

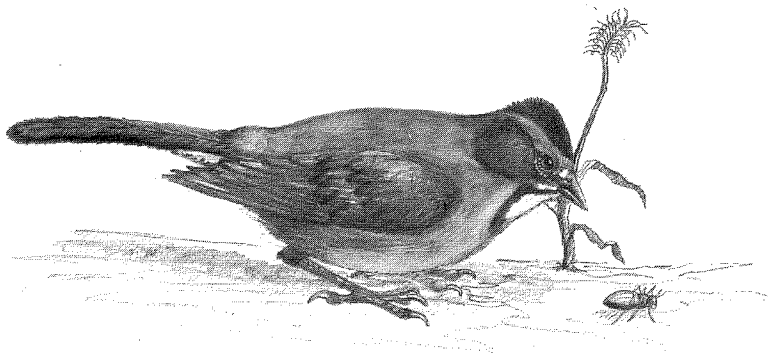
Creek WMA at mile 2.1. *Please leave the gate as you found it.* Stay left at the Y at mile 2.0 (see map). At about mile 3.9 is the South Meadow Creek Trailhead (a semi-cleared area with a small sign) on the right (south). Walk the old farm road "trail" up South Fork Meadow Creek, looking for typical 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!

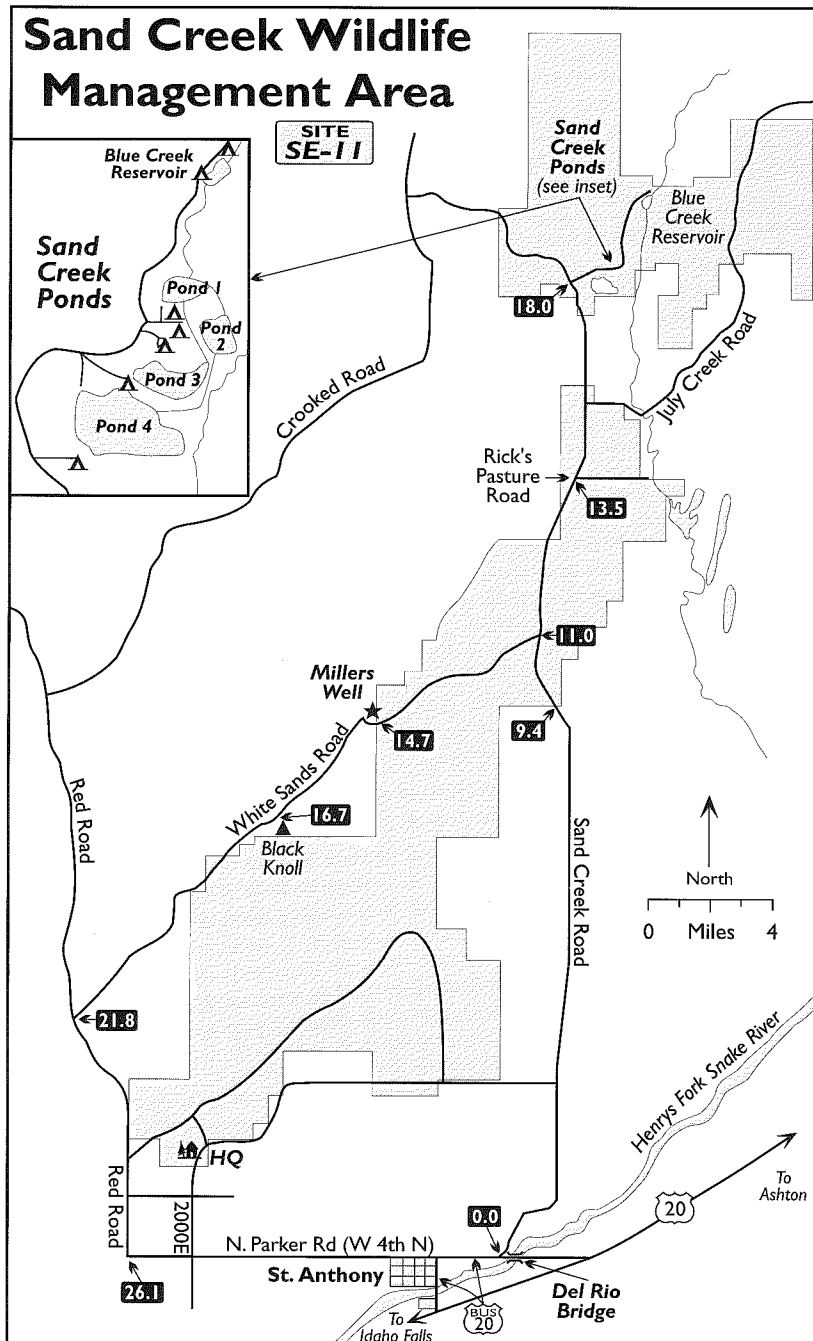
BIRDING:

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 Phoebes, 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



to know that there are cattle-guards along White Sands Road but not along the side roads. Approximately 5.1 miles southwest of Black Knoll, turn left (south) on well-maintained Red Road. After 4.3 miles turn left (east) on North Parker Road and drive 4.5 miles to return to St. Anthony.

RICK'S PASTURE ROAD

Rick's Pasture Road heads east from Sand Creek Road, 13.5 miles north of the Del Rio Bridge. After a mile Rick's Pasture Road forks; stay right and start investigating the Chokecherry habitats for grouse.

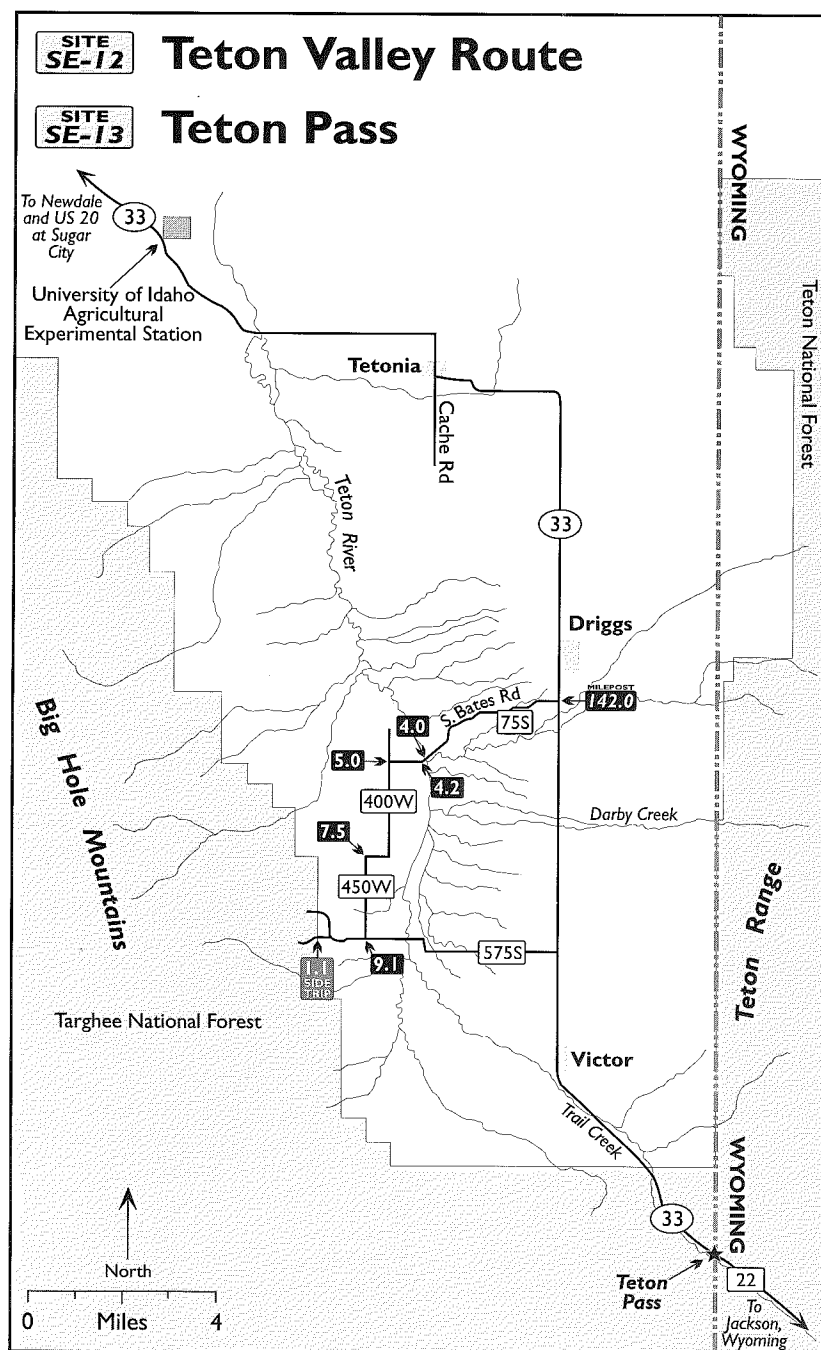
SAND CREEK PONDS

Follow Sand Creek Road 18 miles north from Del Rio Bridge to bird the WMA's northernmost segment, which contains Sand Creek Ponds and most of the bird diversity. A portion of this area may be closed during spring and summer to protect nesting Trumpeter Swans. If the road is open, check the four ponds and Blue Creek Reservoir for Western and Pied-billed Grebes, Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons, various waterfowl, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, Marsh Wrens, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. The road to Blue Creek Reservoir passes by Quaking Aspen clumps containing Swainson's Hawks, Ruffed Grouse, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Warbling Vireos, Yellow Warblers, and Lazuli Buntings.

OTHER:

A brochure and a map are available at WMA headquarters, which is on the southeast corner of the WMA. To get there from St. Anthony, go to the north side of town and turn left (west) on West Fourth North Street (a.k.a. North Parker Road). After 4 miles turn right (north) on 2000 East and follow it 1.5 miles to headquarters. The brochure map is not very detailed, but USGS quadrangle maps can be purchased from the US Geological Survey (800/872-6277). "Black Knoll" map covers White Sands Road.

Much of the WMA is closed to protect wintering big game. Primitive campsites are available at Sand Creek Ponds. For more information, call the WMA (208/624-7065).



TETON VALLEY ROUTE

Author: Susan Patla

Site SE-12 — Map SE-12/SE-13

Highlights: Trumpeter Swan, Sandhill Crane, Common Grackle

Major Habitats: Meadow, Farmland, Mixed Conifer Forest

Location: Teton Co., Driggs

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

Teton Valley is a high-elevation valley known for its spectacular recreation and scenery. Bordered on three sides by the Teton, Snake River, and Big Hole Mountain Ranges, the valley contains a variety of bird habitats. One of Idaho's most impressive birding events occurs here in mid-September, when thousands of Sandhill Cranes congregate by the river before departing for New Mexico. In most years, a large number of wintering Trumpeter Swans can be observed along the 20-mile loop described below.

DIRECTIONS:

Before you leave Driggs, be sure to look for Common Grackles. A few are usually present in residential areas, April to October. To start this route, zero your odometer at Driggs Key Bank and head south on ID 33. At mile 0.7 (milepost 142) turn right (west) onto graveled S. Bates Road (a.k.a. 75 S). Follow S. Bates Road as it winds toward the river, stopping to scan fields, shrubs, and trees. All land along this route is privately owned, unless otherwise noted.

BIRDING:

In spring Swainson's Hawks, Northern Harriers, Long-billed Curlews, Willets, Common Snipe, Short-eared Owls, Sandhill Cranes, and Mountain Bluebirds are often seen in meadows along S. Bates Road. At mile 1.6 listen for Bobolinks. Rough-legged Hawks frequent this stretch of road in winter, as does the occasional Great Horned or Great Gray Owl. Northern Shrikes can often be found foraging from willows or utility wires.

After crossing Teton River (mile 4.0), stay left. A quick stop in spring or summer may yield Cinnamon Teal, Yellow Warblers, and White-crowned Sparrows, while a winter look will likely produce Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes and American Tree Sparrows. At mile 4.2 park in the pull-out on the left (south) and scope the river and marsh for grebes, Tundra and Trumpeter (winter) Swans, various ducks, and Sandhill Cranes (September: spectacular flights at sunrise and sunset).

At mile 5.0 turn left (south) on 400 W. In late summer, migrating Red-tailed, Ferruginous, and Swainson's Hawks, American Kestrels, and an occasional Peregrine Falcon perch on poles and irrigation-rig wheels. Prairie

TETON PASS

Authors: Peder Svingen and Sue Barton

Site SE-13 — Map SE-12/SE-13

Highlights: Clark's Nutcracker, Cassin's Finch

Major Habitat: Mixed Conifer Forest

Location: Teton Co., 6 miles southeast of Victor

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

This is not a major birding area, but it does offer easy access to alpine habitat. Even without birds, stunning wildflowers in late summer and spectacular mountain views makes this a worthwhile stop any time of the year.

DIRECTIONS:

From Victor follow ID 33 southeast 6 miles to the Teton Pass parking area. Park and walk south on the relatively flat graveled road signed "Wildlife Viewing Area." The road ends near a communications station in 0.5 mile. Be aware that ID 33 is subject to periodic closure in winter.

BIRDING:

Teton Pass is good for Clark's Nutcrackers year round. In addition, "winter finches," including Cassin's Finches, Red Crossbills, and Pine Siskins, nest here. Also watch for Red-naped Sapsuckers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Mountain Chickadees, Brown Creepers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Hermit Thrushes, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Western Tanagers, White-crowned Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos. Black-chinned, Calliope, and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds should be looked for around wildflowers. In winter any of the finches are possible, although rosy-finches are unlikely. Calling for Boreal Owls may be worthwhile anytime.

OTHER:

Food, fuel, and lodging are available in Victor, Idaho, or Jackson, Wyoming. There is a private campground in Victor, and a primitive FS campground at Mike Harris Trailhead, 4 miles southeast of Victor. The rugged, 4-mile-long Mike Harris Trail leads to more alpine birding on Oliver Peak (elevation 9,004 feet). Maps and additional information can be obtained from the FS (208/354-2312), just south of Driggs. See also Teton Valley Route, the previous site.

Falcons are seen year round. In winter look for Horned Larks and Snow Buntings along the roadside. Follow the road as it curves right (west) at mile 7.0. At mile 7.5 turn left (south) on paved 450 W. At mile 8.6 you pass a small pond on the right (west) which should be scoped for swans, ducks, and Wilson's Phalaropes (spring).

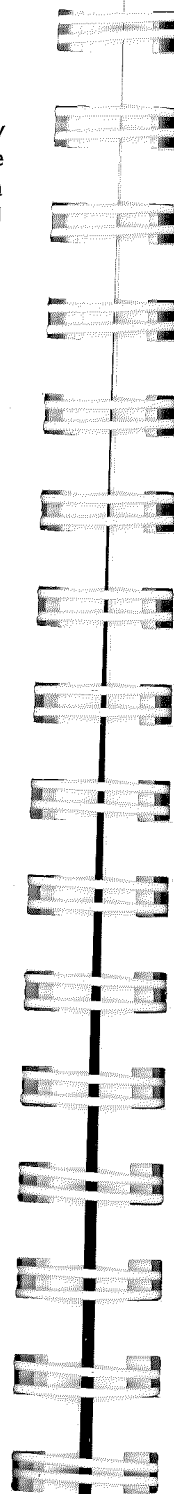
At mile 9.1 turn left (east) on 575 S to return to the river and ID 33 or take a side trip into the hills (see below). Driving back over the river, be alert for Golden and Bald Eagles year round, and for Ospreys in summer. Belted Kingfishers, American Tree Sparrows (winter), and Great Blue Herons are common. Check willow patches and scattered cottonwood groves along the road for other surprises such as summering Red-eyed Vireos or wintering Bohemian Waxwings. Back at ID 33, turn left to return to Driggs or right to reach Victor.

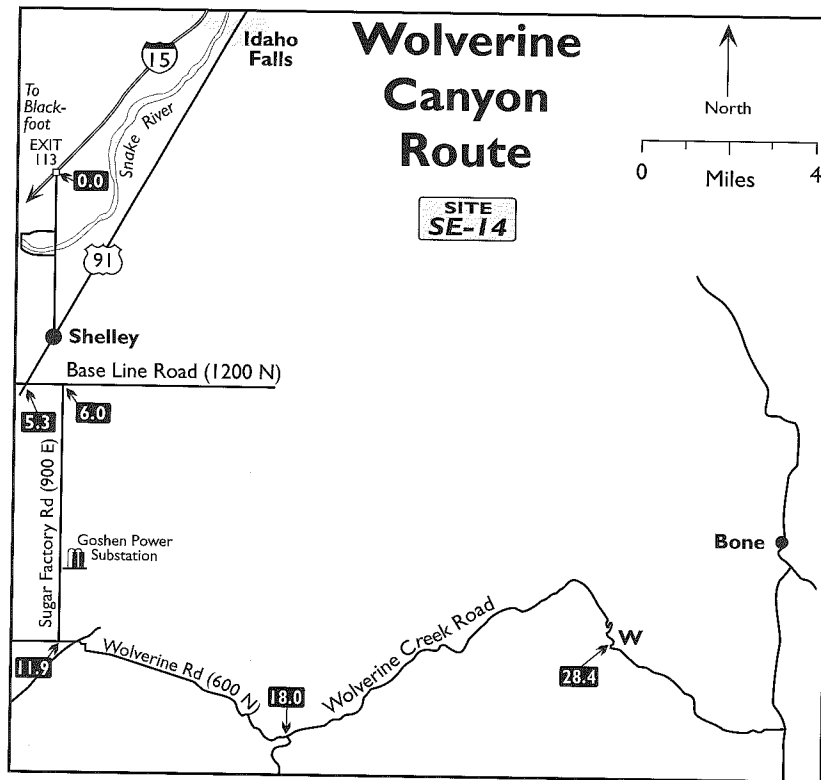
If you want to explore the conifer/Quaking Aspen forest on the west side of the valley, zero your mileage at the junction of 450 W and 575 S and turn right (west) on 575 S. This road soon winds through a maze of small ranchettes...telling the difference between the "main" road and driveways can be tough—at mile 0.3 stay left, at mile 0.6 stay right, at mile 0.7 stay left, and at mile 0.8 stay right! If you don't get lost, you'll reach a cattle-guard marking the start of the Targhee NF (signed) at mile 1.1. From here you can walk along the rutted dirt road, looking for Calliope Hummingbirds, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Olive-sided, Hammond's, and Dusky Flycatchers, Mountain Chickadees, Western Tanagers, MacGillivray's Warblers, and Swainson's Thrushes. Be careful crossing electric or barbed-wire fences.

For additional winter birding, return to Driggs, re-zero your mileage, and follow ID 33 north. At mile 8.3 turn left (south) on Cache Road. Great Gray Owls are often seen in roadside trees by the rodeo grounds, between miles 9.2 and 9.5, but numbers vary year-to-year. *All land here is private.* After returning to ID 33, turn left and continue west. Horned Larks, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches, and Snow Buntings are sometimes seen along the highway, especially near the University of Idaho Experiment Station east of Newdale.

OTHER:

Both Driggs and Victor have accommodations, fuel, and a number of interesting restaurants. The Victor Emporium's huckleberry shakes are of national fame! Area maps and more info can be obtained from the FS (208/354-2312), just south of Driggs. There are several primitive FS campgrounds in the area, as well as a private campground in Victor.





WOLVERINE CANYON ROUTE

Author: Kit Struthers

Site SE-14 — Map SE-14

Highlights: Flammulated Owl, Common Poorwill

Major Habitats: Mixed Conifer Forest, Shrub-steppe

Location: Bingham Co., Shelley

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

Wolverine Canyon is an unexpectedly rugged and beautiful canyon, about a half hour's drive south of Idaho Falls. This 29-mile route follows Wolverine Creek uphill, through willow, sagel/juniper, and cliff habitats and ends in mixed conifer forest on a 7,100-foot summit.

DIRECTIONS:

Zero your mileage at I-15 Exit 113 and drive 4 miles south to Shelley, following "US 91 South" (a.k.a. State Street) through town. At mile 5.3 turn left (east) on Baseline Road (a.k.a. 1200 North). At mile 6.0 turn right (south) on Sugar Factory Road (a.k.a. 900 East). Drive past the Goshen Power Substation to the T intersection at mile 11.9 and turn left (east) on Wolverine Road (a.k.a. 600 N). Bear left at mile 18, staying on Wolverine Road. The entrance to Wolverine Canyon is at mile 20.4. Beyond this point you'll be on a good but narrow graveled road. A spectacular view is found at the top of the "W" (a double switchback near the summit) at mile 28.4. There is ample room to turn around here.

Wolverine Road can be snowy or muddy in spring, and it is closed to automobiles in winter. There is a complex mix of public and private land along this route, but the private stuff is clearly posted.

BIRDING:

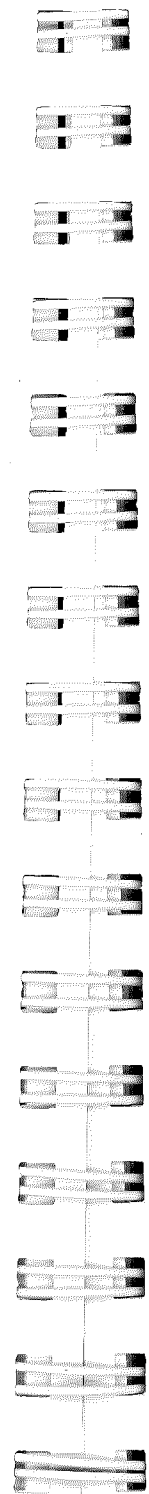
Along the willow-lined stream from mile 17.5 to 21, look for Eastern and Western Kingbirds, Gray Catbirds, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Plumbeous Vireos, Yellow-breasted Chats, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Lazuli Buntings. You may also find Green-tailed Towhees on brushy, rocky slopes, Black-throated Gray and Virginia's Warblers in junipers, and Broad-tailed and Calliope Hummingbirds near flowers.

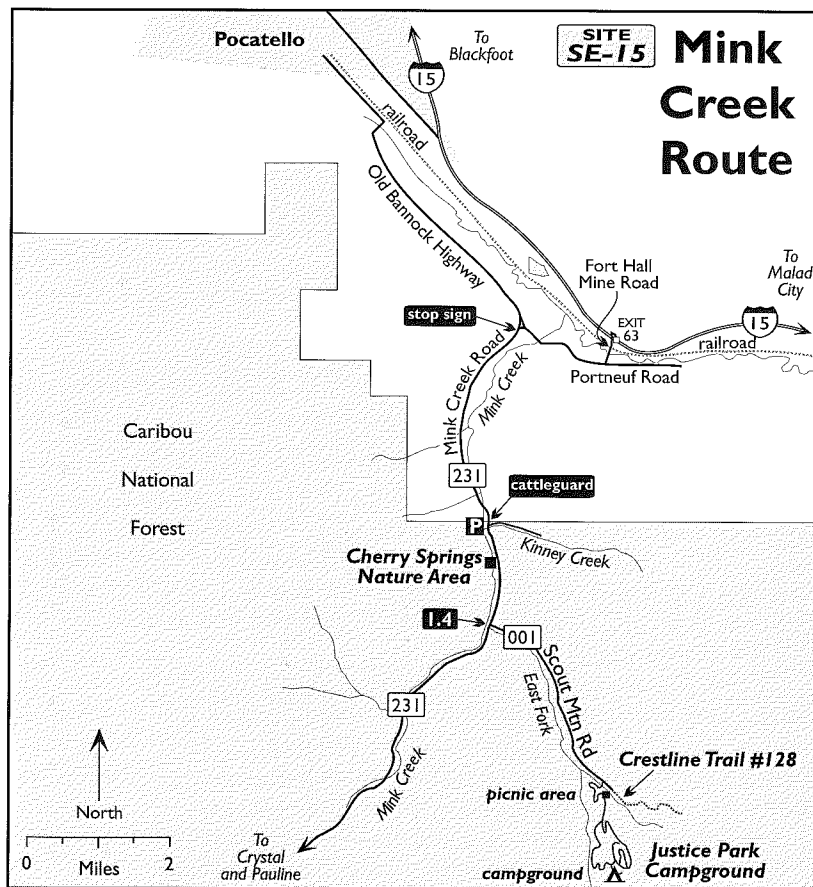
At mile 21 scan cliffs on the left (north) for White-throated Swifts. Prairie Falcons have been seen at about this same spot, and Peregrines should be watched for. An American Dipper pair can usually be found on the rock face above the narrow stream on the right (south) at mile 22.3. Evening Grosbeaks apparently nest at the higher elevations.

Common Poorwills often sit along the road on summer nights, from mile 21 to the summit. Western Screech-Owls, Northern Saw-whet Owls, and Flammulated Owls can be heard on both sides of the summit during June.

OTHER:

Fuel and food are available in Shelley; full services are available in Idaho Falls. Primitive camping is allowed on BLM land. There are rattlesnakes in the lower canyon, but common sense prevents most problems. For a map and more information, contact the BLM (208/524-7500) in Idaho Falls.





MINK CREEK ROUTE

Authors: Chuck Trost, Matt Radford

Site SE-15 — Map SE-15

Highlights: Western Scrub-Jay, Virginia's Warbler, Lesser Goldfinch

Major Habitats: Juniper, Deciduous Forest, Dry Conifer Forest

Location: Bannock Co., 7 miles south of Pocatello

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

A 15-mile drive south of Pocatello will take you from juniper-covered hills at 4,500 feet in elevation to Douglas-fir and Quaking Aspen forest at 7,500 feet. Because of the rapidly changing altitude and southern latitude, this route offers

some of Idaho's best birding. Among the regular breeders is Lesser Goldfinch, one of the state's most local species.

DIRECTIONS:

Mink Creek is south of I-15. To get there from Pocatello, follow I-15 south 5 miles and take Exit 63. Turn right (west) on Old Highway 91 for 0.1 mile, then go left (south) over the railroad tracks for Fort Hall Mine Road for 0.3 mile. Turn right (west) on Portneuf Road for 1.4 miles, and then go left (south) at the stop-sign onto Mink Creek Road. Continue south on Mink Creek Road for 3.2 miles until you come to a cattle-guard marking the entrance to the Caribou NF. Pull into unmarked "Kinney Creek" parking area on the right (west), but park out of the way since this is a school-bus turn-around. Zero your mileage here.

BIRDING:

At the Kinney Creek parking area you can find summering Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, Yellow-breasted Chats, Lesser and American Goldfinches, and Fox Sparrows. Even better birding is available across the road in Kinney Creek Canyon. Follow the old 2-track road through the gate and walk east, entering a rich birding habitat of dense juniper and mountain brush. A variety of species breed here, including Western Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, Virginia's, Black-throated Gray, MacGillivray's, and Orange-crowned Warblers, Green-tailed and Spotted Towhees, and Chipping Sparrow. Calliope Hummingbirds are especially common. Look for Dusky Flycatchers in riparian vegetation and for Gray Flycatchers in junipers. After 0.5 mile you will cross a cattle-guard and enter a grazed area. The habitat opens up as junipers drop out. Old magpie nests in hawthorns may be home to nesting Cooper's Hawks or Long-eared Owls. Ruffed Grouse, Mountain Bluebirds, and Warbling Vireos also nest in this area. As you gain elevation, hawthorns give way to Quaking Aspen groves, with sagebrush and bitterbrush on the hillsides. Watch for Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Black-capped Chickadees, and an occasional Northern Saw-whet Owl.

In winter a surprising variety of birds can be found along Kinney Creek. Look for Western Scrub-Jays, Juniper Titmice, Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees, Brown Creepers, Townsend's Solitaires, American Robins, and Spotted Towhees. There's a magpie roost in hawthorns about a mile up the canyon. When snow is deep, look for Sharp-tailed Grouse and Gray Partridge beyond the grazing exclosures, about three miles up.

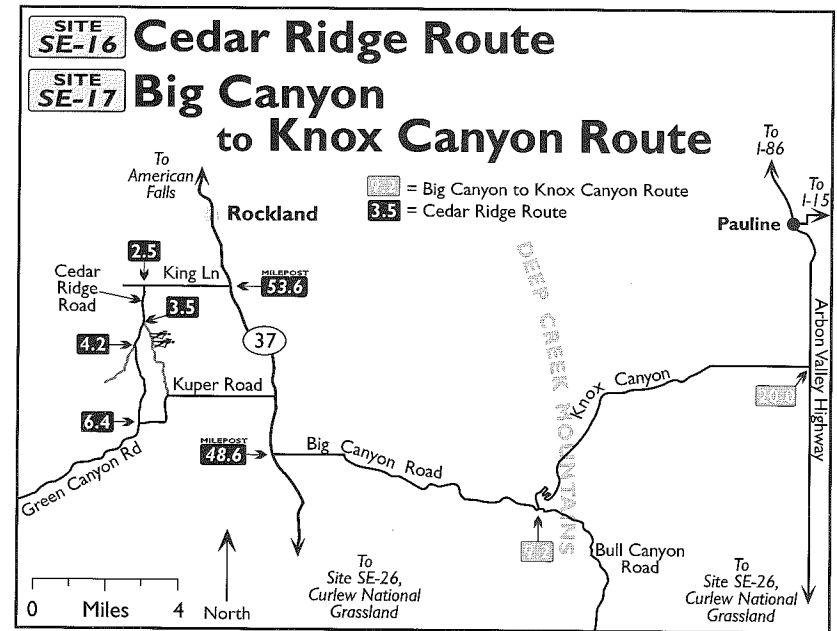
After walking Kinney Canyon, return to Mink Creek Road and continue south. At mile 0.7 is a pull-off on the right (west) for the Cherry Springs Nature Area. This was formerly a FS campground, but campsites (and trails) have long since become overgrown with thick tangles of willows, hawthorns, Red-osier Dogwoods, and other riparian vegetation. This spot is handicapped-accessible, and there is a restroom here. The trail forks at the

entrance, with each side going for about 0.5 mile to a dead end. A total of 104 species have been seen at Cherry Springs, of which at least 55 nest. Local breeders include Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, Western Screech-Owl, Great Horned and Northern Saw-whet Owls, Common Poorwills, Calliope and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, Willow Flycatchers, Rock and House Wrens, Gray Catbirds, Cedar Waxwings, Orange-crowned, Virginia's, Yellow, MacGillivray's, and Black-throated Gray Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chats, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, Green-tailed Towhees, Brewer's, Chipping, Fox, and Song Sparrows, Bullock's Orioles, Cassin's and House Finches, Pine Siskins, and American and Lesser Goldfinches. Several species also winter here, although the area can seem deserted if the wind is blowing. In fall and winter watch for Ruffed Grouse, Golden Eagles, Great Horned Owls, Downy Woodpeckers, American Dippers, Winter Wrens, Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Song Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos.

Back on Mink Creek Road, continue south to mile 1.4, then take paved Scout Mountain Road (a.k.a. FR 001) to the left (east), and follow it uphill. This road is open from May to November and leads 5.5 miles to Justice Park Campground at the base of Scout Mountain. There are many trails that can be birded in this area, including Crestline Motorcycle Trail, which starts in the picnic area. This trail has produced Flammulated Owls, Northern Pygmy-Owls, and several Common Poorwills on summer evenings. Great Horned Owls frequently call in this general area, and even a Great Gray Owl was heard once. Species that can be seen at the picnic area and campground are Ruffed and Blue Grouse, Northern Goshawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, Cordilleran and Hammond's Flycatchers, Common Raven, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Hermit Thrush, Red Crossbill, and Pine Siskin. Lincoln's Sparrows nest at the small marshy area near the campground entrance. Although Scout Mountain Road is closed during winter, snowshoes and cross-country skis can help in finding Northern Goshawks, Sharp-tailed, Blue, and Ruffed Grouse, Steller's Jays, Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Townsend's Solitaires, Northern Shrikes, Red Crossbills, and Pine Siskins.

OTHER:

A checklist, a map, and more information can be obtained from the FS (208/236-7500) in Pocatello. Pocatello is a full-service community.



CEDAR RIDGE ROUTE

Author: Dave Burrup

Site SE-16 — Map SE-16/SE-17

Highlights: Gray Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Major Habitats: Juniper, Farmland

Location: Power Co., 15 miles south of American Falls

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

Spring and summer birding in this corner of the Sublett Mountains can easily produce 50 to 70 bird species. Birding in late summer and fall is less productive. Most of the birds seen will be various sparrows, which are present throughout the fall period. Whenever you visit, access is a bit tricky! You'll need a high-clearance, 4-wheel-drive vehicle to complete the entire 13-mile-long journey. Luckily, the best birding area is relatively easy to access.

DIRECTIONS:

From Rockland follow ID 37 south 2 miles. At milepost 53.6 zero your mileage and turn right (west) onto graveled King Lane. At mile 2.5 turn left (south) on Cedar Ridge Road. Most land along this route is private, but Cedar Ridge itself is an island of public (BLM) land.