

result in significant habitat losses. A proposed expansion of the Glenmore Land Fill in Kelowna threatens to destroy habitat for the only known breeding colony (all other breeding sites had only one or two nests) of avocets in the province. (See footnote page 5). Various development proposals at Robert Lake (Tera Planning Ltd. 1993) also threaten this potentially highly suitable, alternate nesting habitat. The habitat quality of three other wetlands located in ranching areas of the province where nesting has been documented (i.e., Beresford, "White", and Little White Lake) is undetermined. There does not appear to be any imminent development pressures on these wetlands as at present they are used only as pasture lands. In the future, increased recreational interest (e.g., dude ranches) in these areas may become an important human disturbance factor. Generally, however, alkaline lakes are of lower recreational value than other wetlands where water recreation activities are possible.

Alki Lake has been used since the mid 1960s as a landfill site by the City of Kelowna. In the mid-1980s, the City's lease on the southern half of the site was canceled. Prior to cancellation, refuse waste was buried in trenches and covered with clay, resulting in shallow ridges. These ridges were used as nest sites by avocets in 1997 and 1998, when surface water filled most areas of the southern half of the site. The northern half of the site has continued to be used as a landfill. The City has recently purchased the southern half of Alki Lake and plans to use it for garbage disposal within 10 years. The Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Waste Management Program, is concerned about the escape of leachates and requires de-watering of the site. Both proposals would result in the loss of breeding habitat for avocets.

### 3.4 Present Habitat Status

The most important known breeding site in British Columbia, located at Alki Lake, is owned by the City of Kelowna and is slated to be destroyed as part of a proposed expansion of the Glenmore Land Fill. Alki Lake was not given a sensitivity rating (i.e., an unconfirmed site) in the recent 'Wetland Habitat Management Strategy' for Kelowna (Urban Systems 1998) because of the limited scope of the project. Basic inventory and assessment of Alki Lake is still pending, and will eventually be incorporated into the "Wetland Strategy". Robert Lake is owned privately by a number of landowners and is rated to be of Moderate Sensitivity by Urban Systems (1998). The Central Okanagan Parks & Wildlife Trust recently

purchased a small section of Robert Lake in the lake's southwest corner. With this purchase, conservation concerns associated with development pressures in the vicinity of Robert Lake will now have a louder voice.

Two ephemeral avocet breeding locations, Serpentine Fen and Duck Lake, are protected within Wildlife Management Areas. Little White Lake is in Crown rangeland (D. Ogilvie pers comm 1999), while the two remaining sites, Beresford and "White" Lakes, appear to be privately owned. Potential status of other, undiscovered sites in the grasslands of the southern interior will most likely be privately owned, since very few protected areas are established in suitable habitat.

## 4 DISTRIBUTION

### 4.1 North America

#### 4.1.1 Breeding

The American Avocet does not occur outside of North America. It breeds on the Pacific coast from San Francisco Bay south locally to northwest Baja California Norte in Mexico. In western inland areas, it breeds east of the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains from southeast and central Washington, and southern Idaho to eastern Oregon, eastern California and western Nevada. Breeding has also been recorded from northern Idaho and in scattered locations across southern British Columbia. In central inland areas, it is known to breed from central Alberta, central Saskatchewan, and southwestern Manitoba south through most of the Great Plain states to central New Mexico and northwestern Texas. Breeding has been known to occur as far east as western Minnesota, central Iowa and western Oklahoma. Breeding also occurs in central Mexico. Resident breeding populations occur along the Gulf coast of Texas, but no longer occur on the Atlantic coast (Godfrey 1986; Semenchuk 1992; Howell and Webb 1995; Price et al. 1995; Nature Mapping 1997; Robinson et al. 1997; Breeding Bird Survey 1998). Figure 1 (inset) depicts the breeding range of the American Avocet in North America.

Extralimital breeding has been recorded in southwestern Ontario (Godfrey 1986), and the Northwest Territories (Kuyt and Johns 1992). The incidence of extralimital breeding appears to increase in drought years. Sewage lagoons of large southwestern cities such as Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Tucson also attract breeding avocets (Robinson et al. 1997).