

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!

To reach the Upper Mesa Falls overlook, return to ID 47 and drive 0.6 mile farther north to milepost 15.8. Turn left (west) onto FR 295 and proceed 1 mile to the falls. You may want to walk this road, since it provides some of the best birding. From the parking lot at the end of the road, follow the protected walkway down to Upper Mesa Falls, and watch American Dippers at close range. Additional roadside birding is available along FR 294, which continues north 14 miles to rejoin US 20 near Harriman SP.

In winter ID 47 is plowed only to milepost 12.5 (Bear Gulch), so it is popular with snowmobilers and cross-country skiers. From Bear Gulch it is a 3.1-mile ski along the canyon's eastern rim to Lower Falls and about 4.7 miles to Upper Falls. Along the way expect Ruffed Grouse, Clark's Nutcrackers, Common Ravens, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Townsend's Solitaires, Red Crossbills, and Pine Siskins. Look on the river for Mallards, Common Goldeneyes, Common Mergansers, and American Dippers.

OTHER:

Fuel, food, and accommodations are available in Ashton. Grandview Campground (FS) is near the Lower Mesa Falls overlook. There are public restrooms at both falls. Maps and more information can be obtained from the FS stations in Ashton (208/652-7442) or Island Park (208/558-7301).

CAMAS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Author: Kit Struthers

Site SE-7 — Map SE-7

Highlights: Trumpeter Swan, Grasshopper Sparrow

Major Habitats: Wetland, Shrub-steppe, Farmland

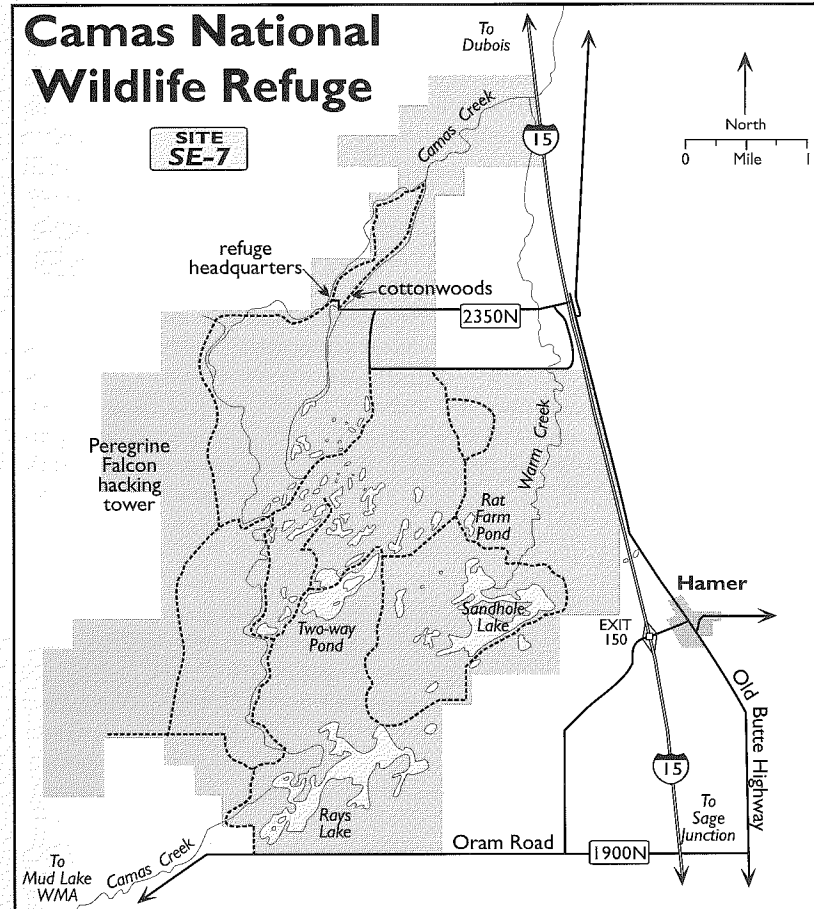
Location: Jefferson Co., 36 miles north of Idaho Falls

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

Covering 10,500 acres, Camas NWR is part of a large-scale wetland complex encompassing nearby Mud Lake and Market Lake WMAs (see p. 229 and p. 232). Each of these areas has something different. At Camas NWR, the specialties are nesting Trumpeter Swans, Peregrine Falcons, and grassland birds.

DIRECTIONS:

Camas NWR is accessed from the small town of Hamer. To get there from I-15, take Exit 150 and drive east 0.4 mile, passing through Hamer. At the T intersection, turn left (north) and proceed for 3 miles, then turn left (west) onto 2350 N, crossing I-15 on an overpass and entering Camas NWR in 2 miles. Park at the refuge office, then look in the information board at the rear of the parking lot for a map and a bird list.



BIRDING:

About 100 yards east of the refuge office, on the north side of the entrance road, is a double row of cottonwoods bordering a road and a canal. Leave your car at the refuge office and walk along the cottonwoods, which in spring can be alive with migrants. Olive-sided Flycatchers, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes, Townsend's Solitaires, most of Idaho's warblers (including Northern Waterthrushes), and Western Tanagers have all been found, as have vagrant Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Least Flycatchers, Yellow-throated Vireos, Black-and-white Warblers, and Baltimore Orioles! During summer look for nesting Red-tailed Hawks, House Wrens, Warbling Vireos, and Bullock's Orioles.

Lilacs and other shrubs surrounding headquarters harbor roosting Common Nighthawks as well as nesting Orange-crowned, Yellow, and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Lazuli Buntings. Large trees often have American Kestrels and Great Horned Owls, and attract roosting Bald Eagles in winter. A double row of cottonwoods to the north of headquarters holds nesting Long-eared Owls, various flycatchers, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers, and White-crowned and Song Sparrows. You'll likely see "Unauthorized Entry Prohibited" signs around headquarters. Birding here is an authorized activity—but please avoid disturbing the manager's home.

After birding headquarters, drive the graveled road that heads west from the parking lot. In about a mile you'll reach a hay meadow which sometimes floods in spring, attracting Green-winged Teal and other ducks. The road bends left (south) through sage and grass, 1.2 miles west of headquarters. Watch for Savannah, Grasshopper, Vesper, and Lark Sparrows in spring and summer, and listen for Rock Wrens. A distant hacking tower is visible to the right (southwest). With a scope you may be able to see a pair of nesting Peregrine Falcons there. This road soon becomes rough. It is usually best to turn around here and return to headquarters.

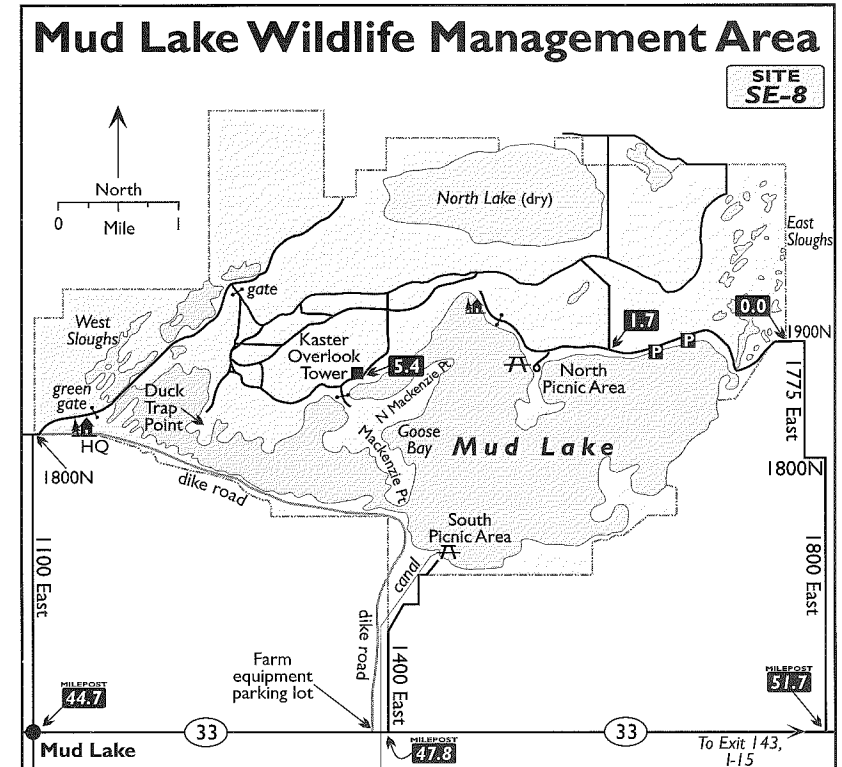
Back at headquarters, turn south at the information board and drive into the heart of the refuge. You'll soon enter a maze of dike roads, allowing you to explore the refuge's interior. Look for Eared, Western, and Pied-billed Grebes, American White Pelicans, Great Blue Herons, Great, Snowy, and Cattle Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, American Bitterns, White-faced Ibises, Trumpeter Swans, Canada, Snow, and Ross's (rare migrant) Geese, Cinnamon Teal, Common and Red-breasted (migration only) Mergansers, Golden Eagles, Sandhill Cranes, Virginia Rails, Soras, American Avocets, Long-billed Curlews, Willets, and Short-eared Owls.

There's also good birding south of Hamer on "Old Butte Highway" (a.k.a. Old Highway 91). Look for Ferruginous Hawks, Loggerhead Shrikes, Sage Thrashers, and Sage and Brewer's Sparrows along this frontage road. Burrowing Owls have been found on the right (west) side of Old Butte Highway. To look for the birds, drive 4.8 miles south of Hamer, then drive or walk the dirt 2-track which leads 0.25 mile west to the interstate. You'll know that you're on the right 2-track if it passes beneath the interstate in a "tunnel" underpass. The owls nest in ground-squirrel mounds on the east side of the interstate. *Please limit your disturbance of these owls.*

OTHER:

The refuge office is often closed, but the refuge itself is open year round, from a half hour before sunrise to a half hour after sunset. Hiking is permitted July 16 to February 28. During nesting season (March 1 to July 15), you'll be restricted to birding from roads only. Hunting is allowed in season, during which period additional access restrictions may apply. For more information call the refuge (208/662-5423).

There's a general store in Hamer. Additional services are available in Dubois, Rexburg, and Idaho Falls. The closest camping is in Roberts. There are no restrooms at Camas NWR. The truck weigh station at Sage Junction has a public restroom, but it's open only when the weigh station is operating.



MUD LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Author: Kit Struthers

Site SE-8 — Map SE-8

Highlights: Waders, Snow and Ross's Geese

Major Habitats: Wetland, Shrub-steppe

Location: Jefferson Co., 30 miles northwest of Idaho Falls

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

In mid-March even non-birders come to Mud Lake WMA to view the spectacle of 50,000 Snow Geese filling the sky. During summer and fall, concentrations of wading birds and shorebirds can also be very impressive.

DIRECTIONS:

From Sage Junction (I-15 Exit 143) drive 7 miles west on ID 33. At milepost 51.7 turn right (north) on 1800 East. Stay left (straight) at the Y in 2 miles. After crossing Camas Creek (about 3 miles north of ID 33), turn left (west) on 1800 North for 0.2 mile, then turn right (north) on 1775 East. After another mile turn left (west) on 1900 North and follow it to the WMA's east entrance in 0.5 mile. There are small signs indicating the way to the WMA at each intersection.

At the east entrance, stop at the information board for a bird list and zero your mileage. Be aware that the WMA brochure's map can be confusing, especially for the north side of Mud Lake.

Continue west toward the north shore of Mud Lake. Road quality varies between good gravel and very primitive 2-track dirt. The dirt roads may require a high-clearance vehicle, and they can be very muddy and slick after a rain; especially the dike road.

BIRDING:

At mile 0.4 is a tree clump on the right (northwest) where Northern Saw-whet Owls, MacGillivray's Warblers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Bullock's Orioles nest.

Parking lots on the left (south) at mile 1 and 1.4 allow you to scan Mud Lake. In mid-March there are usually 300 to 500 Ross's Geese mixed in with the thousands of Snows, but it's often easier to pick 'em out if you can catch the flocks feeding in fields bordering the WMA. There are usually several Bald Eagles watching the geese, as well! Other waterfowl using Mud Lake include Western Grebes (check for Clark's), Tundra and Trumpeter Swans, Canada Geese, Mallards, Gadwalls, Northern Pintails, Green-winged, Blue-winged, and Cinnamon Teals, Eurasian (rare) and American Wigeons, Northern Shovelers, Wood Ducks, Redheads, Canvasbacks, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneyes, Buffleheads, Ruddy Ducks, and Common, Hooded, and Red-breasted Mergansers. The greatest waterfowl numbers occur in March and April, with smaller numbers in late August and early September.

At mile 1.7 the road forks. Go straight for 0.5 mile, then turn left (south) to the northern picnic-area/primitive-camping spot. The tree groves are good for songbirds, including Black-capped Chickadees, House and Marsh Wrens, Bullock's Orioles, and various warblers and sparrows. Past vagrants on the WMA have included Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Common Grackles. Additional views of Mud Lake and more woodland-type birding can be found along the road between the picnic area turn-off and the "Secondary Headquarters" (see map).

To see the rest of the WMA's north side, backtrack to the road fork (0.5 mile east of the picnic area turn-off) and turn left (north) on a rough dirt road which leads through irrigated farmland. Follow the map and signs to "Kaster Overlook Tower" in 3.7 miles. Look here for nesting Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, Great, Snowy, and Cattle Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and vagrant Green Herons, as well as deer, Elk, and Moose. American Bitterns can sometimes be seen (or more likely heard) in nearby marshes.

Waterfowl, Western Screech-Owls, Northern Saw-whet Owls, and bees all use Wood Duck nest boxes along the north shore of Mud Lake, particularly on MacKenzie Point and Duck Trap Point. You can bird more shrub-steppe habitat by continuing west along the dirt 2-track from the tower, but a high-clearance vehicle is recommended. This road will take you past Duck Trap Point and eventually gets you to a canal where a gate blocks access into the West Slough Area during nesting season. Because of this gate, during most of the year you cannot complete a loop. To bird the WMA's south side, backtrack to ID 33 and turn right (west). At ID 33 milepost 47.8, turn right (north) on 1400 East (on the east side of the canal) and drive 2.3 miles to the WMA's southern boat ramp/picnic-area/primitive-camping spot. After investigating the willow shrubs, the trees, and the wetlands, return to ID 33 and continue west.

In the town of Mud Lake, at ID 33 milepost 44.7, turn right (north) on 1100 East and go 3 miles, then turn right (east) onto 1800 N. Park here and walk the graveled road which parallels the canal northeast on the canal's west bank. In 0.4 mile you'll reach a green metal gate which is locked during nesting season. Go behind the gate and walk the dike northeast to view the West Slough Area. *Please stay on the dike when visiting between January 15 and August 30.* The West Slough Area hosts White-faced Ibis and Franklin's Gull colonies, and is good for wading birds, shorebirds, and terns. Watch for Peregrine Falcons.

From the junction of 1100 East and 1800 North, continue east on 1800 North. About 1 mile east of the junction, the road swings south on 1200 East. Continue straight on 1800 North as it turns into a graveled 2-track dike road, and follow it 4.1 miles to its terminus on ID 33, in a farm-equipment parking lot. Cattle Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and shorebirds sometimes feed in large numbers in the field south of the dike road. Listen for Sora in marshy areas.

Most of the common shorebirds, including Killdeer, Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Willets, Long-billed Curlews, Spotted, Western, Least, Baird's, and Pectoral Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, and Wilson's Phalaropes migrate through Mud Lake WMA, with numbers peaking in May. Specific locations used depend on water-level. Some stay to nest.

Watch for Sage Grouse, Gray Partridge, Sandhill Cranes, Great Horned and Short-eared Owls, Northern Harriers, Eastern and Western Kingbirds,

and Sage Thrashers in suitable habitat throughout the WMA. Sage Grouse are most likely to be seen on the WMA's north side.

In winter bird diversity and abundance decline markedly, but you can still find wintering waterfowl, Northern Goshawks, Rough-legged Hawks, Golden and Bald Eagles, Ring-necked Pheasants, Gray Partridge, and American Tree Sparrows.

OTHER:

Mud Lake WMA is open for visitation year round. It is popular with boaters, fisherman, and hunters. There are no established visiting hours. Limited facilities (fuel, groceries, cafe) are available in Mud Lake; full facilities can be found in Idaho Falls. Pit toilets, grills, and picnic tables are available at the primitive camping spots (no potable water) and at Kaster Overlook Tower. There are restrooms and a pop-and-juice machine at the weigh station at Sage Junction, but the door is locked unless the weigh station is operating. For more information call the WMA (208/663-4664).

MARKET LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Author: Kit Struthers

Site SE-9 — Map SE-9

Highlights: American Bittern, Black-necked Stilt, Long-eared Owl

Major Habitats: Wetland, Farmland, Deciduous Forest

Location: Jefferson Co., 20 miles north of Idaho Falls

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

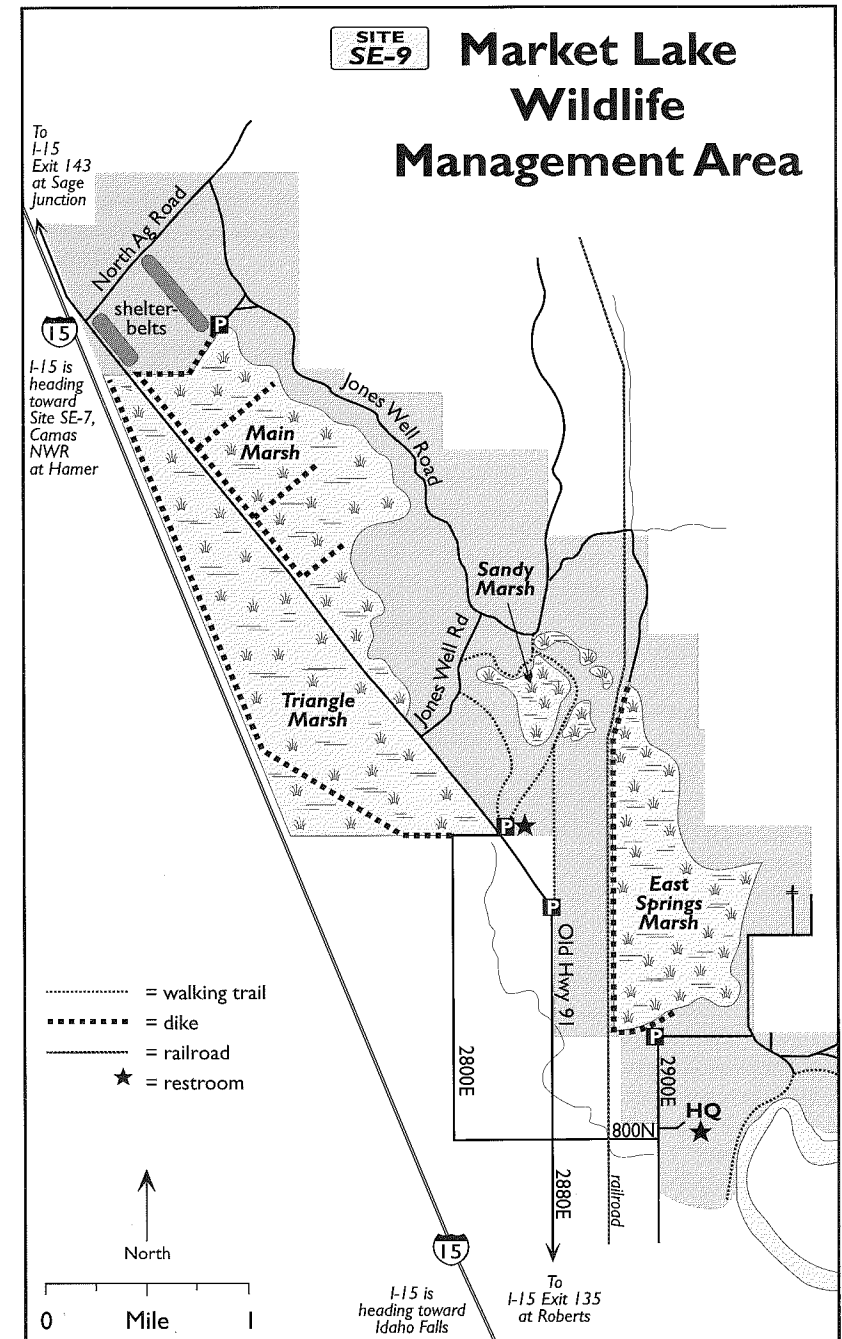
Five-thousand-acre Market Lake WMA is a favorite birding site for local birders, since bird diversity and numbers are high here. Spring and summer evenings are the best time to visit, when light conditions are most favorable and the distant Teton Mountains most impressive.

DIRECTIONS:

From I-15 take Exit 135 and go east 0.3 mile into Roberts. At the stop-sign turn north on ID 48 (a.k.a. 2880 East). Just beyond the north edge of town, stay right at the Y intersection. About 1.6 miles north of town, turn right (east) on 800 N. After 0.5 mile, turn left (north) on 2900 E, then turn right (east) into the WMA headquarters (signed). At the headquarters, pick up a bird list and a brochure. Be aware that graveled and dirt roads in the WMA are sometimes rutty and/or muddy.

BIRDING:

There is no one best way to bird this area; just drive and walk the numerous roads. Local birders spend most of their time at Main Marsh



because it's so convenient and has so many birds, but East Springs Marsh often produces unique species, notably Green-winged Teal and shorebirds.

To find East Springs Marsh from headquarters, head north on 2900 E. In 0.4 mile pull into the lot on the left (west) and park. Walk through the gate in the northeast corner of the parking lot, cross the canal, and then follow the main dike to the west and north to view open water and mudflats. Among the possible shorebirds are Red-necked Phalaropes during May and July, Black-necked Stilts and Willets during summer, and Black-bellied Plovers and American Golden-Plovers during fall. You may also find Long-billed Curlews in the tall grass to the east of East Springs Marsh. Rarities have included Marbled Godwits (spring) and Stilt Sandpipers (July).

To explore the rest of the WMA, backtrack all the way to the intersection of 800 N and 2850 E (see map), and follow 2850 E north to Main and Triangle Marshes. Watch the small ponds along the way for Blue-winged Teal, Greater Yellowlegs, and Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes. If you have a high-clearance vehicle (and if the road is open), you can bird shrub-steppe habitat by taking the 4.5-mile-long Jones Well/N. Ag Road loop (see map). At Main and Triangle Marshes listen for American Bitterns, Virginia Rails, and Soras at dusk. Keep an eye out for the distinctive, moth-like flight of the Short-eared Owl.

During spring migration (usually late March) search the Snow Goose flocks for Ross's Geese. Later in the year, note the reliable American Coots. It's fun to watch their babies bob around on the water! Other summer species include Eared, Western, Clark's, and Pied-billed Grebes, Great Blue Heron, Great, Snowy, and Cattle (rare) Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Heron, White-faced Ibis, California, Ring-billed, and Franklin's Gulls, and Forster's and Black Terns. Vagrant species have included Tricolored Heron, Eurasian Wigeon, Common Moorhen, and Western Gull.

At the north end of Main Marsh are two shelterbelts. Great Horned Owls nest in the western tree-row; Long-eared Owls, in the eastern. These trees are also great for songbirds. During April a Varied Thrush or two might be present, as may a Plumbeous Vireo. Spring warbler species have included Yellow, Yellow-rumped, MacGillivray's, Virginia's, Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, and American Redstart.

Several raptors hunt Market Lake WMA throughout the year. Northern Harriers and Prairie and Peregrine Falcons may be seen year round, while Bald Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, and Gyrfalcons (rare) are most likely in winter or early spring.

OTHER:

Market Lake is open all year, but it has no established visiting hours. Portions of the WMA are closed to protect wildlife. Fuel, groceries, and a cafe are available in Roberts. Full facilities can be found in Idaho Falls. The closest camping is in Roberts. There's an outhouse at the headquarters and another at the Sandy Marsh parking lot. For more information, phone the WMA (208/228-3131).

TEX CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Author: Greg Rice

Site SE-10 — Map SE-10

Highlights: Gamebirds, Green-tailed Towhee

Major Habitats: Deciduous Forest, Grassland

Location: Bonneville Co., 16 miles east of Idaho Falls

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

Tex Creek WMA is a contorted, meandering preserve encompassing about 28,300 acres. Although the WMA's primary use is as big game winter range, it also provides great habitat for Gray Partridge, Ring-necked Pheasants, and Blue, Ruffed, and Sharp-tailed Grouse.

For explorer-types, Tex Creek's prime allure will be its total obscurity. Almost no one knows about this place, and those who do don't know how to find it! There's a good reason for all this mystique: the WMA's unique shape makes giving directions a full-day affair!

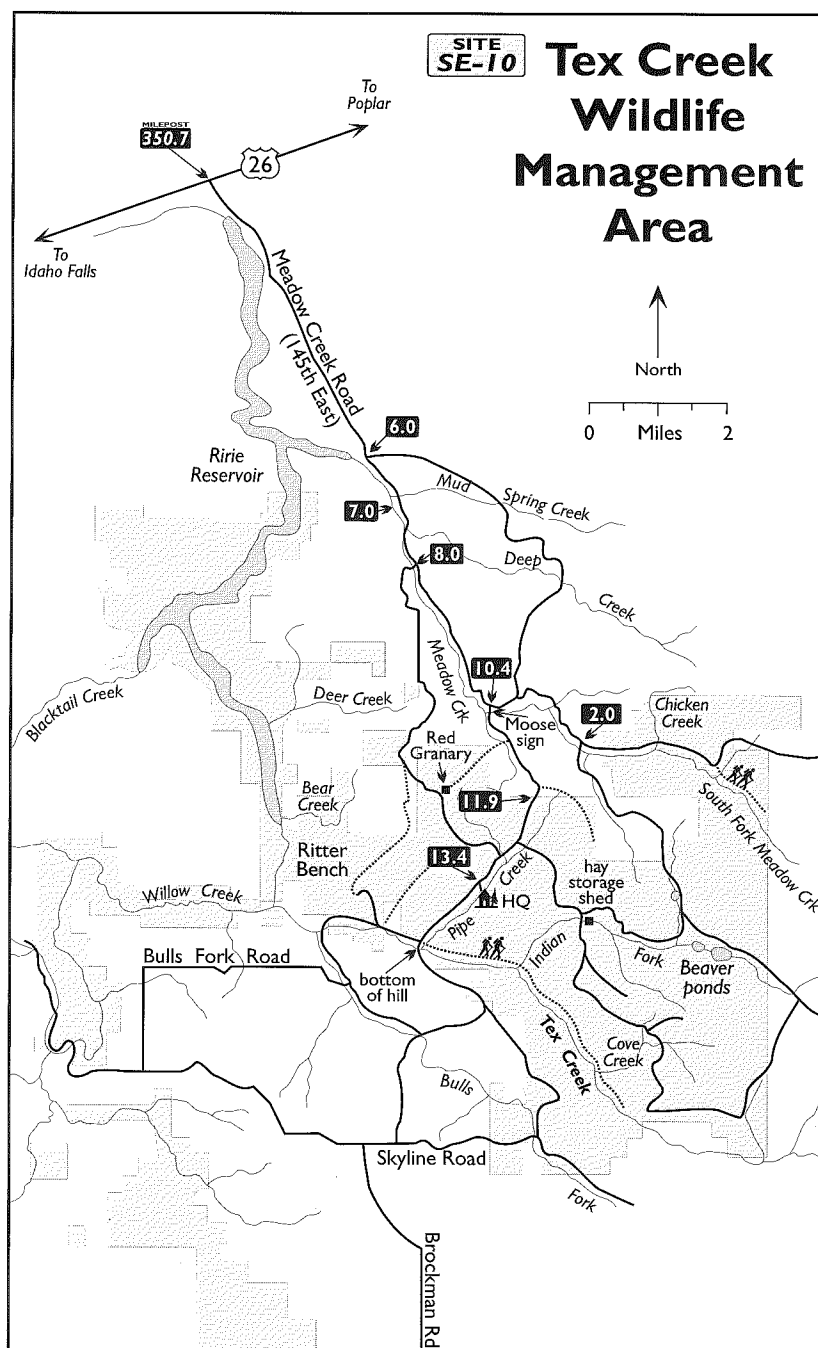
DIRECTIONS:

Before leaving Idaho Falls, stock up on fuel, food, and water, and kiss your loved ones goodbye; you'll be gone a spell. (Actually, if the roads are good, the WMA headquarters are only about an hour from Idaho Falls.) Follow US 26 northeast 14 miles. At milepost 350.7 turn right (south) on paved/graveled Meadow Creek Road (a.k.a. 145th East), and zero your mileage. At the Y at mile 6, stay right (south). You'll immediately begin descending a steep rocky road ("Call Dugway"); watch for Rock Wrens, Green-tailed Towhees, and, in late summer, the beautiful and tenacious yellow Blazing Stars. Be aware that the WMA's graveled/dirt roads can get slick with even slight moisture. Prolonged rains leave some roads impassable for days.

BIRDING:

LOWER MEADOW CREEK and HEADQUARTERS

At mile 7 you'll reach the canyon floor along the lower reaches of Meadow Creek (private land). Park and walk the road to find Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds, Downy Woodpeckers, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Cordilleran and Willow Flycatchers, Western Wood-Pewees, Common Yellowthroats, Wilson's and Yellow Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chats, Gray Catbirds, Swainson's Thrushes, Green-tailed Towhees, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, and Bullock's Orioles. Look overhead for Turkey Vultures, Bald and Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, and Northern Harriers. Keep watch on the hillside for Moose, deer, and Elk.



At mile 8 stay left at the Y. At mile 10.4 is yet another Y. This one is marked with a large sign cautioning hunters to be aware of their target. This "Moose sign" is an important landmark on the road maze; note its location, then go right (south), and start climbing out of the canyon along Blue Creek. Along this stretch you'll pass Quaking Aspen patches, which should be searched for Ruffed Grouse, Mountain and Black-capped Chickadees, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped and MacGillivray's Warblers, and Western Tanagers. The road is pretty gnarly, so it's best birded on foot after finding a safe place to park. *Be aware that the land off the road is private.*

At mile 11.9 you enter Tex Creek WMA and descend along Pipe Creek to the WMA's headquarters at mile 13.4. The H.Q. is centrally located and is a good starting point for further exploration. Before leaving the headquarters, however, consider hiking the surrounding grasslands for Sharp-tailed Grouse and other grassland birds.

RED GRANARY

For additional gamebird opportunities visit Red Granary. From headquarters go back up the road northeast along Pipe Creek about 0.3 mile, then turn left (north) and follow the road 1.5 miles. On the way watch farm fields, mixed grass prairie, and shrub-steppe for Sharp-tailed and Sage Grouse and Gray Partridge. A closed farm road behind the granary takes off to the northeast. Walk this "trail" and venture into the fields to try to spook something out. Be prepared to do a lot of hoofing!

INDIAN FORK

From headquarters go back up the road northeast along Pipe Creek about 0.6 mile, then turn right (east) and drive the winding road through the low, open valley. After 1.5 miles stay straight (left) at the Y by the hay shed. Two miles beyond the hay shed, turn sharp right and head southeast. In another 0.5 mile you'll reach a beaver pond that's good for waterfowl. Snowy Egrets, White-faced Ibises, and Sandhill Cranes are possible here. The WMA's eastern boundary is about a mile farther down the road. You should turn around somewhere soon, since the road deteriorates quickly once you leave the WMA.

UPPER MEADOW CREEK

Arguably the WMA's best birding is along the upper reaches of Meadow Creek. Certainly one of the nicest hikes to be had is along South Fork Meadow Creek. (By the way, don't be fooled by all of this "South Fork"/"North Fork" business. The creeks are hardly big enough to warrant a name, let alone a pretentious "South Fork"!) To find Upper Meadow Creek from headquarters, follow the road northeast along Pipe Creek and descend down along Blue Creek. At the "Moose sign" turn right (east) and re-zero your mileage. Stay right at the intersection at mile 0.8 and you'll reach a gate. The landowner allows the public to drive through the gate to access Tex

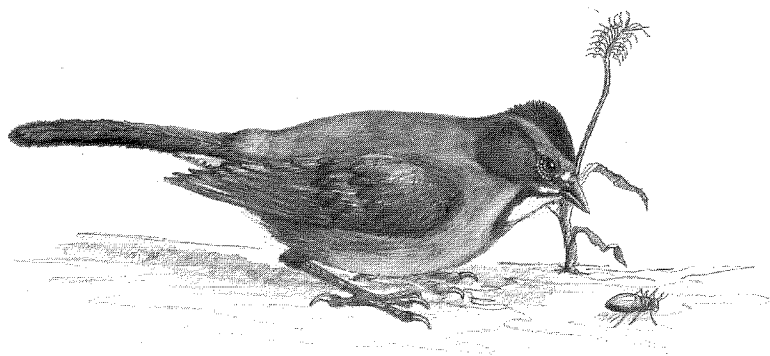
Creek WMA at mile 2.1. *Please leave the gate as you found it.* Stay left at the Y at mile 2.0 (see map). At about mile 3.9 is the South Meadow Creek Trailhead (a semi-cleared area with a small sign) on the right (south). Walk the old farm road "trail" up South Fork Meadow Creek, looking for typical riparian birds. You'll reach Douglas-fir forest on Mount Baldy in a few miles. Search here for Blue Grouse, Northern Goshawks, White-breasted Nuthatches, and Brown Creepers.

TEX CREEK

Tex Creek is yet another mini-canyon. From headquarters go southwest paralleling Pipe Creek downstream about 1.5 miles. At the bottom of the hill you can walk the trail upstream or turn right (west) and continue birding from your car. You'll pass more low riparian willow habitat that harbors high numbers of Rock Wrens, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Green-tailed Towhees, and Lazuli Buntings. You can continue exploring as far upstream or downstream as time and road conditions permit.

OTHER:

There is a developed campground at the Ririe Dam Recreation Area, about 2 miles south of US 26 on Meadow Creek Road. The closest lodging is in Idaho Falls. Fuel and food can be had at the truck stop on US 26, about 1.5 miles west of the Meadow Creek turn-off. For more information and a handy brochure, call the WMA (208/525-7290).



Green-tailed Towhee
Mike Denny

SAND CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Authors: Dan and Ila Svingen

Site SE-11 — Map SE-11

Highlights: Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse

Major Habitats: Shrub-steppe, Wetland

Location: Fremont Co., 9 miles north of St. Anthony

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

Sand Creek WMA is managed as big-game winter range and is popular with off-road-vehicle enthusiasts, sightseers, hunters, and fishermen. Unfortunately, birders have given the WMA scant attention, so little is known of the site's avian potential. There are at least three productive areas to bird here: White Sands Road, Sand Creek Ponds, and Rick's Pasture Road.

DIRECTIONS:

To access the WMA's main route (Sand Creek Road) from St. Anthony, follow Business US 20 east from the north edge of town 1.5 miles, then turn left (north) onto Sand Creek Road, just before crossing the Del Rio Bridge. Zero your mileage here. At mile 1.4 stay left. You'll enter public land (BLM, IDFG) at mile 9.4.

If you don't have a high-clearance vehicle, you may want to restrict your birding to Sand Creek Road. If the area is particularly dry (and thus sandy), remember that a 4-wheel-drive comes in mighty handy!

BIRDING:

The best way to find the WMA's Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse is to visit March to May. Contact headquarters before visiting to learn the status of active leks. During the rest of the year, Sharp-taileds are closely associated with scattered Chokecherry clumps bordering sand dunes, while Sage Grouse can be found almost anywhere.

WHITE SANDS ROAD

White Sands Road (a dirt/sand 2-track) heads southwest from Sand Creek Road, 11 miles north of Del Rio Bridge. About 3.7 miles down White Sands Road is Miller's Well, an abandoned farmstead containing relatively luxurious grass. Walk around here for Sage Grouse, Say's Phoebe, and Savannah and Vesper Sparrows. About 2.0 miles southwest of Miller's Well, you'll reach Black Knoll, a vegetated, low sand ridge on the left (south). This is the type of habitat preferred by Sharp-tailed Grouse, Dusky Flycatchers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Yellow-breasted Chats, Lazuli Buntings, and Bullock's Orioles.

Continuing southwest on White Sands Road, you'll find all kinds of side roads. It is often difficult to determine which is the "main" road, so it helps