

MANN CREEK RESERVOIR

Author: John F. Gatchet

Site C-7 — Map C-5/C-6/C-7

Highlights: Shorebirds, Veery, Red-eyed Vireo

Major Habitats: Wetland, Deciduous Forest, Shrub-steppe

Location: Washington Co., 12 miles northwest of Weiser

Spring: ** **Summer:** ** **Fall:** *** **Winter:** *

This 280-acre reservoir has great birding potential as a fall migrant trap, but it has been little explored. Hopefully, this situation will soon change, since the area can be easily and quickly birded. Be sure to swing in if you're passing by!

DIRECTIONS:

From Weiser follow US 95 north to milepost 95.4, then turn left (west) on Upper Mann Creek Road, following it 1.3 miles to the dam. Mann Creek Reservoir is managed by the BOR, but some private land does occur—watch for posted signs.

BIRDING:

To scan the entire length of the reservoir, turn left at the dam and follow Monroe Creek Road to the parking areas on the right (north and west) in 0.3 and 1.7 miles, respectively. Migrating Eurasian Wigeons (rare), Barrow's Goldeneyes, and an occasional Wood Duck use Mann Creek Reservoir as a resting area, as do Bonaparte's Gulls and Forster's Terns. Unexpected species, such as Horned Grebes in June or Pacific Loons in fall, have also been found.

To bird the east side of the reservoir, zero your mileage at the east end of the dam and continue north on Upper Mann Creek Road. Watch the shrub-steppe habitat to the right (east) for Say's Phoebes, Eastern Kingbirds, Sage Thrashers, and Loggerhead Shrikes. In winter look for Northern Goshawks, Merlins, and Northern Shrikes. Parking areas on the left (west) at miles 0.8 and 1.4 are good vantage points.

At mile 1.6 turn left (west) onto the 0.3-mile-long, graveled entrance road to the campground, where Mann Creek enters the reservoir. There is a short road/trail which follows Mann Creek upstream. It begins behind the camp host's site at the north end of the campground. Wading and bushwhacking are required to bird this riparian forest, which shelters a rich variety of breeding passerines, including Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos, Yellow and MacGillivray's Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Yellow-breasted Chats, Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, Spotted Towhees, Song Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Bullock's Orioles, and American Goldfinches.

The north end of the reservoir is excellent for shorebirds, especially in late fall when water levels are low. In addition to more common species, look for American Golden-Plover, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, and Long-billed Curlew.

Mann Creek's riparian habitat can also be birded by following Upper Mann Creek Road 2 miles north of the campground entrance road (see map). The road parallels the creek for about 4 miles. Watch for Prairie Falcons, Western Screech-Owls, Lewis's Woodpeckers, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Western Wood-Pewees, Veeries, and previously mentioned species.

OTHER:

Food, fuel, and lodging are available in Weiser. Boat ramps, fishing, and a primitive campground (pit toilet; water) are available at Mann Creek Reservoir. For additional maps and information, contact the FS (208/549-4200) in Weiser, or BLM (208/384-3300) in Boise.

GOOSE LAKE

Author: Mark Collie

Site C-8 — Map C-8/C-9/C-10/C-11

Highlights: Red-necked Grebe, Three-toed Woodpecker

Major Habitats: Mixed Conifer Forest, Wetland

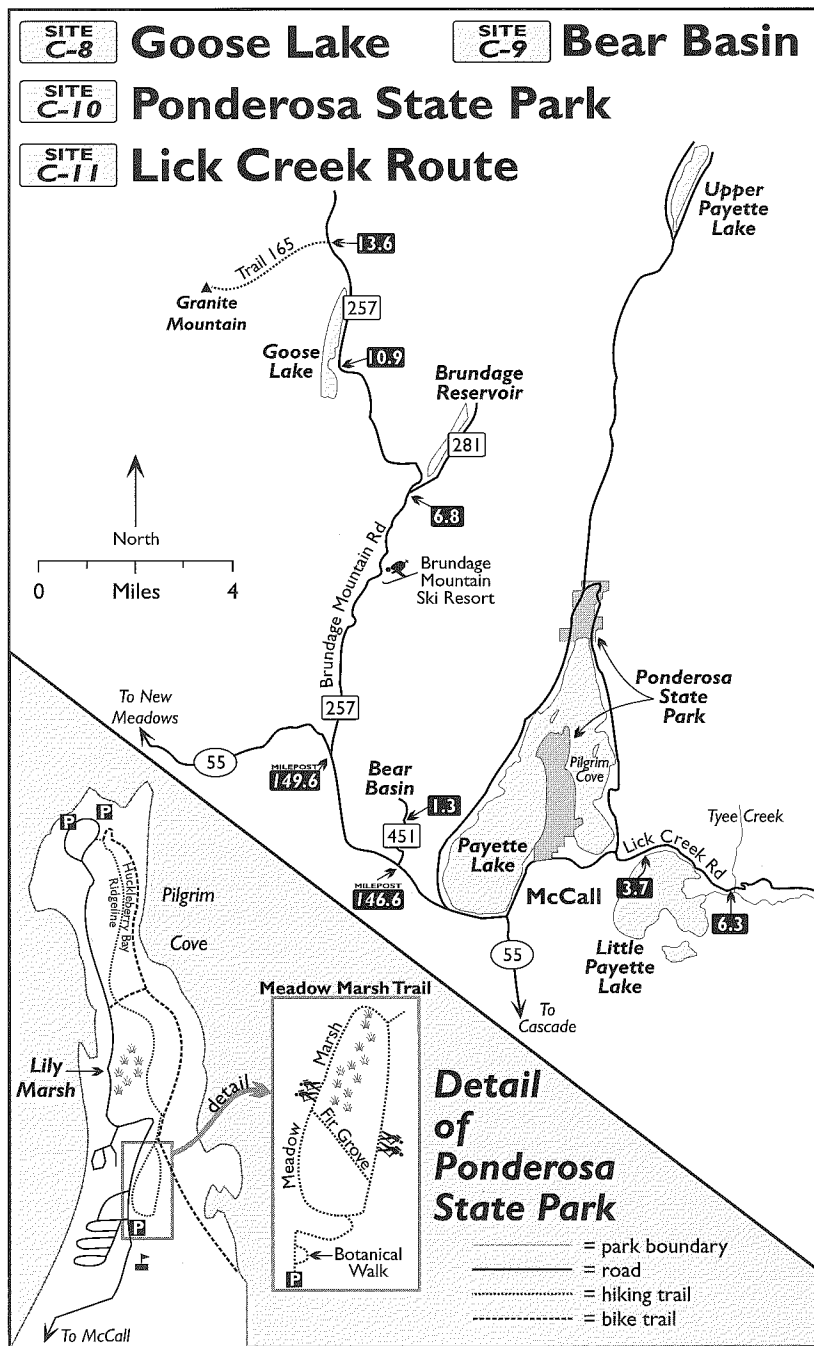
Location: Adams Co., 13 miles northwest of McCall

Spring: N/A **Summer:** ** **Fall:** * **Winter:** N/A

In 1994 over 300,000 acres of woodland burned in central Idaho. A portion of those burns occurred near Goose Lake, a 2-mile-long, high-elevation reservoir. Because of salvage logging, expect heavy logging traffic. Check with the Payette NF for more information (see below). Be aware that access into this area is limited to June through early December.

DIRECTIONS:

From McCall, follow ID 55 northwest 5 miles. At milepost 149.6 turn right (north) onto paved FR 257 (a.k.a. Brundage Mountain Road) and zero your mileage. Continue north 4 miles to the Brundage Mountain Ski Resort, where FR 257 becomes gravel of varying quality (including some rough washboard). At mile 6.8 stay left (northwest) on FR 257 (now called Goose Lake Road). Drive past Brundage Reservoir at mile 7.5. At mile 10.9 (past the entrance to Grouse Creek Campground), turn left (southwest) onto an unmarked dirt road and go 0.2 mile to Goose Lake Dam.



BIRDING:

On the road to Goose Lake watch for Golden Eagles, Northern Goshawks, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, and Ruffed, Blue, and Spruce Grouse. At the lake look for Common Loons (migrant), Red-necked Grebes, Common Goldeneyes, Ospreys, and Bald Eagles.

Along the shoreline, watch for Vaux's Swifts, as well as for Calliope, Broad-tailed, and Rufous Hummingbirds. Woodpeckers are the real treat, with nearly all of Idaho's species possible (except White-headed and Lewis's). Three-toed and Hairy Woodpeckers are the most common ones here. Corvids include Gray and Steller's Jays, Clark's Nutcrackers (most likely on the west slope above the lake), and Common Ravens. All three of our nuthatches are present, as well as Yellow-rumped and MacGillivray's Warblers. Pine Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches, Red Crossbills, and Pine Siskins are likely breeders. At night listen for Great Horned, Northern Pygmy-, Barred, Great Gray, Boreal, and Northern Saw-whet Owls.

For additional birding continue north on FR 257 to mile 13.6 (3 miles north of Grouse Creek Campground), turn left (west), and go 0.2 mile to the obscure Granite Mountain Trailhead. This trail fords Twin Lakes Creek and heads up into a partially harvested burned forest. This area can be very birdy. You'll reach a fire look-out atop 8,500-foot-high Granite Mountain in about 4 miles (signed mileages vary).

OTHER:

Area maps can be purchased from the FS (208/634-0700) in McCall. Camping is available at Grouse Creek Campground (pit toilets) and at undeveloped sites around the lake. Goose Lake is a popular fishing destination as well. McCall is a full-service community.

BEAR BASIN

Author: Dave Trochrell

Site C-9 — Map C-8/C-9/C-10/C-11

Highlights: Great Gray Owl, Williamson's Sapsucker

Major Habitats: Mixed Conifer Forest, Meadow

Location: Valley Co., 4 miles northwest of McCall

Spring: ** **Summer:** ** **Fall:** ** **Winter:** **

Bear Basin is just a few minutes outside the resort town of McCall, and is a good place to see a number of interesting owls and woodpeckers. This is probably Idaho's best site for Williamson's Sapsucker. Another specialty is Great Gray Owl, which has been studied here by the Forest Service.

DIRECTIONS:

Follow ID 55 west from downtown McCall about 2.5 miles. At milepost 146.6 turn right (north) on FR 451 (Bear Basin Road) and zero your mileage. At mile 0.8 stay right (straight) and enter public land (FS).

BIRDING:

As you start up Bear Basin Road, stop and listen for Western Screech-Owls, White-breasted Nuthatches, Swainson's Thrushes, and American Redstarts in the open forest. At mile 1.3 park in the pull-out on the left (west), by the large meadow. Walk the old two-track road that leads 0.3 mile northwest to an old corral. Scan the meadow's periphery for Great Gray Owl, which may be present year round. In summer watch for Common Snipe, Red-naped and Williamson's Sapsuckers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Mountain Bluebirds, and Lincoln's Sparrows. Pileated Woodpeckers, Clark's Nutcrackers, and Red Crossbills can often be detected flying overhead. Enter the woods behind the corral and walk the forest/meadow margin. Carefully scan any small forest openings for Great Grays. In spring and summer you may also find Olive-sided Flycatchers, Mountain Chickadees, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes, Cassin's Vireos, Yellow-rumped and Townsend's Warblers, and Western Tanagers.

If you continue driving north on FR 451, watch all forest openings for Great Gray Owls. Be sure to stop occasionally to listen for woodpeckers. Though rare, Spruce Grouse, Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers, and Pine Grosbeaks are possible. More common species include Dusky Flycatcher, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit and Varied Thrushes, and Wilson's Warbler. An evening's owling could yield Flammulated, Northern Pygmy-, Barred, Boreal, and Northern Saw-whet Owls.

OTHER:

McCall is a full-service community. Area maps and more information are available from the FS (208/634-0700) in McCall. See also Ponderosa SP (the next site), Goose Lake (the previous site) and Lick Creek Road Route (p. 122).

PONDEROSA STATE PARK

Author: Diane Evans

Site C-10 — Map C-8/C-9/C-10/C-11

Highlights: Vaux's Swift, Olive-sided Flycatcher

Major Habitats: Mixed Conifer Forest, Wetland

Location: Valley Co., 2 miles northeast of McCall

Spring: * **Summer:** *** **Fall:** * **Winter:** *

Towering conifers bordering beautiful Payette Lake are the dominant feature of Ponderosa State Park. This forest packs high densities of Mountain Chickadees, Swainson's Thrushes, Townsend's Warblers, and Western Tanagers.

The best birding at Ponderosa SP is along the trail maze within the Day Use Area. Early mornings are the most productive time, particularly after mid-summer, when nesting activity slows and the number of human visitors increases. Be aware that during winter and early spring, you'll be limited to cross-country ski access.

DIRECTIONS:

The park entrance is 1.8 miles from downtown McCall. Signs to the park are posted at every major intersection in town.

From the intersection of ID 55 and East Lake Street, head east on East Lake Street. Follow the main drag as it turns into Pine Street/Roosevelt Avenue/Hemlock Street. After 0.6 mile turn left on Davis Avenue, then go straight to the park entrance in another 1.2 miles.

Zero your mileage at the park entrance station. The narrow road that leads through the park is paved for 1.5 miles and gravel for the remaining 1.7 miles.

BIRDING:

A good place to begin exploring Ponderosa SP is along Meadow Marsh Trail, which forms a short loop close to the campground. To get there, turn right (east) into the large dirt parking lot at mile 0.3, just before the large wooden gate marking the entrance into the Day Use Area. The trailhead is by the road. Follow the trail northeast, bypassing the Botanical Walk Loop. At the first major junction turn left onto Meadow Marsh Trail. Dusky Flycatchers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and MacGillivray's Warblers frequent the Quaking Aspens here. Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Swainson's Thrushes, and Yellow-rumped Warblers are common as you continue north. Listen for Steller's Jays as well. For a short loop, turn right onto Fir Grove Trail and continue eastward. Pileated Woodpeckers are often heard along this section. Pick up the Meadow Marsh Trail to follow the loop back to the gravel parking lot. After retrieving your vehicle, continue north on the park's main road. At mile 1.3 stay right.

Lily Marsh parking lot is on the right (east) at mile 2.0. In spring, Lily Marsh supports Wood Ducks, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Mallards, and Hooded Mergansers. A short walk to the bridge (visible from the parking lot at the north end of the marsh) provides easy viewing. There are several Osprey nests around the marsh, including one directly over the bridge. In June listen for Soras, Willow and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Varied Thrushes, Yellow-rumped, Townsend's, and Nashville Warblers, and Cassin's Vireos. Lily Marsh Trail continues to the east, with several hiking options (e.g., south along the east side of the marsh or northeast toward Pilgrim Cove), all of which access good birding territory. Northern Pygmy-Owls and Barred Owls are possible in this general area.

After investigating the Lily Marsh area, drive to the north end of the park. The stupendous overlook at road's end is worth the extra time. *This portion of the road is not suitable for trailers or motorhomes.* At mile 3.0 is the Huckleberry Bay Trailhead, but you cannot park there, so continue 100 yards or so and use the pull-out at the Lake Overlook, then walk back down the road to access the trailhead. Follow Huckleberry Bay Trail east and turn north (left) at the trail junction in 50 yards, and loop down into the woods. Follow the trail south past a small wetland; Pileated Woodpeckers nest here. Listen also for Vaux's Swifts. Hiking options include completing a loop by continuing downhill and returning on the Ridgeline Trail, or backtracking to the road (see map).

OTHER:

A checklist and a trail map can be obtained at the visitors center (mile 0.1). Ponderosa SP supports a popular full-service campground (reservations advised), boat launch, beaches, and picnic pavilions. McCall is a full-service community. For more information, contact the park (208/634-2164). See also Lick Creek Road Route, the next site.

LICK CREEK ROAD ROUTE

Author: Marilyn C. Smith

Site C-11 — Map C-8/C-9/C-10/C-11

Highlights: Townsend's Warbler, Spring migrants

Major Habitats: Dry Conifer Forest, Mixed Conifer Forest, Wetland

Location: Valley Co., McCall

Spring: *** **Summer:** *** **Fall:** * **Winter:** *

This short route ascends into the Payette NF near McCall. It is one of central Idaho's best spots for spring migrants, and it also attracts lots of typical conifer forest nesters. Best birding is from mid-May to early July.

DIRECTIONS:

Zero your mileage at the intersection of ID 55 and East Lake Street in downtown McCall, then head east on East Lake Street toward Ponderosa SP. Follow the main drag through the curves as it changes to Pine Street, Roosevelt Avenue, and Hemlock Street. At mile 0.6 turn left (north) on Davis Avenue. At mile 1.1 turn right (east) onto Lick Creek Road at the flashing signal light. At mile 3.2 stay right. From this point on, Lick Creek Road is a graveled road of variable quality.

BIRDING:

Little Payette Lake is on the right (south) at mile 3.8. It can be scoped from the wooden dock. Look for Red-necked Grebes and various waterfowl, including nesting Common Goldeneyes. One or two Common Loons often spend the entire summer. Keep an eye out for Rufous and Calliope Hummingbirds (June to September) in the roadside bushes, and for Ospreys over the lake.

At mile 3.9 park in the pull-off on the right (south). A narrow dirt road on the left (north) side of Lick Creek Road leads into the woods. Walk this road and the maze of trails along its edge for common forest birds, including Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, Ruffed Grouse, Red-naped and (possibly) Williamson's Sapsuckers, Gray and Steller's Jays, and Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

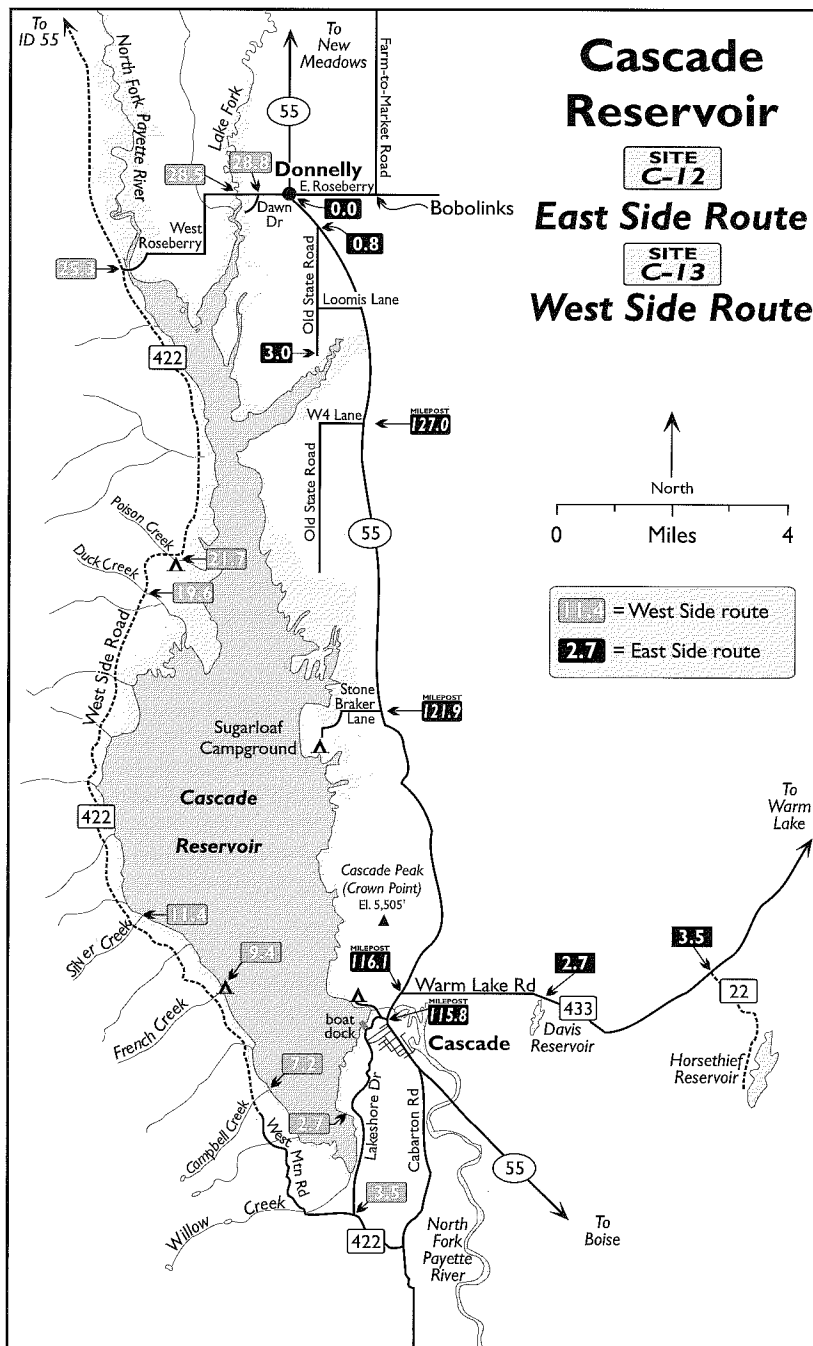
The best birding is around mile 5.7. Park at the road spur on the left (north), next to the large rock. The small clearing allows excellent views of the boggy area to the south, and the high cliff to the north. Bird songs come from every direction! Thick willows beside the road hide warblers, while kinglets sing from the tree-tops and Common Ravens and Clark's Nutcrackers call from the cliff. Other species to watch for include Turkey Vulture, Red-naped Sapsucker, Downy, Hairy, and Pileated Woodpeckers, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Rock Wren, Western Tanager, and Nashville, Yellow, Townsend's, MacGillivray's, and Wilson's Warblers.

At mile 5.9 pull into the large parking lot on the right (south), which borders Scouts Pond. A series of paths radiates around and beyond the pond for additional birding.

There is a good place to turn around by Tyee Creek (mile 6.5). Beyond Tyee Creek, Lick Creek Road has more tantalizing spots for the adventure-some birder, but the road becomes a bit rough.

OTHER:

A Payette NF map is suggested for anyone going beyond Tyee Creek; it is available from the FS office (208/634-0700) in McCall. McCall is a full-service community.



CASCADE RESERVOIR — EAST SIDE ROUTE

Author: Marilyn C. Smith

Site C-12 — Map C-12/C-13

Highlights: Pacific Loon, Bald Eagle

Major Habitats: Wetland, Grassland

Location: Valley Co., 12 miles south of McCall

Spring: *** **Summer:** ** **Fall:** *** **Winter:** *

This site is viewed against a background of conifer-forested mountains, presenting spectacular scenery anywhere along the shore. This 16-mile-long route follows the eastern edge of Cascade Reservoir (managed by the BOR for over 40 years), from Donnelly to Cascade.

DIRECTIONS:

The starting point is the junction of ID 55 and West Roseberry Road in Donnelly (the intersection by the Donnelly store/Sinclair station). Zero your mileage here, then head south on ID 55. At mile 0.8 turn right (south) onto Old State Road at the binoculars sign.

The first few stops discussed are on Old State Road. Most of Old State Road was flooded when the reservoir was built, but those portions which escaped inundation offer excellent view-points; *watch out for broken pavement*. Be aware that much of the shoreline is closed to public use from February 1 to July 1.

BIRDING:

Between mile 0.8 and 2.8 check fences, tree-tops, and power poles for hawks and Great Gray Owls (most likely from August to December). At mile 3.0 stop at the "Road Closed—Water Over Road" sign, and scan the lake for migrant Pacific Loons (October and November), Common Loons, Tundra and Trumpeter Swans, and various waterfowl.

The next birding stop is 4 miles south of the "Road Closed" sign, but you'll usually have to make a loop to get around the flooded portion of Old State Road. To do this, backtrack north along Old State Road 0.7 mile and go right (east) on graveled Loomis Lane 0.7 mile to ID 55, then turn right (south) for 2 miles. At ID 55 milepost 127, turn right (west) on W 4 Lane and continue 0.8 mile to rejoin Old State Road. At the intersection of W 4 Lane and Old State Road, turn left (south) and go to road's end. Old State Road is gated 2.6 miles south of its junction with W 4 Lane. Between February 1 and July 1 you'll have to be content with long-distance scoping, but during the rest of the year, you can explore on foot. Old State Road is good for Swainson's Hawks and Northern Harriers in summer, Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks in winter, and Bald Eagles anytime. In spring the swan count at the end of Old State Road can reach a hundred. American White Pelicans, Great

Blue Herons, and Sandhill Cranes are all regular during summer, while Peregrine Falcons and Soras are more irregular. Snow Buntings are possible, October to April.

To reach the next lake access, backtrack to ID 55 and continue south 5.2 miles. Watch the fence-lines in this general area for Common Snipe and Mountain Bluebirds in summer, and power poles for hawks all year. At milepost 121.9 turn right (west) onto Stone Braker Lane. A quarter-mile down the road, stop to scope the lone pine tree in the south field for a Bald Eagle and its nest, one of about seven found around Cascade Reservoir. Farther along, two good pull-outs allow scoping of the reservoir for loons, grebes, and ducks. The second pull-out also gives foot access to the reservoir. In spring you may see 100 Yellow-headed Blackbirds polka-dotting the hillsides. In summer Horned Larks and Savannah and Vesper Sparrows will be flushed as you continue to the road's end at Sugarloaf Campground (1.8 miles from ID 55). Check the bays for migrating Pacific, Red-throated, and Common Loons, Buffleheads, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Greater and Lesser Scaup, and Oldsquaws. The Bald Eagle nest tree is clearly visible from the Sugarloaf Campground parking lot.

After backtracking to ID 55, continue south toward Cascade. At milepost 116.1 turn left (east) onto Warm Lake Road and continue 2.7 miles to Davis Reservoir (on the south side of the weigh station), where Western and Red-necked Grebes and assorted waterfowl may be scoped from the road.

The 2-mile-long gravel entrance road into Horsethief Reservoir is another 3.5 miles east on Warm Lake Road. Several hours of birding around the reservoir in spring and summer will reveal nesting ducks (including Common Goldeneyes) and birds common to meadows and mixed conifer forest.

When you've finished with Horsethief Reservoir, return to ID 55 and turn left (south). At milepost 115.9 you cross the North Fork Payette River below Cascade Dam. Both flow and water-level affect the number of birds found here, but it's a rare occasion when none is in view. Oldsquaws have been present during winter, while Hooded Mergansers and Barrow's Goldeneyes are common from November to March. Common Mergansers and Ospreys take their turn in summer.

At ID 55 milepost 115.8, Lake Way (a.k.a. Crown Point Road) is on the right (west). Follow this road 0.7 mile to the Crown Point Campground and scan the deep water behind the dam for loons and mergansers, and look on both ends of the dam for Rock Wrens.

OTHER:

For more information call the BOR (208/382-4258) or FS (208/382-4271) offices in Cascade. Also see Cascade Reservoir—West Side Route, the next site.

CASCADE RESERVOIR — WEST SIDE ROUTE

Author: Marilyn C. Smith

Site C-13 — Map C-12/C-13

Highlights: Greater Scaup, Bobolink

Major Habitats: Wetland, Dry Conifer Forest

Location: Valley Co., Cascade

Spring: *** **Summer:** ** **Fall:** *** **Winter:** *

Starting in Cascade and ending in Donnelly, this 30-mile-long route takes you between Cascade Reservoir and West Mountain. Although birding is often less productive on this side of the reservoir, the possibility of several unusual species makes this beautiful drive worthwhile any time of the year.

DIRECTIONS:

The route begins at the municipal boat dock in Cascade, at the intersection of Old State Highway and Lakeshore Drive. To find the starting point, go to the Texaco Station at the north end of town and follow Old State Highway northwest 0.6 mile.

At the municipal boat area, zero out your mileage, scan the water for loons and waterfowl, and then head southwest on Lakeshore Drive past the golf course.

BIRDING:

Several dirt roads, campgrounds, and the Cabarton Boat Launch allow lake access along Lakeshore Drive. Use these points to scope the reservoir for waterbirds. The best birding is at mile 2.7, just before you cross a cattle-guard. A short rutted road on the right (west) leads to a small parking area, where you can scan for Western and Clark's Grebes, American White Pelicans, dabbling ducks, and shorebirds.

Return to Lakeshore Drive and continue south. Just past the second cattle-guard, turn right (west) at mile 3.5, onto West Mountain Road (a.k.a. West Side Road). Follow West Mountain Road as it passes through meadow and pine-forest habitat. Varied Thrushes may be heard from March to July along this stretch of road. At mile 7.0 the pavement ends. Lake access is available at Campbell Creek Boat Launch at mile 7.2 (just past the cattle-guard), one of the best places to look for Greater Scaup in fall. Red-naped Sapsuckers and other woodpecker species should be expected in the Quaking Aspens. More Quaking Aspen groves line the road at mile 8.4, where Hairy Woodpeckers, Western Wood-Pewees, Dusky Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, House Wrens, Yellow Warblers, American Redstarts, and Warbling Vireos may be present. At mile 9.4 is French Creek Campground. Bird the campground along both sides of the road for Winter Wrens, MacGillivray's Warblers, and other common conifer-forest birds. You may also want to

wander through the forest above the upper campground for Three-toed Woodpeckers and Townsend's Warblers.

At mile 11.4 check berry bushes at Silver Creek for Warbling Vireos, Cedar Waxwings, and Western Tanagers. Another Quaking Aspen patch is on the right (east) side of the road at mile 14.2.

Duck Creek WMA begins at mile 19.6 and continues to the Poison Creek Campground at mile 21.7. The shoreline, grassland, woodland, and riparian areas in the WMA have been little explored for birding potential, but it's known that this is one of the best spots for loons in November. Foot access is allowed from July 2 to January 31.

At mile 25.3 turn right (east) onto West Roseberry Drive (a.k.a. Tamarack Falls) toward Donnelly. The bridge at mile 25.4 has a small parking lot, a fishing-bridge, and access to woods and shoreline. Scoping waterfowl from the bridge and carefully perusing the shoreline are frequently productive. River Otters may be found anywhere along the North Fork Payette River.

Continuing east on West Roseberry, you will reach another bridge at mile 28.5. Foot access to the shoreline is at the bridge's west end. Anything from eagles to shorebirds is possible. At mile 28.8 turn right (south) onto Dawn Drive. Good lake views appear immediately on the right (west) with a campground nearby for safe parking. After scanning the lake, continue south on Dawn Drive. About 0.2 mile south of the "Donnelly Public Camping" sign, turn right (west) on the dirt road which leads to a beach and picnic area. From here, grebes, American White Pelicans, mergansers, and gulls can be seen from April to August. Farther south along Dawn Drive, look for Mountain Bluebirds, Cedar Waxwings, and Red Crossbills. In fall hundreds of Canada Geese, American Wigeons, and American Coots stage here. Eurasian Wigeons are possible during migration.

To get to Donnelly, backtrack to West Roseberry Road, and turn right (east) for 0.7 mile. Bobolinks can be found on a short side trip, 1.6 miles east of Donnelly at the intersection of East Roseberry Road and Farm-to-Market Road (see map).

OTHER:

Fuel is available in Donnelly. Fuel, motels, camping, and groceries are available in Cascade and McCall. There are several developed BOR and FS campgrounds around Cascade Lake and in the nearby mountains. See also Cascade Reservoir—East Side Route, the previous site.

CHAMBERLAIN BASIN

Background by: Pat and Greg Hayward

Site C-14 — See Central map, page 102

Highlights: Spruce Grouse, Boreal Owl, Black-backed Woodpecker

Major Habitats: Mixed and Dry Conifer Forests, Deciduous Forest

Location: Idaho Co., 56 miles northeast of McCall

Spring: ** **Summer:** ** **Fall:** ** **Winter:** N/A

Deep inside the huge Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness, Chamberlain Basin takes a little effort to get to. This inaccessibility, however, provides a unique opportunity to observe large-scale natural processes at work. And the birds are great! Spruce Grouse are easy to find; you can hardly take a spring hike without hearing one. In summer hens and broods can often be found dust-bathing in the trails. Especially intriguing, though, is the well-studied owl community, which includes most of the state's species. Boreals are common nesters in old-growth Ponderosa Pine, Douglas-fir, and Quaking Aspen forests, hunting in the subalpine forest on the ridgelines above the Basin.

DIRECTIONS:

Birding Chamberlain Basin requires good physical condition and practiced map and compass skills. Being able to identify Idaho's conifers is also helpful. You can get to Chamberlain Basin by horseback, hiking, or flying. Riding and hiking are usually possible from mid-June to mid-October. Access via air taxi can begin in mid-May.

To ride or hike to Chamberlain, use a Payette NF forest map (McCall Ranger District portion) to navigate the tortuous 94-mile journey from McCall to Yellow Pine to Edwardburg to the Smith Creek-Big Creek Trailhead. From the trailhead, follow Big Creek Trail east 3 miles, then go north on Chamberlain Trail (#001). Chamberlain Trail will take you up Beaver and Hand Creeks before heading down into Chamberlain Basin. Most backpackers should plan on two days for this 25-mile jaunt, but a one-day hike is possible for those in excellent shape. If you ride in, bring an ax; you'll need it to clear trails.

Several air charter companies regularly service Chamberlain Basin. Take your pick among Arnold Aviation (208/382-4844) in Cascade, Pioneer Aviation (208/634-7127) in McCall, or Mountain Air (208/383-3325) in Boise.

BIRDING:

The best birding strategy is to sample each of the three main habitats: old-growth dry conifer forest; old-growth mixed conifer forest; and old-growth Quaking Aspen forest. Also investigate the wetlands, riparian areas, meadows, and burns. (The latter is the preferred habitat of Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers.)