

CRAIG MOUNTAIN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Author: Frances Cassirer

Site P-26 — Map P-26

Highlights: Chukar, Williamson's Sapsucker, Western Bluebird

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

Location: Nez Perce Co., 20 miles southeast of Lewiston

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

Craig Mountain is a rolling forested plateau perched between the steep breaklands of the Snake and Salmon Rivers. The 40-mile-long route described below will take you along graveled and dirt roads, some of which require a high-clearance vehicle. A 4-wheel-drive vehicle is needed to see the entire area. Be aware that WMA roads are usually snow-covered from November into April.

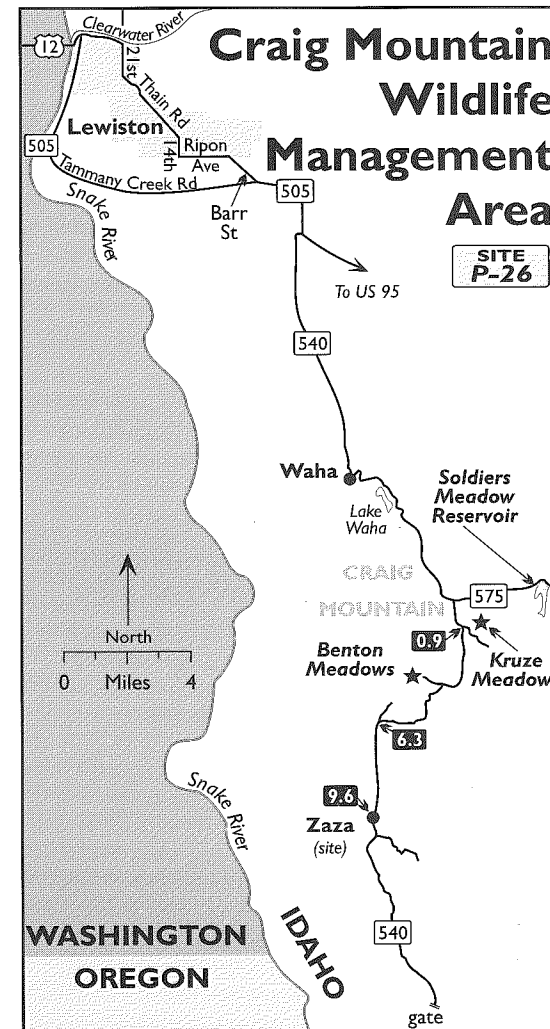
DIRECTIONS:

From the north side of Lewiston follow US 12 West into town. After crossing Memorial Bridge, turn left (south) at the confusing 5-way intersection, and head uphill on 21st Street. Follow 21st Street (which becomes Thain Road) through Lewiston and Lewiston Orchards 4.0 miles, then follow it as it curves south, becoming 14th Street. After 2 blocks follow the main road left (east) onto Ripon Avenue (a.k.a. P2) for 3.5 blocks, then follow the right curve onto Barr Street. At the bottom of the hill, follow the curve left (east) onto Tammany Creek Road (a.k.a. Nez Perce County Road 505) toward Waha. In another 4 miles, take Nez Perce County Road 540 (a.k.a. Waha Road) to the right (south), and drive to the top of Craig Mountain in another 15 miles.

You'll reach the junction of Nez Perce County Roads 540 and 575 about 20 miles from Lewiston Orchards. Zero your mileage here, then turn right (south), following Road 540 into the WMA. As you enter, watch for Great Gray Owls, since they sometimes perch in this general area. Most of Craig Mountain is public land (IDFG, BLM, FS). Some private inholdings do occur, however, so be aware of posted signs.

BIRDING:

At mile 0.9 (just past the old corral), park at the yellow gate on the left (east) and walk down the road about 0.5 mile, staying to the right on Snowmachine Trail 2 (marked with small orange triangles). You'll pass between Kruze Meadow and a heavily logged forest. In summer, you're likely to find Common Snipe, Olive-sided Flycatchers, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, Western and Mountain Blue-



birds, and Red-winged Blackbirds. In spring you'll also be treated to a chorus of Pacific Treefrogs.

Farther south, at mile 2.3 (just before the gravel pit), park where the side road takes off to your right (west). This road leads to two gated roads. Follow the left "Snow-machine Road 2" past Benton Meadows to a cattle pond in about 0.75 mile. Look in this general area for Northern Goshawks, Red-tailed Hawks, Common Snipe, various woodpeckers, Mountain and Western Bluebirds, and Cassin's Finches.

From about mile 3.5 on, Road 540 is often snowblocked until May. You'll pass the junction with Eagle Creek Road at mile 5.2. Eagle Creek road offers additional birding opportunities, but it's basically a jeep trail; don't try it without a high-clearance 4x4.

Continuing south on 540, park in the pull-out on the right (northwest) near the blue gate at mile 6.3. Walk down this gated road for 0.5 mile, then cut up to the ridgetop for a beautiful view of the Snake River Canyon. Birding in this area is best in spring and summer. Regular species include Northern Goshawk, Red-naped and Williamson's Sapsuckers, Mountain Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Townsend's Warbler.

The ghost "town" of Zaza is along Road 540 at mile 9.6. Nez Perce County doesn't maintain Road 540 beyond this point, though it's usually passable in summer and fall.

In the next few miles you'll pass gated roads leading off to the left (east). A walk through the Grand Fir forest bordering these roads may yield Barred Owls, Pileated Woodpeckers, Varied Thrushes, and Cassin's Vireos.

At mile 12.4 Road 540 climbs to the top of a hill, allowing another spectacular view of the Snake River Canyon's grassland habitat. As you continue south on Road 540, you'll have even more awesome views when you enter bunchgrass habitat within Hells Canyon. Species here include American Kestrel, Blue Grouse, Chukar, Lewis's Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Western Bluebird, and Western Tanager. At night you may find Flammulated Owls or Common Poorwills. Continue to explore this area by vehicle or on foot. There is no one single place to bird here—it's all good!

OTHER:

The only designated campground near Craig Mountain WMA is at Soldiers Meadow Reservoir. A WMA map is available from the IDFG (208/799-5010) in Lewiston. Lewiston is a full service community. There are no other services along this route itself.

HEART OF THE MONSTER

Author: Dan Svingen

Site P-27 — See Panhandle map, page 20

Highlights: Gray Catbird, Bewick's Wren, Red-eyed Vireo

Major Habitats: Deciduous Forest, Meadow

Location: Idaho Co., 2 miles south of Kamiah

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

With guile and intelligence, Coyote slew a great monster at this very site, giving rise to Nee-Mee-Poo (the Nez Perce people)—so goes the tale told at this small (100-acre) National Historic Site. You can hear a recording of the story in both English and Nez Perce.

DIRECTIONS:

Heart of the Monster National Historic Site is on the west side of US 12, 1.6 miles south of Kamiah, at milepost 68.5.

BIRDING:

The best birding is along the Clearwater River. From the parking lot, go west 60 yards to a small maintenance shed hidden behind bushes. Listen for Veeries singing in cottonwoods upstream (on private land). In May and June look for showy Common Camas growing in the meadow just south of the shed. (The meadow is public land until you reach the barbed-wire fence.) A mowed grass trail starts at the shed and goes north along an oxbow. Take

the trail, watching for Wood Ducks, Osprey, Gray Catbirds (which seem to be in every other bush), Yellow Warblers (which are in every other bush), and Cedar Waxwings. Bewick's Wrens recently colonized this area. The grass trail continues about 600 yards until it ducks under some mature cottonwoods where Western Wood-Pewees and Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos are common. The 500-yard-long paved trail begins at the parking lot and passes by several brush patches, where migrating passerines often gorge on ripened berries.

OTHER:

The closest lodging, food, and fuel are in Kamiah. Picnic tables and pit toilets are available at the historic site.

WILDERNESS GATEWAY CAMPGROUND

Author: Winifred Hepburn

Site P-28 — See Panhandle map, page 20

Highlights: Harlequin Duck, Red-eyed Vireo, American Redstart

Major Habitats: Mixed Conifer Forest, Deciduous Forest

Location: Idaho Co., 40 miles east of Kooskia

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

Wilderness Gateway Campground borders the Lochsa River and is the best place in Idaho to see Harlequin Ducks. Because the campground is also a trailhead for the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, there are endless birding opportunities on the miles and miles of paths which begin here. After birding this diverse spot has worn your legs to the nubbins, dip your feet in the river, pick a comfortable chair and your favorite beverage, and let the birds come to you!

DIRECTIONS:

From Kooskia, take US 12 northeast 49 miles, following the Middle Fork Clearwater and Lochsa Rivers upstream. The entrance to Wilderness Gateway Campground is on the right (south) side of the road at milepost 122.6. The campground is comprised of 4 camp loops (A, B, C, and D).

BIRDING:

Just before you cross the bridge to enter the campground, look for the information board on the right (west) side of the road. Opposite the information board (on the east side of the road), is a fishing trail leading to the Lochsa River. Spotted Sandpipers nest in the rocks there. This is a good spot to check the river for Harlequin Ducks and American Dippers. From the bridge itself, watch for Tree Swallows overhead, and keep an eye out for Vaux's and Black Swifts, the latter being a rare migrant.

There are two riverside hiking trails on the south bank: the 0.5-mile Downriver Trail (which begins between campsites C22 and C23) and the 0.5-mile Upriver Trail. Rumor has it that the Upriver Trail begins by campsite A14, but you may have difficulty finding the entrance. If so, walk the service road near the dump station and watch for the trail to cut across. The Downriver Trail is better-maintained, but it's not as birdy. Keep an ear open for Cordilleran Flycatchers near the end. At the lower end of the Upriver Trail, listen for Pileated Woodpeckers and Ruffed Grouse. The open areas along this trail are excellent for hummingbirds, which can often be seen courting in May. Be sure to watch for vireos and warblers chasing through the tree tops, as well. Be especially alert for American Redstarts, which are local and often hard to find in Idaho.

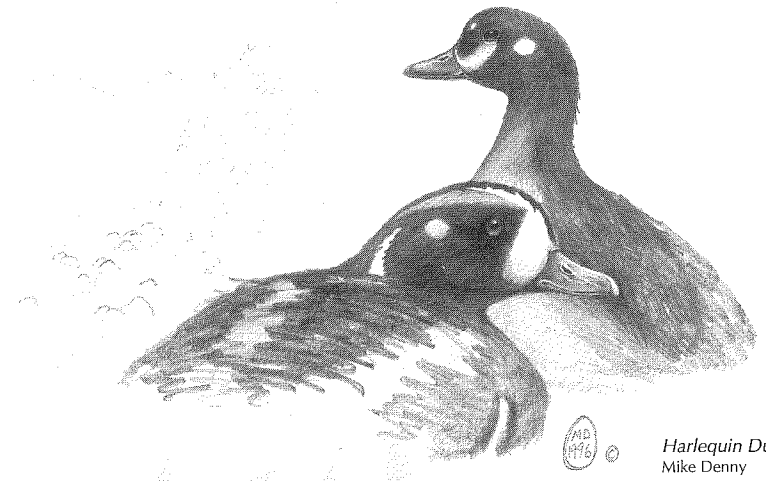
In early morning walk the main campground roadway and scan brush and trees for vireos and warblers. Search the open hillsides for Elk. The trail from Camp A to the amphitheater can be good birding. The entrance to Camp C is good for Hammond's Flycatchers and Gray Catbirds. Camp D is best for Ruffed Grouse, Black-chinned, Calliope, and Rufous Hummingbirds, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Black-capped and Chestnut-backed Chickadees, and Western Tanager. Swainson's Thrushes and Red-eyed Vireos are everywhere.

To look for Harlequin Ducks, drive US 12, watching for males (mid-April to early June) or females with broods (July and August). Keep an eye on exposed rocks and logs, in or adjacent to shallow, swift water. Some of the best spots are the islands by US 12 mileposts 120, 142, 151, and 158. Although the Lochsa River Harlequin Duck population is the largest in Idaho, it still numbers fewer than 50 birds. Don't be surprised if you miss 'em!

OTHER:

Wilderness Gateway Campground has 88 campsites, water, playground, pit toilets (flush toilets in Camps A and B), picnic tables, group shelter, dump station, and horse facilities. A camp host is available from Memorial Day to Labor Day. In summer there may be evening programs at the amphitheater. Flyfishing, horseback riding, hiking, rafting, and kayaking are all popular activities here—at times it can be down-right crowded!

The Historical Lochsa Ranger Station is located across the road from the campground. For more information, contact the Kooskia Ranger Station (208/926-4274). The nearest town is Lowell, 21 miles southwest, where Three Rivers Resort (208/926-4430) has cabins, pool, and a restaurant. Fuel (and other necessities) can be hard to find east of Kooskia, so plan accordingly.



Harlequin Duck
Mike Denny

SPALDING SITE

Author: Dan Svingen

Site P-29 — Map P-29/P-30

Highlights: California Quail

Major Habitats: Deciduous Forest

Location: Nez Perce Co., 9 miles east of Lewiston

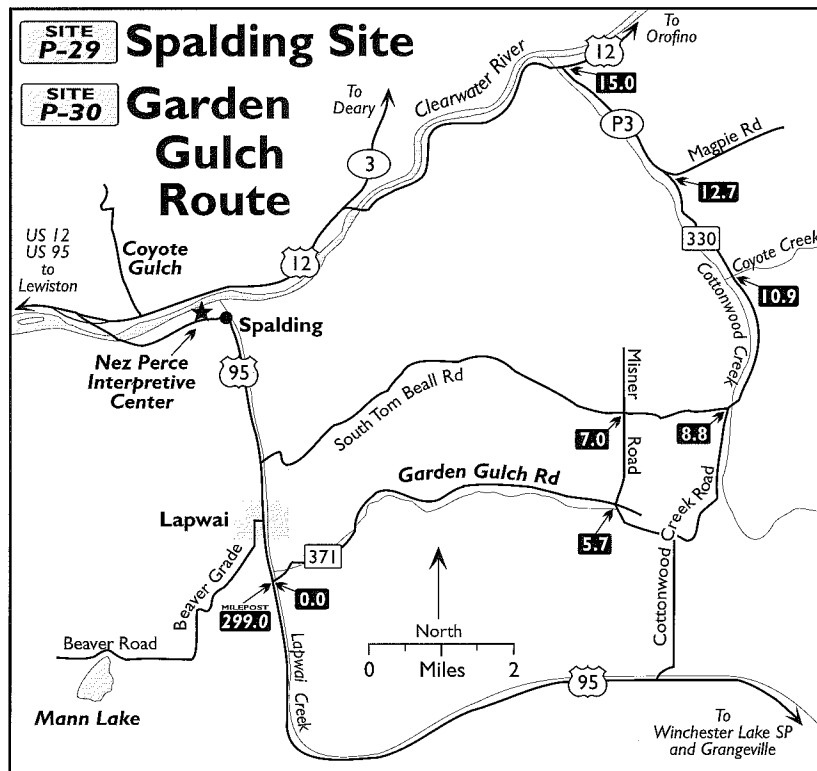
Spring: ** **Summer:** ** **Fall:** ** **Winter:** **

The Nez Perce Interpretive Center at Spalding Site provides insight into this area's rich history, including the operation of Spalding Mission. The best birding is in the picnic area along the Clearwater River. Because this spot offers a rare bit of shade, it can be crowded on summer weekends.

DIRECTIONS:

If the visitors center is open, you can reach the picnic area from the visitors center entrance road, which is on the north side of US 95 at milepost 303. As soon as you drive through the visitors center entrance gate, turn right (east) and go downhill 0.5 mile to the T intersection. Turn left (north), crossing the railroad tracks. Keep right to the picnic area in 0.2 mile.

If the visitors center is closed, the picnic area may still be open; try coming in the back way. At US 95 milepost 302.8, turn north onto the paved road that descends 0.5 mile along Lapwai Creek to the picnic area. You may still find a closed gate, but you can walk in.



BIRDING:

Approximately 150 species have been recorded at the picnic ground, with one of the most prominent being California Quail. Quail are most often found hiding in the trees and shrubs at the picnic area's eastern boundary (by the barbed-wire fence). During late evening, it's not uncommon to see a Cooper's Hawk fly stealthily into the area. The best place to stake-out for the Cooper's (and Black-headed Grosbeaks and Bullock's Orioles) is among the shrubs and trees lining the railroad tracks. Listen for Cordilleran Flycatchers. A pair of Great Horned Owls usually nests somewhere in the park, occasionally under the old bridge.

In winter Spalding Site marks the upper-limit of major waterfowl activity along the Clearwater River, while the trees often act as a vagrant trap, collecting such interesting visitors as Barn, Long-eared, and Northern Saw-whet Owls, Brown Creepers, Townsend's Solitaires, and Bohemian Waxwings.

OTHER:

The visitors center is open 9 am to 5 pm from September to May, and 8 am to 5 pm during summer. The closest services are at Lapwai and Lewiston. Bigfoot was reportedly sighted here in 1992, just above US 95—keep an eye out. See also Coyote Gulch (p. 81), Lewiston Area (p. 83), and Mann Lake (p. 88).

GARDEN GULCH ROUTE

Author: Winifred Hepburn

Site P-30 — Map P-29/P-30

Highlights: Wild Turkey, Yellow-breasted Chat

Major Habitats: Farmland, Deciduous Forest

Location: Nez Perce Co., Lapwai

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

This 15-mile-long drive will take you through the southern edge of the Palouse Prairie. There is good birding here any time of year, but it's best during summer.

DIRECTIONS:

The route begins at the south end of Lapwai. At US 95 milepost 299, turn east onto graveled Garden Gulch Road (a.k.a. Road 371), zero your mileage, cross the creek, pull over, and start birding. *All land along this route is private.*

BIRDING:

The tall trees and brush in this area are good for nesting Warbling Vireos and Black-headed Grosbeaks, and they also attract migrating warblers, such as Orange-crowned, Nashville, Yellow-rumped, and MacGillivray's. You may see a Golden Eagle or a Red-tailed Hawk flying along the canyon rim. As you drive farther down Garden Gulch Road, start scanning the rocky hillside near mile 0.2 for Chukars and Rock Wrens. The large storage barn at mile 2.5 is surrounded by Black Locust trees, which host Western Kingbirds and Bullock's Orioles in summer. Teasel weeds and berry brambles are good for California Quail, House Wrens, House Finches, and House Sparrows. Walk up the road to hear Willow Flycatchers, Western Wood-Pewees, and Yellow-breasted Chats.

At mile 5.4 stop at the old homestead for Great Horned Owls, House Wrens, and Spotted Towhees. Turn left (north) at mile 5.7, where Garden Gulch Road joins Misner Road. In fall and winter, watch in this area for swirling flocks of White-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, and American Goldfinches. Keep an eye out for Northern Shrikes, American Tree Sparrows, and Common Redpolls, as well.

At mile 7 turn right (east) on South Tom Beall Road. At the stop-sign at mile 8.8, go straight, onto Cottonwood Creek Road (a.k.a. Road 330) and follow the pavement northwest. Pull over at mile 10.9 after crossing the creek, and check the hillsides for Wild Turkeys. In the early morning, turkeys may even be seen on the road. Red-breasted Nuthatches, Black-capped Chickadees, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Dusky Flycatchers, Spotted Towhees, and Black-headed Grosbeaks may be present along the creek, and both Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks should be watched for.

Cottonwood Creek Road joins Ruebens-Gifford Road (a.k.a. Nez Perce County Road P3) at mile 12.7. Turn left (northwest) here to access US 12 at mile 15.

OTHER:

Food and fuel are available in Lapwai. All services are available in Lewiston.

WINCHESTER LAKE STATE PARK

Authors: Dan Svingen, Winifred Hepburn

Site P-31 — Map P-31

Highlights: Common Loon, Solitary Sandpiper

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

Location: Lewis Co., 22 miles southeast of Lewiston

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

Annual stocking of Rainbow Trout makes Winchester Lake SP a popular location for humans, Great Blue Herons, and Double-crested Cormorants. A few Common Loons use the 100-acre lake each spring and fall, and occasionally one will even summer here.

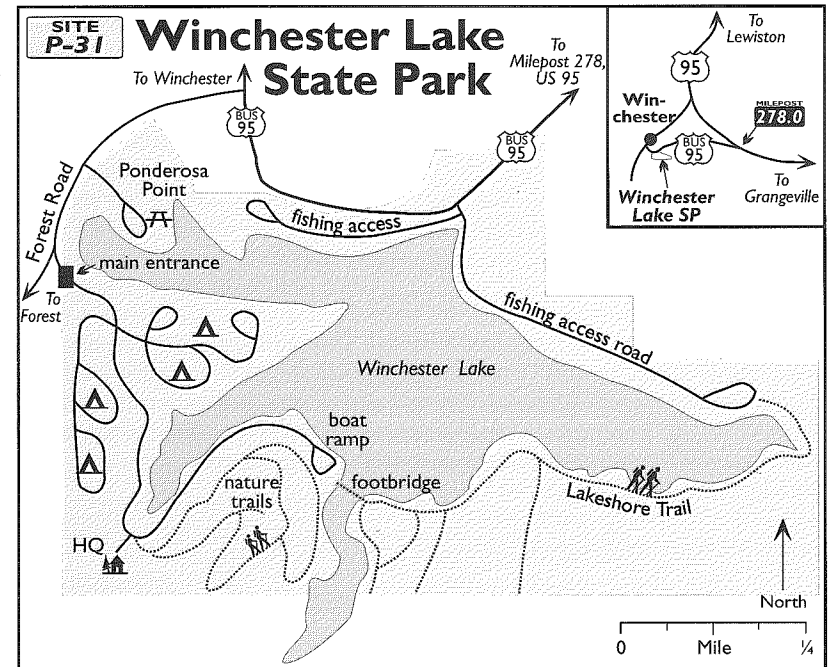
DIRECTIONS:

To reach the park's main entrance, turn west onto US 95A at US 95 milepost 278. Follow the road southwest to Winchester Lake at US 95A milepost 2.1.

BIRDING:

At milepost 2.1 you cross Winchester Lake's overflow channel. There's a small parking lot and a short (0.1 to 0.2 mile) access road on each side of the overflow. Use these to get various views of the lake, scanning for Common Loons, Pied-billed and Western Grebes, Double-crested Cormorants, and waterfowl.

Continue west/southwest on US 95A as it swings north into the town of Winchester. At milepost 2.4 turn left (west) onto Forest Road and go 0.2



mile to Ponderosa Point Picnic Area on the left (southeast). The picnic area contains a small stand of old-growth Ponderosa Pines which attracts Dusky Flycatchers, Pygmy Nuthatches, Western Tanagers, and Red Crossbills. The lake's northwest arm can be scanned from here as well. This seems to be the favored spot for Wood Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Mallards, and assorted diving ducks.

The park's main entrance is another 0.2 mile to the southwest on Forest Road. At the entrance sign, turn left (southeast) and pull up to the entrance station. From here continue straight, following the road as it weaves around the lake to the boat ramp at the end of the road in another 0.7 mile. Lakeshore Trail begins by the boat launch and follows the southeast edge of the lake, providing the best birding opportunities. Look for Solitary Sandpipers along lake margins in May, and again in July and August. This is one of the most reliable spot in northern Idaho for this uncommon migrant. Because it's wetter on this side of the lake, the forest shifts to mixed conifers. Local nesters include Sharp-shinned Hawks, Ruffed Grouse, Barred Owls, Calliope Hummingbirds, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Hammond's Flycatchers, Steller's Jays, Swainson's and Varied Thrushes, Cassin's and Warbling Vireos, and Orange-crowned, Nashville, Townsend's, and MacGillivray's Warblers. Year-round residents include Steller's Jays, Mountain, Black-capped, and Chestnut-backed

Chickadees, Brown Creepers, Winter Wrens, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Cassin's Finches, and Red Crossbills.

You can also access a couple other trails from the boat ramp parking lot. Wandering any of these trails (especially the one which follows the southern lake arm) can produce good birding for common mixed conifer bird species. For additional birding, return to the main entrance and turn left (southwest) on Forest Road, and follow it 8 miles to the town of Forest. Watch for Northern Goshawks, Great Gray Owls, Gray Jays, and Western and Mountain Bluebirds along the way, especially near Forest.

OTHER:

Winchester has fuel, food, and lodging. The closest full-service communities are Grangeville and Lewiston. Winchester Lake SP (208/924-7563) offers a full-service campground, the only such public facility between Lewiston and McCall. Several docks have been built around the lake, making fishing access easy. Cross-country skiing is popular during winter.

GRAVES CREEK ROUTE

Author: Winifred Hepburn

Site P-32 — Map P-32

Highlights: Cordilleran Flycatcher, Veery, Yellow-breasted Chat

Major Habitats: Deciduous Forest, Dry Conifer Forest

Location: Idaho Co., 2 miles east of Cottonwood

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

Graves Creek descends 11 miles from the Camas Prairie to the Salmon River. Along the way this beautiful, lush riparian area passes by moss-covered walls and miniature waterfalls. May and June are the best times to bird here.

DIRECTIONS:

From Cottonwood go southeast on US 95 to milepost 252.4, then turn right (west) onto paved Twin House Road (signed for "Weis Rock Shelter 7 miles", and zero your mileage.

At mile 1.4 turn left (south) onto Graves Creek Road. Except for the last 3 miles, all property is private, so please bird exclusively from the road. The route's lower portion is good gravel.

BIRDING:

Birding is good along this entire trip. The best strategy is simply to use whatever pull-outs are available and walk along the road. A few suggested stops are listed below.

At mile 1.9 check the two small farm ponds on the left (east) for migrating Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and Solitary Sandpipers—but be careful, since parking is limited. At mile 2.6 is an old orchard on the right (west); you never know what will turn up here.

At mile 3.5 you'll descend through a big curve. Just past the curve you'll see a large pull-out on the left (north). Stop here to look for Cordilleran, Willow, and Dusky Flycatchers, Veeries, Cassin's Vireos, MacGillivray's Warblers, Western Tanagers, Lazuli Buntings, and Spotted Towhees. At mile 3.8 are some tiny marsh areas surrounded by brush, where you should listen for Orange-crowned, Nashville, Yellow, and MacGillivray's Warblers and Black-headed Grosbeaks. At mile 5.0 look for nesting swallows and Cordilleran Flycatchers by the large pull-out on the right (west). The Weis Rock Shelter at mile 7.2 is good for Yellow-breasted Chats. The junction of Rock Creek and Graves Creek at mile 7.9 is often birdy. Watch for Lewis's Woodpeckers, Red-eyed Vireos, and Yellow-breasted Chats for the next 3 miles. At mile 11.5 follow the road past the information signs and dumpster, staying to the left. Graves Creek empties into the Salmon River at mile 11.7, where numerous Lazuli Buntings are usually seen.

The road now parallels the Salmon River upstream, ending at mile 14.7 and Pine Bar Recreation Area. Watch for Common Mergansers, Chukars, Lewis's Woodpeckers, and Canyon Wrens along this last 3 miles.

OTHER:

Food, fuel, and lodging are available in Cottonwood. For other services, try Grangeville. Local attractions include the St. Gertrude Museum (please call ahead at: 208/962-7123), and the Weis Rock Shelter, a shallow indentation in the canyon wall once inhabited by people of the Clovis culture.

Pine Bar Recreation Area offers primitive camping (pit toilets, water) and a boat ramp. Additional maps and information can be obtained from the BLM (208/962-3245) in Cottonwood, or the FS (208/983-1950) in Grangeville.

