

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.)

To reach accessible old-growth dry conifer forest, use the north end of the north-south airstrip as your starting point. Follow Trail 024 up Ranch Creek approximately 0.75 mile. After passing a sagebrush slope and cutting through a section of Lodgepole Pine, you'll arrive at the foot of an open bunchgrass slope. Go up the grass slope to the large Ponderosa Pine/Douglas-fir stand visible from the trail. At the grass-forest interface is the cut-off trail used by Stonebraker Ranch to access the Flossie Lake Trail. This is the type of habitat that both Flammulated and Boreal Owls nest in at Chamberlain; in fact, Idaho's first Boreal Owl nest was found in this very stand.

To find old-growth mixed conifer forest, head to the west end of the east-west airstrip. Immediately north of the airstrip is an old wagon road. Follow the wagon road westward less than 0.5 mile to its terminus in dense Lodgepole Pine. Head north and climb to the band of old-growth along the upper half of the hill. Look here for Boreal Owls, Northern Saw-whet Owls, and Pileated Woodpeckers, and listen for the evening songs of Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes.

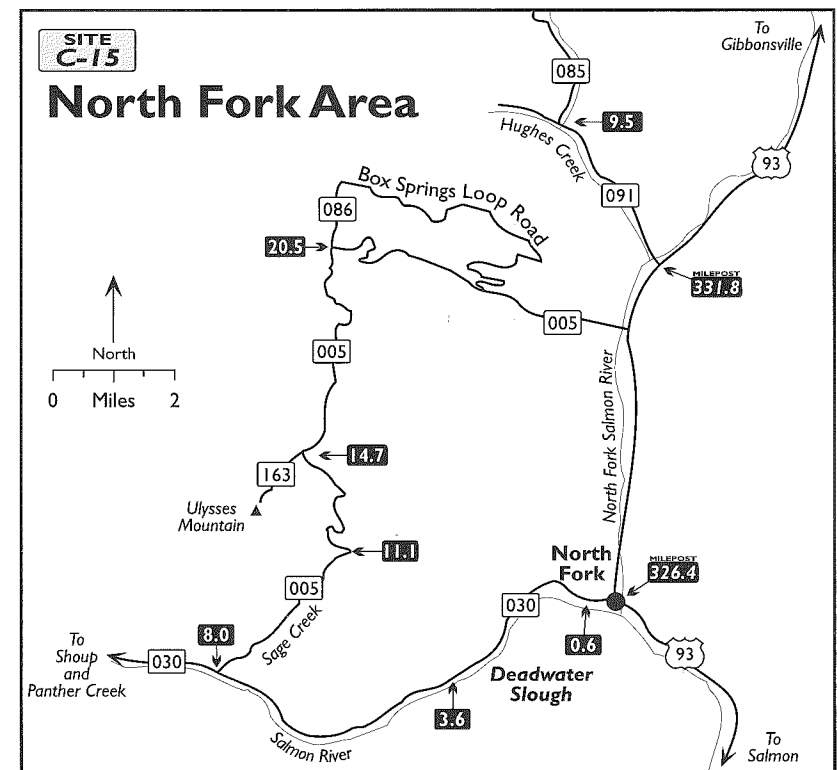
Boreal Owls also nest in the old-growth Quaking Aspen patches scattered throughout the basin. Two good patches can be reached by heading southwest on Trail 003 from the south side of the east-west air strip. In approximately 2.5 miles Trail 003 traverses the edge of the first good patch. About a mile farther west, go south on Trail 017 toward Moose Jaw Meadows. About a half to three-quarters of a mile farther along, the trail crosses the second aspen stand, which is particularly good for Western Screech-Owls and Pileated Woodpeckers.

To investigate more Quaking Aspen, follow Trail 024 north from the north end of the north-south airstrip for approximately 1.5 miles. At the crossing with Ranch Creek, leave the trail and continue upstream along the creek. In approximately 0.25 mile a small draw comes in from the right (north). Follow this draw up over a small rise into the wet, boggy, aspen.

#### OTHER:

Topographic maps for the area include: Sheepeater Mountain, Meadow of Doubt, Mosquito Peak, and Lodgepole Creek. Trail numbers are from the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness North Half map. This map and additional information are available from the McCall Ranger District (208/634-2255) or Middle Fork Ranger District (208/879-4101).

Chamberlain Basin Outfitters (208/756-3715) can provide more civilized housing and food at their base camp, as well as horse trips for fishing, sightseeing, etc.



## NORTH FORK AREA

Authors: Hadley B. Roberts, Noel Wamer

### Site C-15 — Map C-15

**Highlights:** Chukar, Flammulated Owl, Lewis's Woodpecker

**Major Habitats:** Dry Conifer Forest, Deciduous Forest, Wetland

**Location:** Lemhi Co., 21 miles north of Salmon

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

Remote, rugged, and very scenic, the riparian and upland forests around North Fork provide diverse birding. Three of the best spots are described below, but equally good birding can be had almost anywhere in this area. You just have to go exploring to find it!

#### DIRECTIONS:

The starting point for all three sites is the junction of US 93 and FR 030 in North Fork (US 93 milepost 326.4). Zero your mileage here.

**BIRDING:****DEADWATER SLOUGH**

Deadwater Slough is one of Lemhi County's best birding spots. Over 60 bird species have been recorded on this 250-acre tract of riparian floodplain. To reach Deadwater Slough from the starting point, turn left (west) on paved FR 030 and follow it 0.6 mile to the FS recreation site on the left (south), at the upstream end of Deadwater Slough.

One of the first birds that you'll probably find is the omnipresent Lewis's Woodpecker, usually seen flycatching over the Salmon River. Pileated Woodpeckers also nest in this area but are less common. Bald and Golden Eagles are frequently seen flying along the river year round. This is also one of the few local nesting areas for Wood Ducks.

The slough (a backwater area of the Salmon River) is best birded by canoe or inflatable raft. A boat ramp is available at the picnic area at mile 3.6. To do additional land-based birding, continue west on FR 030 and use any suitable pull-out that allows investigation of the cottonwood forest. Be aware that some land here is private. In dense cover along the river, look for Eastern Kingbirds, Gray Catbirds, Red-eyed Vireos (uncommon), MacGillivray's Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chats, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, and Bullock's Orioles.

To look for Chukars, search steep, brushy slopes all along FR 030, which extends 45 miles east of Deadwater Slough. Particularly good are the areas near Deadwater, Shoup, and the mouth of Panther Creek (mile 28).

**FOREST ROAD 005**

This loop will take you on a good half-day drive through a variety of habitats. From the starting point, go west on FR 030 to mile 8, then turn right (north) onto FR 005, a narrow, rocky, steep road. The first few miles of this route follow Sage Creek upstream. This is a good area to look for Northern Saw-whet Owls, Ruffed Grouse, American Dippers, and Nashville Warblers. You should be able to find Mountain Bluebirds and Chipping Sparrows on slopes above the creek.

At mile 11.1 FR 005 crosses Sage Creek and rises quickly through a series of switchbacks into Ponderosa Pine/Douglas-fir forest. Look here for Williamson's Sapsuckers (rare), Olive-sided and Hammond's Flycatchers, Steller's Jays, Clark's Nutcrackers, Common Ravens, Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Townsend's Solitaires, Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Western Tanagers, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks. At mile 14.7 FR 005 reaches the ridgetop. You may want to park here and walk along FR 163 to the left (southwest) to see more of the species listed above.

From the junction of FR 005 and FR 163, continue driving north on FR 005 along the ridgetop. At mile 20.5 turn sharp left (north) onto FR 086 (a.k.a.

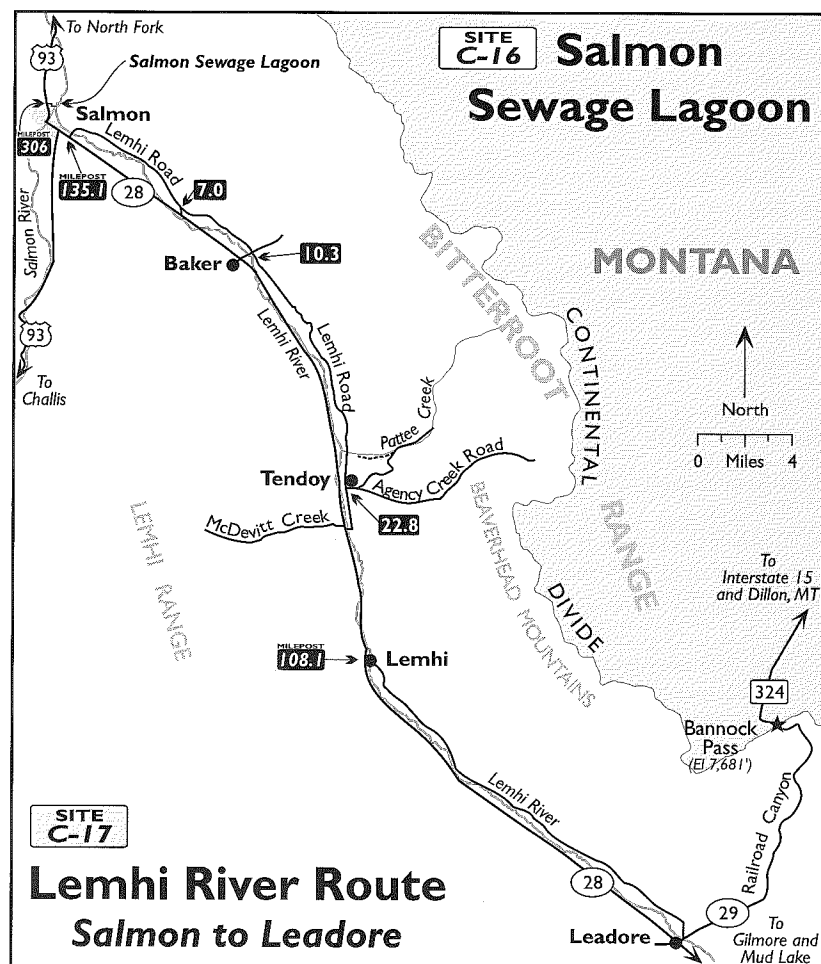
Box Springs Loop Road). This will take you through mature Ponderosa Pine habitat good for Flammulated Owls. At about mile 28.5, FR 086 rejoins FR 005. From here, continue east (downhill) to US 95 at mile 32 or so.

**HUGHES CREEK ROAD**

To investigate more Flammulated Owl habitat, go 5.4 miles north of the starting point on US 93 to milepost 331.8, then turn left (west) onto FR 091 (a.k.a. Hughes Creek Road). At mile 9.5, turn right (north) on FR 085. This road leads into the open mature Ponderosa Pine forest favored by Flammulated Owls and away from the noisy waters of Hughes Creek. Start owling from about mile 10 on up.

**OTHER:**

Deadwater Picnic Area has a boat ramp, pit toilet, and water. Accommodations in North Fork are limited to two motel/campground combinations (fuel available). Other services are available in Salmon. Stop in at the FS (208/865-2700) in North Fork or the North Fork Store (208/865-2412) for maps, checklists, and more information.



## SALMON SEWAGE LAGOON

Author: Hadley B. Roberts

Site 16 — Map C-16/C-17

**Highlights:** Grebes, Waterfowl, Shorebirds

**Major Habitats:** Wetland

**Location:** Lemhi Co., Salmon

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

For spring concentrations of waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds, no place in the Salmon River drainage can beat the Salmon Sewage Lagoon. Over 100 species have been recorded here in April and May. For reasons unknown, fall migration does not offer the same viewing opportunities.

### DIRECTIONS:

To reach the lagoon, drive north from Salmon on US 93 for about a mile to milepost 306. Turn right (east) at the sign marked "Sportsman Access-Lemhi Hole" onto a good dirt road that leads to the lagoon in 0.4 mile. Pull up to the lagoon's perimeter fence and park. Unfortunately, you'll have to view the birds through the chain-link fence; just walk all the way around to get various viewing angles.

### BIRDING:

The lagoon is a major stop-over for large flocks of Snow Geese, with occasional sightings of Ross's Geese as well. Barrow's Goldeneyes and Cinnamon Teal are often present, and even a Harlequin Duck was seen here once. Large flocks of Canada Geese can be found on the adjacent stock pond and in the surrounding pasture. Wood Ducks nest in tree cavities along the river. Six species of grebes have been recorded at the lagoon—Pied-billed, Red-necked, Western, Clark's, Horned, and Eared. The latter two are most common. The list of wading and shorebird species includes Great Egret, American Avocet, Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes, and Least and Solitary Sandpipers. Franklin's and Bonaparte's Gulls and Black and Forster's Terns are occasional visitors. Ospreys and Bald and Golden Eagles are often sighted as they fly along the river. A small stand of cottonwoods adjacent to the lagoon contains Lewis's Woodpeckers and Western Wood-Pewees.

### OTHER:

Salmon is a full-service community.

## LEMHI RIVER ROUTE

*Authors: Hadley B. Roberts, Helen Ulmschneider*

**Site C-17 — Map C-16/C-17**

**Highlights:** Gambel's Quail, Cordilleran Flycatcher

**Major Habitats:** Deciduous Forest, Shrub-steppe, Meadow

**Location:** Lemhi Co., Salmon

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

*This route follows the Lemhi River upstream from Salmon to Bannock Pass, a 60-mile drive one-way. During late May and early June you may see over 125 bird species, one of the most diverse bird-assemblages in the state. Among the critters to look for are Gambel's Quail, which were introduced in 1921. This is the only place in Idaho where the species occurs.*

### DIRECTIONS:

From the junction of ID 28 and US 93 in Salmon, go south on ID 28 for 6 miles to milepost 135.1, then turn left (east) on Lemhi Road, zeroing your mileage. This paved/graveled county road (a.k.a. Old Highway 28) is unsigned for much of the route. *Most of the trip passes through private property, but portions are public (BLM and FS).*

### BIRDING:

The best birding strategy here is simply to pull over and investigate wherever you see birds or likely-looking habitat. A few of the more dependable spots are noted below.

Throughout your drive watch riparian habitat for Veeries, Gray Catbirds, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chats, and Black-headed Grosbeaks. Where cottonwoods are present, Lewis's and Pileated Woodpeckers, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Western Wood-Pewees, and Bullock's Orioles may be found.

Several ponds and cattail marshes are scattered throughout the lower valley. Watch this habitat for Cinnamon Teal, Soras, Common Yellowthroats, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Sage Grouse, Gray Partridge, Chukars, Rock Wrens, Sage Thrashers, and Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows can be observed in sagebrush areas. In meadows Sandhill Cranes, Long-billed Curlews, Willets, Northern Harriers, Short-eared Owls, and Bobolinks (rare) may be seen. Between Salmon and Baker, listen for the distinctive call of Gambel's Quail.

At mile 7.0 turn left at the T intersection to stay on Lemhi Road. At mile 10.3 is a 4-way intersection. Go straight (east)—do not cross the river.

At mile 22.8 (Tendoy) turn left (east) onto Agency Creek Road. After 0.6 mile, turn left (north) onto a rough, steep, dirt road, and drive 3.2 miles to Pattee Creek. *Do not attempt this road if it's muddy, or if you have any doubts*

*about your vehicle's suitability. (A high-clearance vehicle is recommended.)* At Pattee Creek one can wander on public land for about 2 miles upstream or 1 mile downstream. Pattee Creek is great for riparian birds, and it is one of the few local spots for Cordilleran Flycatchers. In fall migration Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks and Wilson's Warblers are frequently present. In late fall look for Pine Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls, and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches.

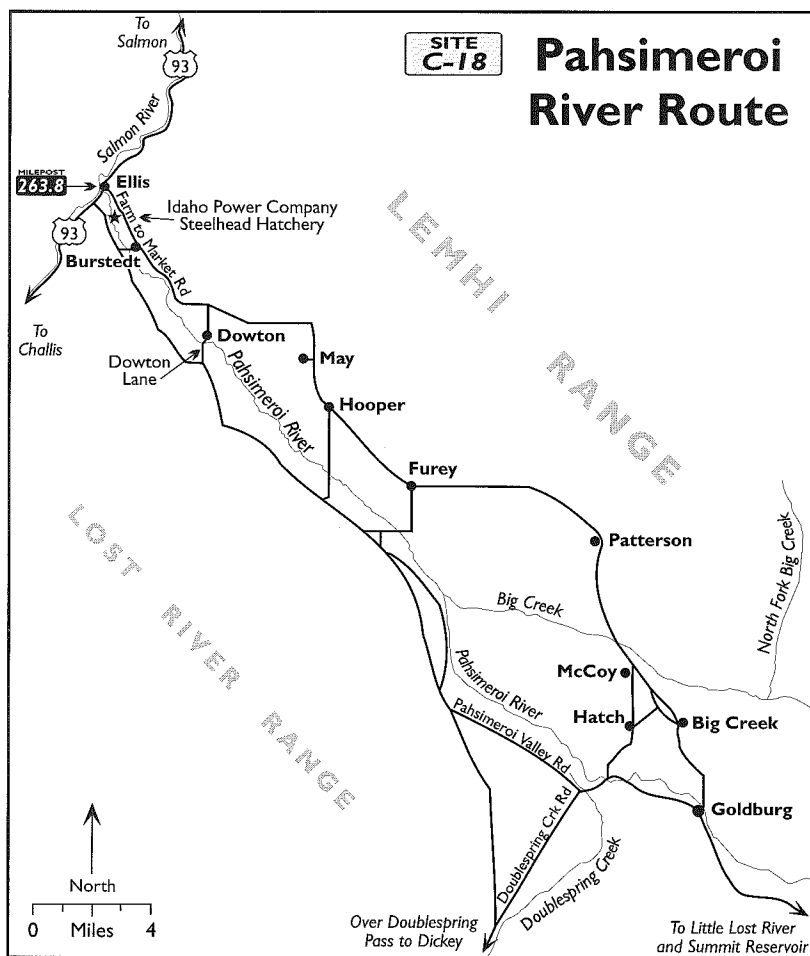
After birding Pattee Creek, backtrack to Lemhi Road and turn left (south), go 1.8 miles, and cross the Lemhi River. At the junction with ID 28, turn right (north) on ID 28 for 0.1 mile, then turn left (west) on McDevitt Creek Road. Good riparian birding is found along this entire creek, *but the lower portion is private, so please stay on the road.* After 4 miles you'll cross a cattle-guard onto public land (BLM). Many of the previously mentioned riparian birds are also found along this portion of McDevitt Creek. A vagrant Black-and-white Warbler summered here in 1994, 1995, and 1996!

Return to ID 28, turn right (south), and go 7.6 miles. At milepost 108.1 turn left (east) by the Lemhi Mercantile and proceed south on the county road to Leadore. In Leadore, turn left (east) on ID 29 and follow it 14 miles through Railroad Canyon to the Montana boundary at Bannock Pass (elevation 7,681 feet). ID 29 is paved for 4 miles, then turns into a well-maintained gravel road. In the scattered timber of Railroad Canyon, Golden Eagles, Clark's Nutcrackers, Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers, Hermit Thrushes, Western Tanagers, and Green-tailed Towhees are often found. Bald Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, Bohemian Waxwings, and Snow Buntings can be seen along this route during winter.

### OTHER:

All services are available in Salmon. There are two BLM campgrounds along the route: McFarland Recreation Site (ID 28 milepost 103.6) and Smokey's Cub Recreation Site (ID 29 milepost 3.7). Both have tables and pit toilets. Fuel, telephone, and some groceries are available at Tendoy, Lemhi, and Leadore.

Maps, checklists, and information can be obtained in Salmon at the FS (208/756-2215) or BLM (208/756-5400) offices. In Leadore, try the Leadore Ranger District (208/768-2371).



## PAHSIMEROI RIVER ROUTE

Author: Hadley B. Roberts

Site C-18 — Map C-18

**Highlights:** Chukar, Sage Grouse

**Major Habitats:** Shrub-steppe, Deciduous Forest, Meadow

**Location:** Lemhi Co., 17 miles north of Challis

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

This 70-mile-long loop up the Pahsimeroi (pah-SIM-er-oy) River Valley is a great day-trip during May and June. The main loop starts and ends in Ellis, going upriver as far as Goldberg, an abandoned townsite. Much of this trip passes through public land (BLM). The best birding however, is at the river crossings on private land. Please bird from the road in such areas.

If you don't have enough time to complete the entire loop, you can make "mini-loops" by using one of the several cross lanes which connect the main roads on each side of the valley (see map).

### DIRECTIONS:

From Challis follow US 93 north to milepost 263.8, then turn right (southeast) onto paved Farm to Market Road along the north side of the Pahsimeroi River. There are no mileposts along this route.

### BIRDING:

The best way to bird is simply to stop wherever you see good habitat or hear birds. The most productive habitat is the riparian zone, accessed by the cross-lanes. Typical riparian species include Western Kingbird, Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lazuli Bunting, White-crowned Sparrow, Bullock's Oriole, and American Goldfinch. During winter, Pine Grosbeaks are occasionally found in such habitat.

In sagebrush areas look for Gray Partridge, Chukars, Sage Grouse, Burrowing Owls, Horned Larks, Rock Wrens, Sage Thrashers, and Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows, as well as Pronghorn. Sandhill Cranes, Long-billed Curlews, Bobolinks, and Savannah Sparrows are occasionally seen in meadows and pastures. Check the infrequent cattail patches for Soras, Common Yellowthroats, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

Several waterfowl species can be found in the Pahsimeroi Valley, but the most common is Canada Goose. Lewis's Woodpeckers can sometimes be found in the lower valley's cottonwoods. Of the raptors, Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, and American Kestrels are common throughout the year. Bald Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks are present in winter. Look for American Dippers year round along the river.

One mile up the Pahsimeroi River is an Idaho Power Company Steelhead Hatchery. In season, these large ocean-going trout can be seen at close range. The riparian zone around the hatchery contains good numbers of several songbird species.

The midpoint of this route is Goldberg, 32 miles up the Pahsimeroi River. If you have time, continue southeast toward Little Lost River through more Chukar habitat. In about ten miles you'll reach Summit Reservoir, which can be alive with migrant waterfowl. The area around the reservoir can also be good for wintering Snow Buntings.

To return to US 93 from Goldberg, follow the Doublespring Road west for about 5 miles to the major intersection, then stay right (northwest). You'll reach pavement in about 10 miles, and can then follow it all the way to US 93, via Downton Lane (see map).

#### OTHER:

A full range of services is available in Challis. Maps can be obtained from the FS (208/879-4321) in Challis. The only service available along this route is a small cafe in May, located on a side road about 11 miles up the Pahsimeroi. The more adventuresome explorers with high-clearance vehicles may also want to wander up the numerous side canyons (use a FS map) for additional riparian birding.

## MORGAN CREEK TO PANTHER CREEK ROUTE

Author: Hadley B. Roberts

Site C-19 — Map C-19

**Highlights:** Blue Grouse, Green-tailed Towhee

**Major Habitats:** Dry Conifer Forest, Deciduous Forest

**Location:** Custer Co., 8 miles northwest of Challis

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

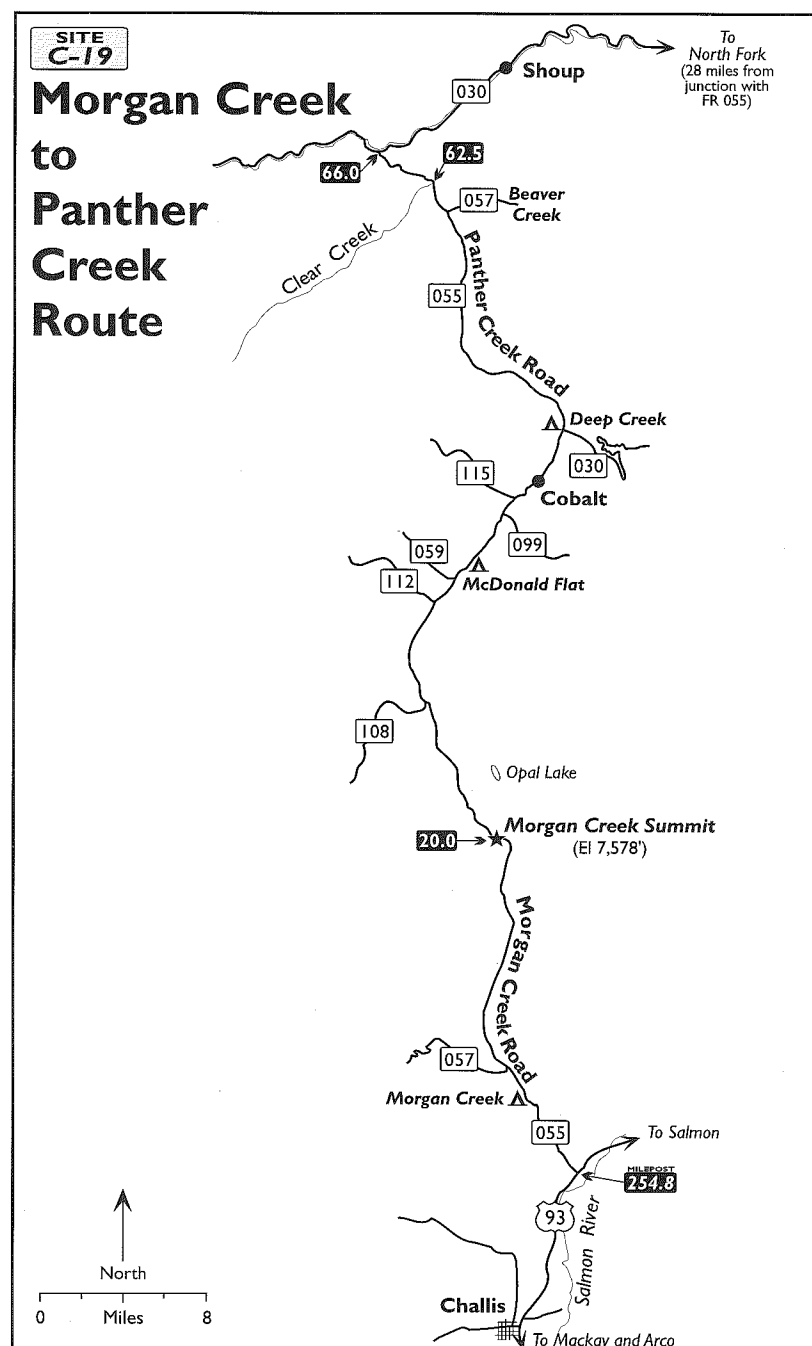
Some of east-central Idaho's best birding is along Morgan and Panther Creeks. This very scenic route is 66 miles long (one-way) and is best done over two days. In addition to birds, Mule Deer, Elk, Pronghorn, Mountain Goat, and Bighorn Sheep are often seen. If you're extremely lucky, you may also see a Gray Wolf; two pairs now frequent this area.

#### DIRECTIONS:

From Challis follow US 93 north 8.3 miles, then turn left (west) up Morgan Creek Road at milepost 254.8. Zero your odometer here. Morgan Creek Road (a.k.a. FR 055) is paved for 2 miles, then turns to good gravel for most of the remainder. The road ascends Morgan Creek to the 7,578-foot-high summit (mile 20), then descends along Panther Creek to the Salmon River (mile 66). The first 8 miles of the route weave in and out of private land, but the rest of it is mostly public (FS).

#### BIRDING:

The first 5 miles follow a tight canyon along a narrow riparian area. Look in the cottonwoods for Lewis's Woodpeckers and Western Wood-Pewees, on the rocky slopes for Chukars, and in the surrounding cliffs for Canyon Wrens. After mile 5 the canyon opens up into a wide valley surrounded by rolling sagebrush hills and scattered patches of timber, with a shrubby riparian



strip along Morgan Creek. *Most of the riparian habitat is on posted private land, so please bird from the road.* Look for Veeries, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chats, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Fox Sparrows. In small ponds along the creek you may see Cinnamon Teal, Soras, and Wilson's Phalaropes. Sage Grouse, Rock Wrens, Sage Thrashers, Lazuli Buntings, and Green-tailed Towhees should be watched for in sagebrush.

At about mile 17 the road enters Douglas-fir and Lodgepole Pine forest. Look here for Blue Grouse, Pileated Woodpeckers, Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers, Mountain Chickadees, Mountain Bluebirds, Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes, Western Tanagers, and Red Crossbills.

As you descend Panther Creek, the road passes in and out of more forest. Many of the species found in Morgan Creek can also be found here. In addition, you may find an elusive American Redstart in Quaking Aspen patches, or a vagrant Indigo Bunting in riparian shrubs. Be sure to check the skies for Golden Eagles and Prairie Falcons.

Chukars are often seen or heard near the mouth of Clear Creek (mile 62.5), while White-throated Swifts can be seen flying near the mouth of Panther Creek (mile 66). Bighorn Sheep are common near the mouth of Panther Creek, as well.

When you arrive at the Salmon River, turn right (east) on FR 030 and follow it 28 miles to North Fork.

#### OTHER:

Salmon and Challis are full-service communities. There are no services along the route. Camping facilities are available at Morgan Creek Recreation Site (mile 5.1, no water), McDonald Flat Campground (mile 37), Deep Creek Campground (mile 43), and Clear Creek Trailhead (mile 62, no water). There are many undeveloped sites, too. Maps are available from the FS in Challis (208/879-4321) or Salmon (208/756-2215).

## CHALLIS AREA

Author: Elise Faike

### Site C-20 — Map C-20

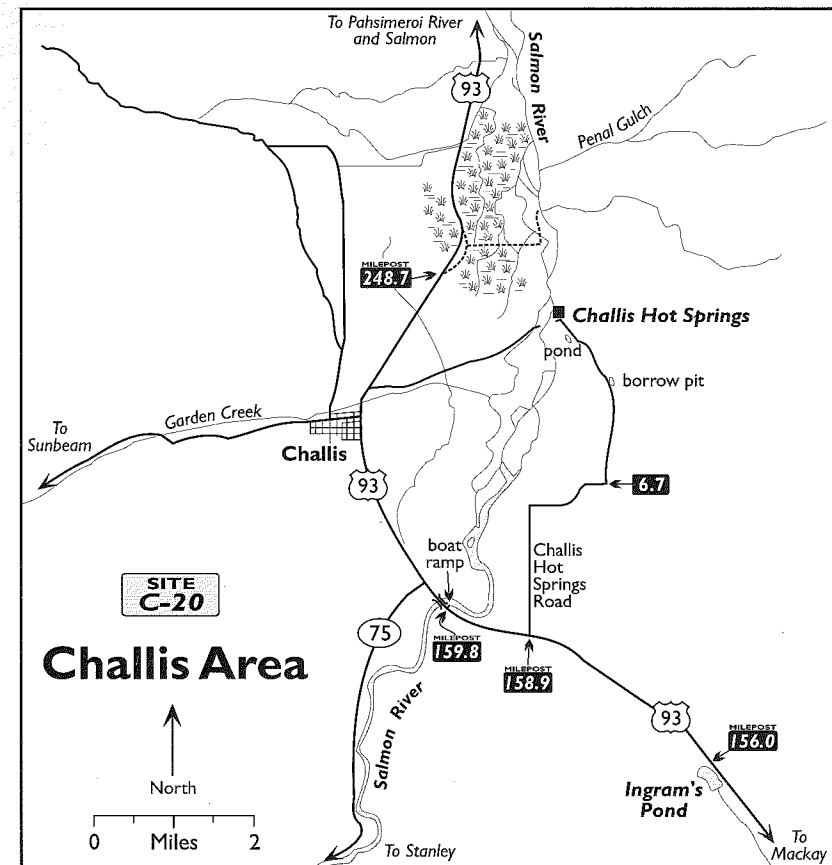
**Highlights:** White-throated Swift, Least Flycatcher

**Major Habitats:** Deciduous Forest, Wetland, Farmland

**Location:** Custer Co., Challis

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

*Challis is a good staging-spot for exploring east-central Idaho. The Salmon River Mountains and Lemhi Mountains offer extensive birding opportunities. Varied birding is also available right around town, in riparian areas, wetlands, and grasslands. Four such sites are highlighted below.*



#### DIRECTIONS:

The starting point for all four sites is the intersection of Main Street and U.S. 93 (signed "City Center") in Challis. Zero your mileage here. Be aware that milepost markers along US 93 change sequence at the junction with ID 75. *Unless otherwise noted, all land here is private.*

#### BIRDING:

#### INGRAM'S POND

Ingram's Pond is a small, easily overlooked area that can be full of nice surprises. To reach the pond, follow US 93 south 6.9 miles. Just south of the small hill (at milepost 156), look for a small, steep, turn-out on the right (west) that overlooks the pond (you may need to find a larger parking spot if you're driving an RV).



Birding here is best in the morning. A scope is handy for viewing waterfowl and shorebirds that use the pond. Possible species include Eared Grebe, Tundra and Trumpeter (late fall) Swans, Cinnamon Teal, Canvasback, Barrow's Goldeneye, Virginia Rail, American Avocet, Solitary, Western, Least, and Baird's Sandpipers, Red-necked and Wilson's Phalaropes, and Black Tern. Eurasian Wigeon are also possible (spring/fall). *Use caution when returning to the highway.*

#### CHALLIS HOT SPRINGS ROAD

From the starting point follow US 93 south for 3.9 miles, turn left (north) onto paved Hot Springs Road at milepost 158.9, and bird the open meadows and fields for Long-billed Curlews (spring/early summer), Ring-necked Pheasants, and an occasional Northern Harrier or Merlin (rare). At mile 6.7 turn left (north) at the Hot Springs sign. On the right (east) at mile 7.8 is a borrow pit housing a large Bank Swallow colony, late May to August. In late summer or fall watch for Chukars from here to the Hot Springs and on the rock slopes above the Hot Springs area.

At mile 8.8 slowly approach the pond on the left (west). Park along the narrow road and look for Cinnamon Teal, Solitary Sandpipers, and other migrants. After you've figured out the birds on the pond, check the cliffs on the right (northeast) for perched Red-tailed Hawks and Golden Eagles, soaring White-throated Swifts, and foraging Barn and Tree Swallows.

The parking area for Challis Hot Springs is at mile 9.0. Stop at the office and ask permission to walk through the camping area to bird the riparian habitat along the Salmon River. Go slowly along the river bank to the north (downstream) and you may spot Steelhead, River Otter, or Mule Deer, as well as common riparian birds.

#### SALMON RIVER FLOAT

One of the best ways to bird Challis, from late spring to early fall, is by kayak or canoe. To begin, drive 2.9 miles southeast of the starting point on US 93. At milepost 159.8, turn left (north) onto the short gravel road that leads 0.1 mile to the Junction Bridge boat ramp.

The fairly easy (Class II) 7-mile float from Junction Bridge to Penal Gulch usually takes about 2 hours. Ospreys are frequently encountered within the first few bends of the river. Farther on you're sure to find Great Blue Herons, Mallards, Common Mergansers, Spotted Sandpipers, and Belted Kingfishers, and possibly Sandhill Cranes, American Avocets, and American Dippers. Check trees along the way for thrushes and warblers. Thirty to forty-five minutes downriver an active Great Blue Heron heronry can be seen along the right channel. As you approach Hot Springs Campground, look for River Otters along the west bank. Past the Hot Springs, watch the cliffs for Red-tailed Hawks, Rock Wrens, White-throated Swifts, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows. Scan the left bank as you get closer to Penal Gulch, and you could be rewarded with a Wild Turkey sighting. Just upriver of the Penal

Gulch take-out point, look for American Dippers along the left bank. A Peregrine Falcon hacking-site was located in the cliffs immediately downriver, so watch for returning birds.

#### PENAL GULCH

From the starting point follow US 93 north 2 miles to milepost 248.7. Turn right (east) onto the gravel road signed "Sportsman Access." At mile 2.5 take the second right to the east. (Skip the first one; it's a drive-way.) Check the small creeks in this general area for waterfowl and the ranchlands for raptors (including Merlins or Prairie Falcons) and Sandhill Cranes. Cliff, Barn, Bank, and Tree Swallows are commonly found on the utility lines along the road. At mile 3.1 you'll see some cattails on the right. Look for Soras, Virginia Rails, Marsh Wrens, and Yellow-headed and Red-winged Blackbirds.

At about mile 3.2 turn left (north) onto "Public Access Road." Scan the fields on the right (east) for Wild Turkeys. At mile 3.5 check the ponds on both sides for Cinnamon Teal and Wood Ducks and the surrounding trees for Western Wood-Pewees. Between miles 3.7 and 3.8 check the roadside trees for Red-naped Sapsuckers and Least Flycatchers (a very rare and local nester in Idaho), and listen for Veeries and Northern Waterthrushes. *Be careful not to trespass on private land.* You'll reach the river at mile 4.0. (This is the take-out point for the Salmon River Float.) Park and scan the cliffs for White-throated Swifts, and keep an eye out for Peregrine Falcons.

#### OTHER:

Area maps and more information can be obtained from the FS (208/879-4321) or Chamber of Commerce (208/879-2771) in Challis. Camping is available at both Challis Hot Springs (208/879-4442) and Buffalo Jump (kayak rentals, too; 208/879-5454). Bed and Breakfasts include Cottage B&B (208/879-4563) and Darling Creek B&B (208/879-5222), which has Chukars year round and an occasional Wild Turkey. Challis is a full-service community.

The Land of the Yankee Fork Visitors Center (208/879-5244) is located at the junction of US 93 and ID 75, interpreting the mining history of Custer County. Wilson's Warblers, Willow Flycatchers, and other riparian birds frequent the willows near the visitors center's pedestrian bridge.