North America (Morrison et al. 2001). Greater than half of this population breeds in the Great Basin (Oring et al. 2000). In Idaho, the current population size of this species, which nests in the southern half of the state, is unknown.

#### POPULATION TREND

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data suggest little or no change in the population in the U.S. and the western BBS region during the periods 1966–2004, 1966–1979, or 1980–2005 (Sauer et al. 2005). In the physiographic region Great Basin Deserts, BBS data suggest an increase during the period 1979–1980 (+10.0% per year) and 1966–2004 (+12.9% per year; not statistically significant; Sauer et al. 2005). In contrast, BBS data suggest declines in the Basin and Range physiographic region during the same periods (-21.25 and -10.7% per year, respectively; not statistically significant; Sauer et al. 2005). Population trends for Idaho are not available, likely because of low detection rates along BBS routes for this species.

#### HABITAT AND ECOLOGY

Black-necked stilts nest along edges of sewage ponds or shallow inland wetlands, generally in the fresher sections of the wetland that contain emergent vegetation, such as cattails, bulrush, and sedges (Robinson et al. 1999). Also nests in flooded lowlands

and permanently-flooded pastures. Nest bowls or scrapes, lined with vegetation, are constructed on short emergent vegetation stubble over water, or high spots with sparse vegetation (Robinson et al. 1999). Black-necked stilts forage in shallow water, feeding on aquatic invertebrates (Robinson et al. 1999).

## **ISSUES**

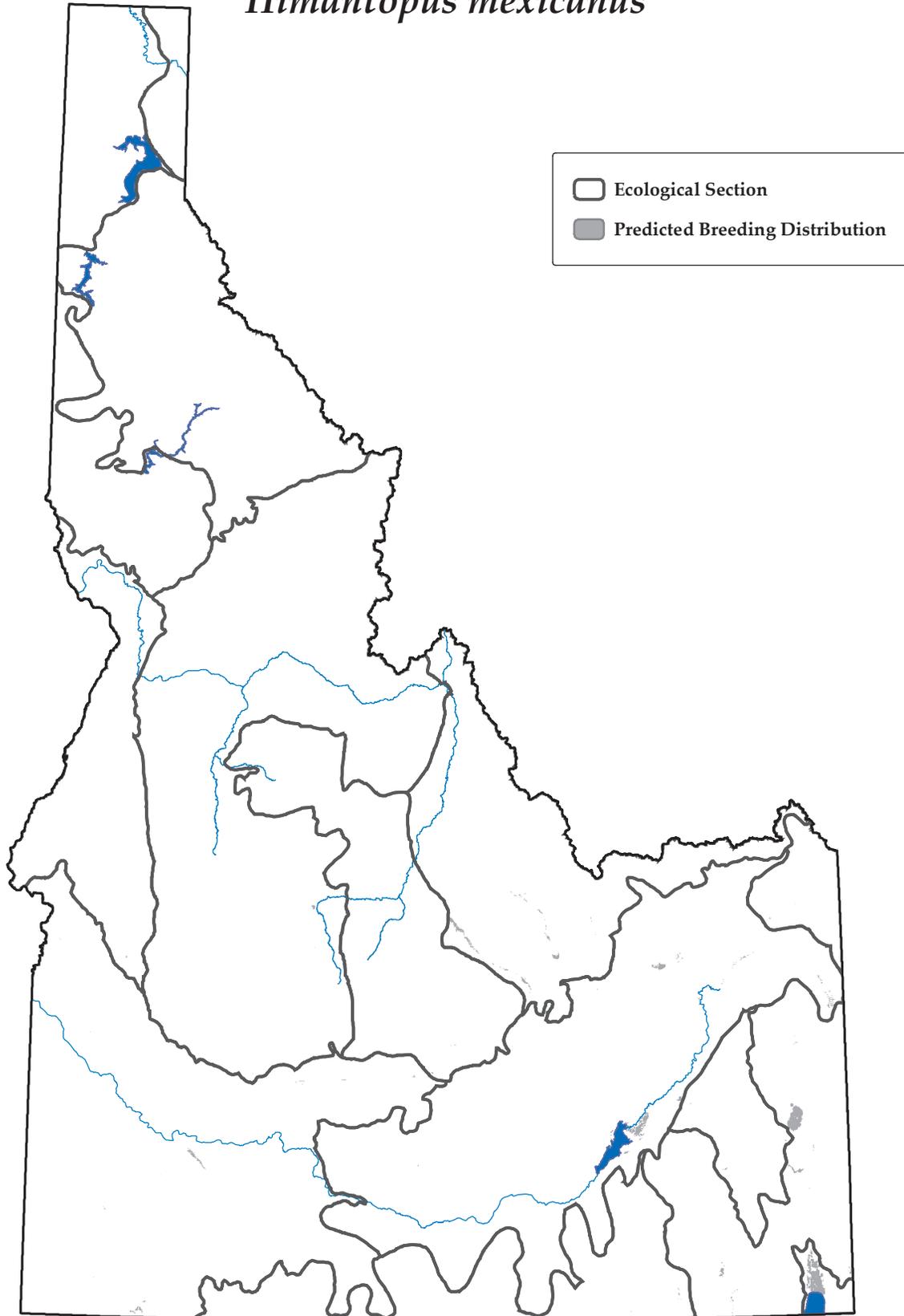
Shooting and trapping led to population declines and range retractions before the 1840s; illegal shooting and trapping may be a minor source of mortality currently (Robinson et al. 1999). Many wetlands in the western U.S. that black-necked stilts use for nesting have been contaminated, particularly by selenium, as a result of irrigation and other human activities (USFWS 1992). This species is an important indicator in identifying effects of contaminants in irrigation drain water on wildlife (Robinson et al. 1999). Loss of wetland habitat probably has led to black-necked stilt declines (Page and Gill 1994). This species is also susceptible to disturbance at the nest site, particularly during the early nesting stages, and is often subject to nest destruction resulting from routing levee grading (Robinson et al. 1999).

## **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Coordinate with the Intermountain West Joint Venture to address wetland habitat and management needs (Oring et al. 2000). Monitor black-necked stilts for any contamination issues. Establish monitoring of nesting sites on a regular basis, using the Idaho Bird Inventory and Survey (IBIS) framework. Foster research focused on the interactions between black-necked stilts and primary predators (e.g., canids, corvids, larids; Oring et al. 2000).

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Map created on September 21, 2005  
and prepared by Idaho Conservation Data Center.  
Sources: Predicted distribution is from the Wildlife Habitat  
Relationships Models (WHR), A Gap Analysis of Idaho:  
Final Report. Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research  
Unit, Moscow, ID (Scott et al. 2002). Predicted distribution  
is approximate (for more information, go to  
[http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap\\_report.asp](http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap_report.asp)).

