

## MACKAY RESERVOIR AND CHILLY SLOUGH

Authors: Chuck Trost, Eric Lepisto, Jerry Gregson

Site SE-1 — Map SE-1/SE-2

**Highlights:** Waterfowl, Sandhill Crane, Shorebirds

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

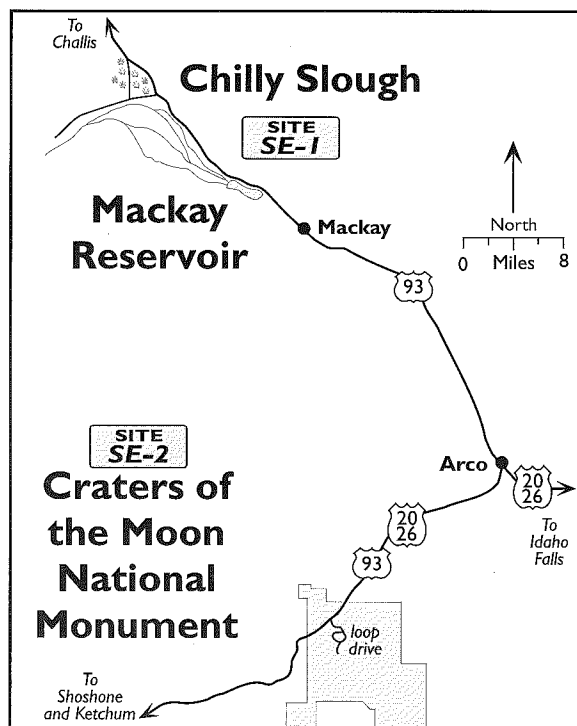
**Location:** Custer Co., 5 miles north of Mackay

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

Mackay Reservoir and Chilly Slough provide precious wetland habitat in an arid environment, attracting a variety of birdlife. Probably the first thing you'll notice, however, is the scenic location. Mackay Reservoir is in the middle of Big Lost River Valley, with majestic 12,230-foot-high Leatherman Peak as a backdrop. Chilly Slough sprawls across Thousand Springs Valley and is ringed by many of the same mountains, including Borah Peak, Idaho's highest at 12,662 feet.

### DIRECTIONS:

From Mackay follow US 93 northwest 5 miles to Mackay Reservoir. There are several access places along the east shore, including ones at mileposts 112.9, 113.6, and 114.5. The northwest and southeast ends of the reservoir (by the inlet and outlet) are private land. The rest of the shoreline is public (BLM).



### BIRDING:

#### MACKAY RESERVOIR

The dam at the south end of Mackay Reservoir overlooks an expansive cottonwood riparian forest that is mostly private. Birding opportunities are limited to the Sportsman Access Point. Even

with this restriction, however, you should find a variety of nesting birds, including Hairy Woodpeckers, Barn, Cliff, and Violet-green Swallows, Gray Catbirds, Yellow Warblers, Lazuli Buntings, and Bullock's Orioles.

Wading birds can be found at the reservoir's northwest end, but there is no direct land access; you'll have to scope from afar or use a canoe. As the reservoir drops during summer, you may be able to walk around the shoreline to investigate the Western, Least, and Baird's Sandpipers that are regular here.

#### CHILLY SLOUGH

To visit 400-acre Chilly Slough, continue driving northwest on US 93. During winter watch the roadsides for Snow Buntings and Gray-crowned and Black Rosy-Finches, and an occasional Rough-legged Hawk. At milepost 126, turn into the graveled pull-out on the left (west).

Among the 134 bird species recorded at Chilly Slough are American Bittern, Tundra Swan, Sandhill Crane, Long-billed Curlew, Willet, Wilson's Phalarope, Marsh Wren, and Sage Thrasher. Peregrine Falcons have been reintroduced nearby, so scan the skies carefully. To get additional views of Chilly Slough, walk about 0.75 mile along the edge of the wetland in either direction from the highway pull-out (be prepared to get your feet wet.) Boundary fences are signed to prevent trespass on adjacent private lands. Putting a canoe in at the highway pull-out is the easiest and most pleasurable way to bird here.

#### OTHER:

Mackay offers fuel, food, and lodging. Mackay Reservoir provides camping (fee, pit toilets, shelters, water). No developed facilities are available at Chilly Slough. Maps and more information can be obtained from the BLM (208/756-5400) in Salmon, the FS (208/588-2224) in Mackay, or the IDFG (208/525-7290) in Idaho Falls.

## CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT

Author: Kit Struthers

Site SE-2 — Map SE-1/SE-2

**Highlights:** Clark's Nutcracker, Rock Wren, Mountain Bluebird

**Major Habitats:** Dry Conifer Forest

**Location:** Butte Co., 18 miles southwest of Arco

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

Although only a limited number of bird species are found at Craters of the Moon, the monument is still worth a visit; the baked landscape is like no other in the Northwest. The best birding is from April through June. This is also the time to witness the impressive desert wildflowers. Because of the limited moisture, the blooms are so evenly spaced that they look planted!

### DIRECTIONS:

From Arco follow US 93 southwest 18 miles. By milepost 230 turn left (south) at the well-signed entrance to the monument. The visitors center is on the left (east) in 0.1 mile. Stop here to pick up a map and a checklist. The park's current biologist is very knowledgeable about birds and may be able to provide additional information.

The monument is most easily birded by following the 7-mile-long main loop road that begins south of the visitors center. This road is open late April until mid-November, depending on snowfall. In winter it's groomed for cross-country skiing.

### BIRDING:

Throughout the monument, watch for Golden Eagles, Prairie Falcons, Sage Thrashers, and Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows. Rock Wrens can be found tail-bobbing and singing everywhere! Clark's Nutcrackers, Dusky Flycatchers, Mountain Bluebirds, and Green-tailed and Spotted Towhees are common in Limber Pine groves, like those along the Wilderness Trail. This trail is accessed from the Tree Mold Trail parking lot. It's about a one-mile walk to good Limber Pine habitat.

### OTHER:

Plan your hikes for the coolest parts of the day, since the monument can get very hot. Sturdy hiking-boots are needed to negotiate the sharp lava surfaces.

Full services are available in Idaho Falls and Ketchum; limited services (restaurants, motels, groceries, gas stations) are available in Arco. The monument's developed campground is open from May to October, but it has no showers. For more information, call the monument (208/527-3257).

## HENRYS LAKE

Authors: Chuck Trost, Eric Lepisto

Site SE-3 — Map SE-3/SE-4

**Highlights:** Red-necked Grebe, Boreal Owl, American Pipit

**Major Habitats:** Shrub-steppe, Mixed Conifer Forest

**Location:** Fremont Co., 30 miles north of Ashton

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

Henrys Lake is nestled in Idaho's northeast corner, just 15 miles from Yellowstone National Park. The 6,200-acre reservoir supports a world-renowned trout fishery, but the best birding is away from the water, in the surrounding plains and mountains.

### DIRECTIONS:

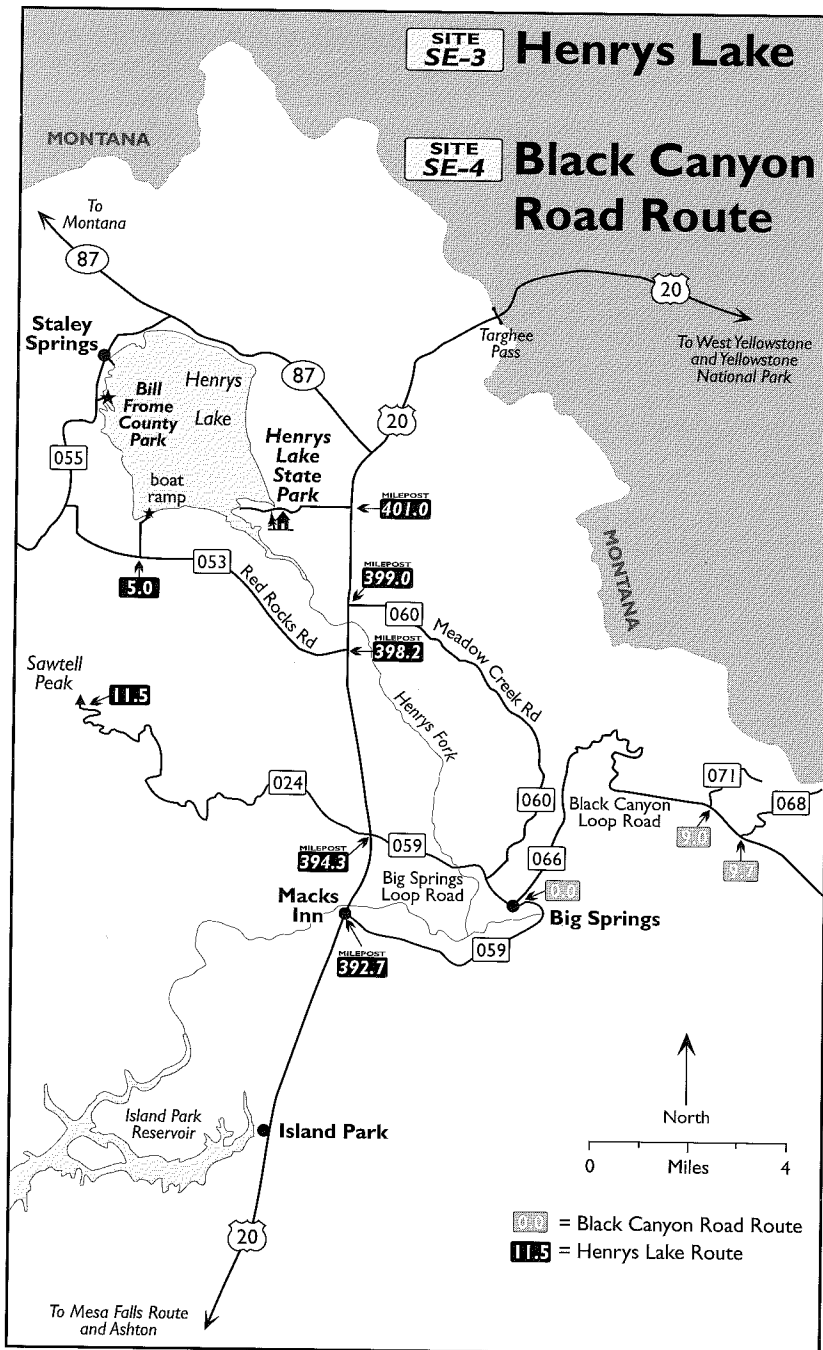
The starting point for sites described below is Macks Inn, which is located at US 20 milepost 392.7.

### BIRDING:

A good place to begin birding is 5 miles north of Macks Inn along US 20, where meadows and sagebrush flats are favored by staging buteos. From mid-August to mid-September it's possible to see 100 Red-tailed, 40 Ferruginous, and 50 Swainson's Hawks in a single day! Early morning is the best time to look for these birds since they are often off and soaring by 10 am. At US 20 milepost 398.2, zero your mileage and turn left (west) onto Red Rocks Road (a.k.a. FR 053). At mile 5 turn right (north) and follow the rough dirt road 1.1 miles to a boat ramp and overlook. Look for Red-necked Grebes, Trumpeter Swans, and White-crowned Sparrows, then backtrack to FR 053 and turn right, continuing west. Watch for Sandhill Cranes, Long-billed Curlews, Great Gray Owls (at dawn and dusk), and Red Foxes. After 2.5 miles you'll reach a T intersection. Turn right (north) on FR 055. In about 2.9 miles turn right (east) into Bill Frome County Park. The bay on the south side of the park is the best place to look for nesting Red-necked Grebes.

Continuing north on FR 055, look in the area east of Staley Springs for migrant Red-breasted Mergansers or nesting Lesser Scaup and Barrow's Goldeneyes. The small ponds nearby are good sites for Soras. You'll reach ID 87 in about 2.7 miles. Turn right (southeast) here and follow ID 87 as it loops back to US 20.

At the junction of ID 87 and US 20, turn right (south) onto US 20. As you pass through the sagebrush flats, watch for Pronghorn antelope and Sandhill Cranes. Also keep a sharp eye out for Horned Lark flocks in April and May and again in fall, since vagrant McCown's Longspurs have been seen here.



The entrance to Henrys Lake SP (fee) is at US 20 milepost 401. The short nature trail behind campsite #32 may reveal Trumpeter Swans, Soras, Marsh Wrens, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. At the boat dock look for California, Ring-billed, and Franklin's Gulls. A scan of the lake's eastern shore can produce nesting Bald Eagles. In fall look for migrant loons, Caspian Terns, and vagrant jaegers.

Continuing south on US 20, zero your mileage at milepost 399, turn left (east) onto Meadow Creek Road (a.k.a. FR 060), and follow the road as it loops southeast. After 8.6 miles Meadow Creek Road joins FR 059 near Big Springs. Turn right (west) onto FR 059 and follow it back to US 20 in 3 miles. Stop often to look and listen for birds. Besides common meadow, conifer, and deciduous-forest birds, you may see a Northern Goshawk or a Great Gray Owl. FR 059 crosses the outlet of Henrys Lake 1 mile west of the FR 059/060 junction. Listen here for Ospreys, Willow Flycatchers, MacGillivray's Warblers, and perhaps Northern Waterthrushes.

Boreal Owls nest in the mountains above Henrys Lake, between 7,000 and 8,000 feet in elevation. To reach a representative area, follow US 20 north from Macks Inn about 1.5 miles. At milepost 394.3 zero your mileage and turn left (west) on Sawtell Peak Road (a.k.a. FR 024). This is a good road, but it's closed in winter. At mile 6 you'll reach a maintenance shop on the right (north). In the evening a Boreal Owl tape can sometimes elicit a response from here on up to about mile 10, where the Whitebark Pines begin to thin out. In the whitebark forest look for Clark's Nutcrackers, White-breasted Nuthatches, Cassin's Finches, Red Crossbills, and both Evening and Pine Grosbeaks. In fall this area is hunted regularly by all three accipiters, several buteo species, and Golden Eagles. There's a radar dome at mile 11.5 with an excellent view of the flats, as well as nesting American Pipits.

**OTHER:**

Henrys Lake SP is open late May to October 31. If you're visiting after September 15, call ahead to check road conditions. The park offers a day-use area, a picnic area and campground, nature trail, restrooms, showers, and a boat ramp. Motels, condos, and private campgrounds are available in Island Park, as are restaurants, fuel, and groceries. Note that the "town" of Island Park is actually a loose conglomeration of houses and businesses stretching for some 30 miles along the highway. For more information call Harriman SP (208/558-7368), which manages Henrys Lake SP, or the Island Park Chamber of Commerce (208/558-7448). See also Black Canyon Road Route, the next site.

## BLACK CANYON ROAD ROUTE

Authors: Peder Svingen, Sue Barton

Site SE-4 — Map SE-3/SE-4

**Highlights:** Clark's Nutcracker, Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill

**Major Habitat:** Mixed Conifer Forest

**Location:** Fremont Co., 10 miles northeast of Macks Inn

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

This 20-mile route offers adventure and exploration along the Continental Divide, but it has received little attention bird-wise. A high clearance, 4-wheel-drive vehicle is required to reach the most interesting habitat.

### DIRECTIONS:

From Macks Inn follow US 20 north 1.7 miles. At milepost 394.3 turn right (southeast) on FR 059 (a.k.a. Big Springs Loop Road) and go 4 miles. At the intersection of FR 059 and FR 066, zero your mileage and turn left (northeast) onto FR 066 (a.k.a. Black Canyon Loop Road).

### BIRDING:

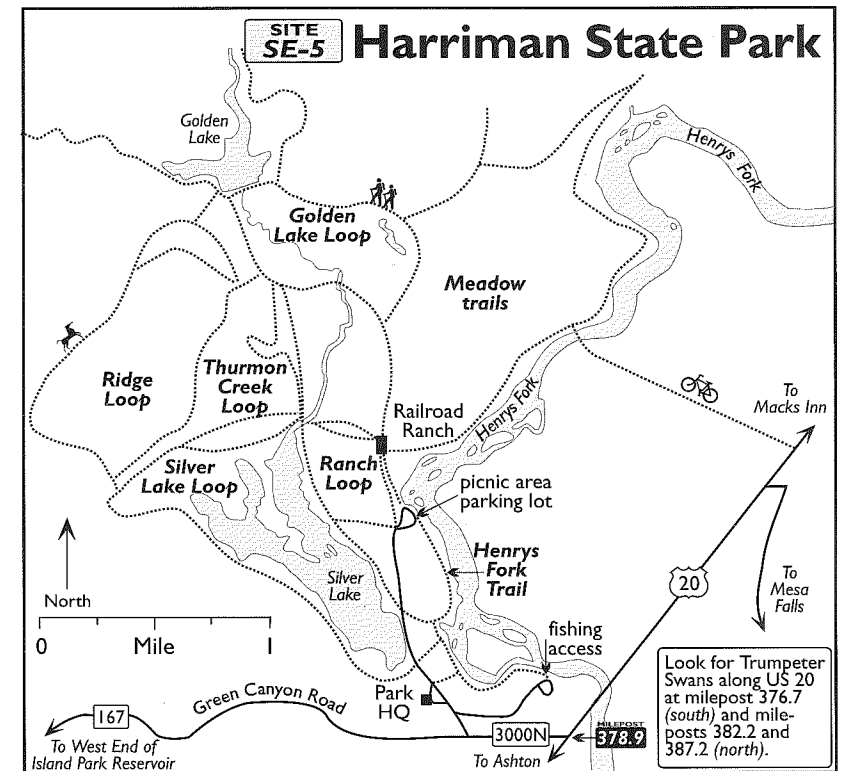
FR 066 begins by meandering through monotonous Lodgepole Pine forest. As the road climbs past the turn-off to Reas Pass, however, terrain becomes more varied and birdlife more interesting. During a June visit, you might pick up Dusky Flycatchers calling along one side of the road and a Hammond's Flycatcher answering from the other! Stop anywhere for Red-naped Sapsuckers, Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes, Red Crossbills, and Pine Siskins. Many side roads in this area are gated, a situation which may actually improve birding on foot or by bicycle. At mile 9.0 you'll reach the intersection of FR 066 and FR 071. Stay right on FR 066.

At mile 9.7 you'll reach a well-marked intersection with FR 068, where you should look for Clark's Nutcrackers and raptors, especially in fall. Turn left (northeast) and follow FR 068 about 2.3 miles to the Continental Divide or to where the road becomes impassable, whichever comes first. This stretch is both scenic and productive, passing through Subalpine Fir and Whitebark Pine forest. Possibilities here include Northern Goshawks, Blue Grouse, Gray and Steller's Jays, Townsend's Solitaires, Pine Grosbeaks, and Cassin's Finches. A tape might solicit a Boreal Owl response during summer or fall evenings.

When you're able to leave this beautiful remote area, backtrack to US 20. The adventuresome birder may want to do additional exploring along FR 071 (a.k.a. Middle Road), as it too climbs to the Continental Divide.

### OTHER:

Maps, road conditions, travel restrictions, and other information can be obtained from the FS (208/558-7301) or the Chamber of Commerce (208/558-7448) in Island Park. Full services are available in St. Anthony and in West Yellowstone; fuel, food, and accommodations are abundant in Island Park. See also Henrys Lake Area, the previous site.



## HARRIMAN STATE PARK

Author: Kit Struthers

Site SE-5 — Map SE-5

**Highlights:** Red-necked Grebe, Trumpeter Swan

**Major Habitats:** Wetland, Mixed Conifer Forest, Meadow

**Location:** Fremont Co., 18 miles north of Ashton

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

*Harriman SP is well known as a major wintering area for Trumpeter Swans. This 11,700-acre park also offers other birding attractions, as well as turn-of-the-century history. The pristine lakes and river were once the playground of several wealthy families that established the "Railroad Ranch," around which the park is centered. Buildings of that period are now open to the public.*

#### DIRECTIONS:

From Ashton follow US 20 north to milepost 378.9. Turn left (west) onto Green Mountain Road (a.k.a. 3000 N), then immediately right (north) into the actual park entrance. Stop here to pay the \$2 entrance fee, and then drive on into the park.

#### BIRDING:

The best way to bird Harriman is to follow the 1.5-mile-long entrance road to the picnic grounds parking area, and then explore along the 20 miles of trails. Particularly productive are the four-mile-long Silver Lake Trail and the one-mile-long Henrys Fork Trail. The 3.6-mile-long Thurman Creek Loop is recommended for forest birds.

Make sure to scan Silver Lake for Common Loons in spring and for Double-crested Cormorants and American White Pelicans throughout summer and fall. Silver Lake is also one of Idaho's most dependable spots for nesting Red-necked Grebes.

Trumpeter Swans can be found throughout the park year round. You can look for additional nesting Trumpeters at Swan Lake south of the park, at US 20 milepost 376.7. Wintering Trumpeters and Barrow's Goldeneyes are also easily observed along US 20—try Osborne Bridge (milepost 379.2), Last Chance (milepost 382.2), and Buffalo River (milepost 387.2).

Common breeding species at Harriman include Sandhill Crane, Long-billed Curlew, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Red-naped Sapsucker, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Eastern Kingbird, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Barn and Cliff Swallows, Steller's Jay, Common Raven, Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, American Robin, Mountain Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed and Red-winged Blackbirds, Pine Siskin, Dark-eyed Junco, Chipping, White-crowned, Lincoln's, and Song Sparrows, Western Tanager, and Red Crossbill. Moose are often found in the park, especially near the creek flowing out of Silver Lake.

Trails are groomed for cross-country skiing in winter. Three-toed Woodpeckers are seen irregularly on the Silver Lake Trail during winter, and the Gray Jays are so tame that they may even eat from your hand!

#### OTHER:

Maps and information are available at park headquarters (208/558-7368), at the picnic area, and at the visitors center. Pets are allowed in parking lots only. There is no camping allowed here.

Fishing, hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking are popular attractions at the park. Full services are available in St. Anthony and in West Yellowstone; fuel, food, and accommodations are abundant in Island Park. See also Henrys Lake, p. 219.

## MESA FALLS ROUTE

Author: Chuck Trost

Site SE-6 — See Southeastern map, page 214

**Highlights:** Great Gray Owl, American Dipper

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

**Locations:** Fremont Co., 10 miles northeast of Ashton

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

*Mesa Falls consists of two spectacular 70-foot waterfalls on Henrys Fork of the Snake River. The falls are contained within the same huge volcanic caldera that houses Yellowstone National Park; they were created by the river slowly cutting through massive basalt layers. The area surrounding the falls is worth exploring for typical southeast Idaho forest birds.*

#### DIRECTIONS:

Zero your mileage in Ashton, then drive east on ID 47 (a.k.a. Mesa Falls Scenic Byway, a.k.a. FR 294) following the highway as it eventually turns northeast and then northwest. Watch for Great Gray Owls throughout this route at dawn and dusk.

At mile 15 turn left (west) at the well-signed entrance to Lower Mesa Falls, and drive 0.1 mile to the overlook. All land here is public (FS).

#### BIRDING:

The two Mesa Falls are surrounded by Douglas-fir and Lodgepole Pine forest, with scattered Quaking Aspen groves mixed in. Breeding birds here include Ospreys, Hairy Woodpeckers, Red-naped and Williamson's (uncommon) Sapsuckers, Cassin's Vireos, and Western Tanagers. The more extensive forest stands are good nesting habitat for Northern Goshawks. Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons should also be watched for, and you may spot Northern Pygmy-Owls in snags along the canyon rim.

If you're willing to do some bushwhacking, park at Lower Mesa Falls parking lot, cross the highway, and hike east through some replanted timber-harvest units. In about a mile you'll come upon a shallow 10-acre pond filled with lily pads. This is a good place to see nesting Ring-necked Ducks, Sandhill Cranes, American Coots, and Black Terns. Olive-sided and Dusky Flycatchers, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Lincoln's Sparrows also breed here. Be prepared for lots of biting flies!