

## BLACKFOOT RESERVOIR ROUTE

Authors: Chuck Trost, Eric Lepisto

Site SE-27 — Map SE-27/SE-28

**Highlights:** Clark's and Western Grebes, Black Tern

**Major Habitats:** Wetland, Shrub-steppe, Farmland

**Location:** Caribou Co., 15 miles north of Soda Springs

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

Blackfoot Reservoir is a large (19,000 acres) impoundment on the Blackfoot River. It shares both water and birds with nearby Grays Lake NWR (p. 279). Although Blackfoot Reservoir is ringed by roads, shore access can be difficult except at designated places. This area is best birded as a 60-mile-long loop.

### DIRECTIONS:

From Soda Springs follow ID 34 north 11 miles to milepost 69.6. Turn left (west) on China Cap Road, go 1.5 miles, then turn right (north) on Dike Road (signed for Dike Lake) and follow it 4 miles to the BLM's campground on the southern edge of the reservoir.

### BIRDING:

On the way to the campground watch for Black Terns over the small wetlands. At the campground scan the reservoir for Western and Clark's Grebes, various waterfowl, and Caspian Terns, then backtrack to China Cap Road.

Turn right (west) on China Cap Road for 2.7 miles, then turn right (north) at the T intersection onto Government Dam Road. This road follows the west side of the reservoir about 15 miles to the dam. Any road that takes off to the right (east) will lead you to Blackfoot Reservoir. These side roads can be very muddy.

Approximately 5.1 miles north of the junction of China Cap Road and Government Dam Road, turn right (east) on a dirt trail and follow it 1 mile to Hopkins' (a.k.a. Hokkin's) Landing. (You may want to hike this road, rather than drive it.) From Hopkins Landing, you can see an island nesting colony of American White Pelicans, California and Ring-billed Gulls, and Caspian Terns. Farther out in the reservoir is a series of low islands with colonies of Black-crowned Night-Herons, Great Blue Herons, Snowy Egrets, and Double-crested Cormorants.

Return to Government Dam Road and continue north. After 10.1 miles stay right at the Y intersection and follow the 1.0-mile-long spur road to view the dam. After looking for additional waterbirds, return to Government Dam Road and follow it northeast across the Blackfoot River. About 1.7 miles after crossing the Blackfoot, stay right at the Y intersection, and explore along

unmarked Blackfoot North Access Road as it parallels the reservoir's eastern shoreline for 17 miles. Watch for more waterbirds along this drive, as well as for Sandhill Cranes, Burrowing Owls, Sage Thrashers, and Vesper, Savannah, Lark, and Brewer's Sparrows.

When you reach ID 34, turn right (south) and go 2 miles, passing through Henry, to milepost 76. Either walk or drive the 2-track road to the right (west), which is just before some gravel piles on the left (east) side of ID 34. You'll reach the reservoir in 0.2 mile. Look for shorebirds along the shoreline, especially in summer, when the reservoir is drawn down for irrigation. Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and Long-billed Dowitcher can be common here, and even a vagrant Ruddy Turnstone has shown up.

#### OTHER:

The small store in Henry has a few odds and ends. The BLM campgrounds by Dike Lake have a boat ramp, picnic tables, pit toilets, and water. Other services are available in Soda Springs. For a map and more information, contact the FS (208/547-4356) in Soda Springs, or BLM (208/236-6860) in Pocatello.

## ALEXANDER RESERVOIR

*Authors: Chuck Trost, Eric Lepisto*

**Site SE-28 — Map SE-27/SE-28**

**Highlights:** Western Grebe, Forster's Tern

**Major Habitat:** Wetland

**Location:** Caribou Co., Soda Springs

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

*A dam on the meandering Bear River has created 1,200-acre Alexander Reservoir at the outskirts of Soda Springs. This shallow wetland attracts a variety of waterbirds, particularly waterfowl. It also supports incredible numbers of carp!*

#### DIRECTIONS:

Alexander Reservoir is along ID 34, on the west side of Soda Springs. There are viewpoints all along the northern shore. There is especially good birding at Soda Point Picnic Area and at Betty's Cafe, at ID 34 mileposts 402.4 and 404, respectively.

To explore the dam area, turn south at milepost 399.9 onto Soda Point Power Plant Road and follow it 0.6 mile.

The reservoir's south side is accessed by going into Soda Springs and turning south on West 3rd Street, at ID 34 milepost 404.6. Drive past Caribou County Hospital, then turn right (west) on 4th South Street and cross the Bear River. You can follow this road along the south shore for 3.5 miles

until it dead-ends at a turn-around. *Out-of-date maps show a bridge across the reservoir at this point; don't believe it.*

#### BIRDING:

Common Loons can be seen on the reservoir in April and early May, as can a variety of duck species. Western Grebes and Forster's Terns are fairly common in summer. Look for American White Pelicans loafing at the reservoir's west end. Shorebirds, such as Marbled Godwits and American Avocets, are most often seen near the east end.

In winter the reservoir usually ices up. If the lake's inlet and outlet are still unfrozen, look for Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes, Common Mergansers, and Bald Eagles.

#### OTHER:

Soda Springs offers food, fuel, and lodging. There are several FS campgrounds within 15 miles of town. For maps and information, contact the FS (208/547-4356) in Soda Springs.

## GRAYS LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

*Author: Dan Svingen*

**Site SE-29 — Map SE-29**

**Highlights:** Trumpeter Swan, Sandhill Crane

**Major Habitats:** Wetland, Meadow

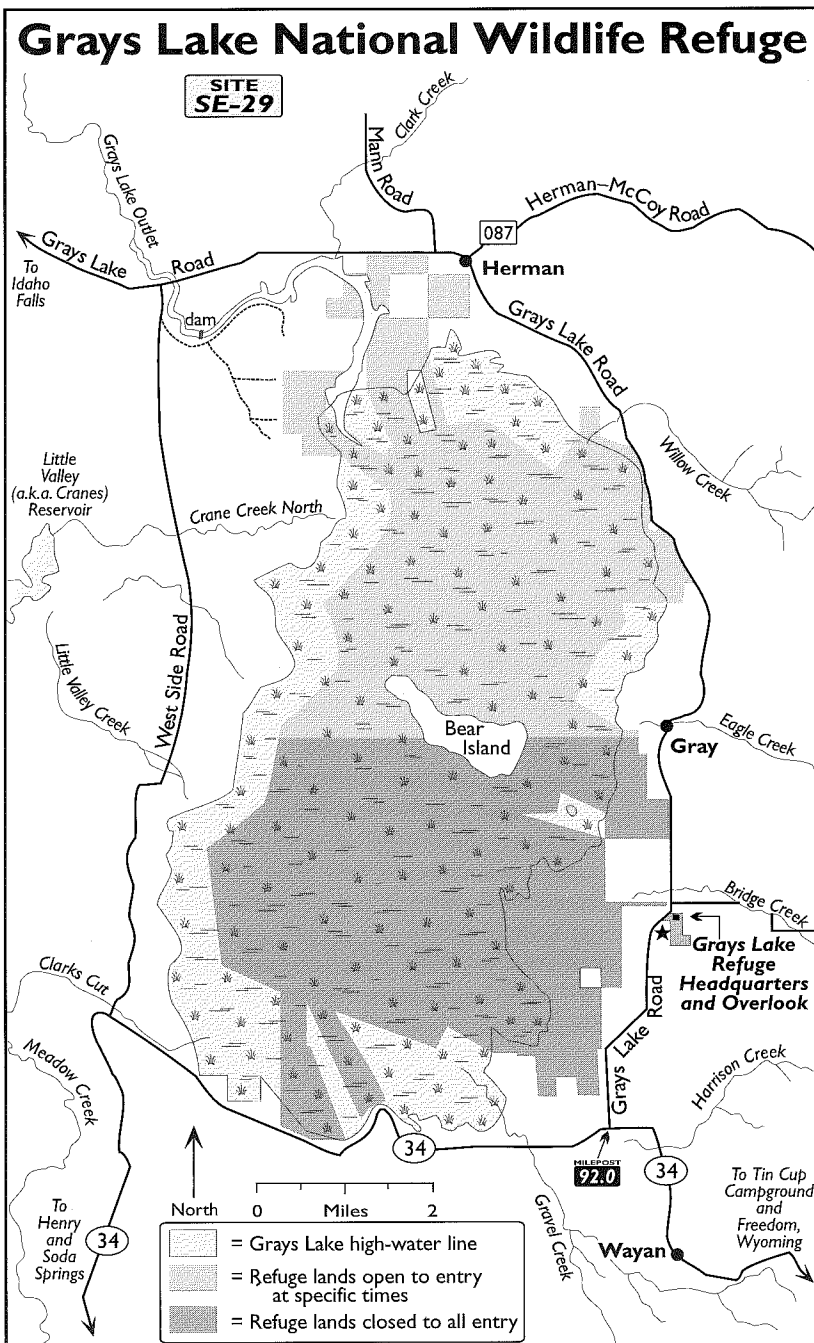
**Location:** Bonneville Co., 27 miles north of Soda Springs

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

*Grays Lake NWR encompasses about 18,300 acres of bulrush/cattail marsh and wet meadow. Because of the large nesting population of (Greater) Sandhill Crane, Grays Lake was chosen for an unique experiment. Beginning in the mid-1970s, Whooping Crane eggs were placed in Sandhill Crane nests on the refuge. The resulting Whooper chicks were then raised by their foster parents. It was hoped that this experiment would result in a second breeding population of Whoopers, but it was not to be. With luck you may still see a Whooping Crane or two on the refuge.*

#### DIRECTIONS:

From Soda Springs follow ID 34 north 33 miles. At milepost 92 turn left (north) onto Grays Lake Road and follow it 3 miles to refuge headquarters on the right (east). Stop here to pick up a bird checklist and a map.



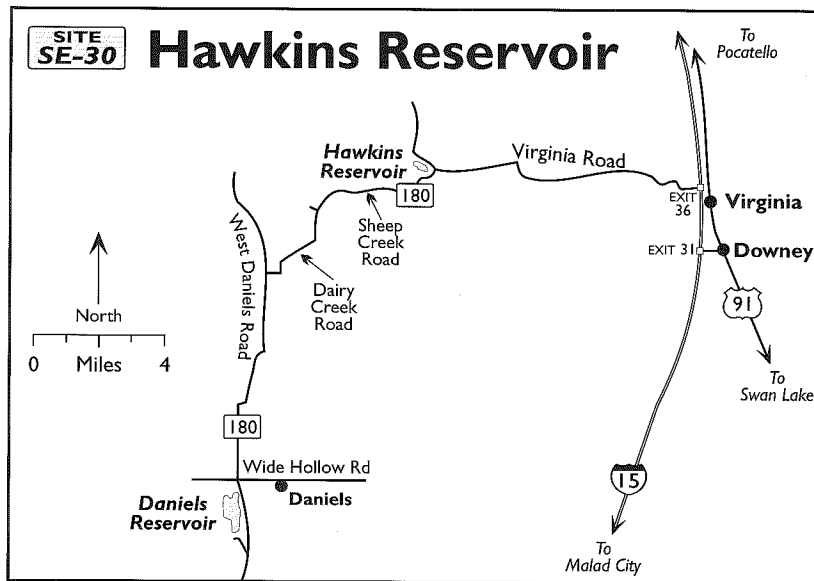
**BIRDING:**

Grays Lake provides great bird habitat but poor birding. From April 1 to October 9 there is no access into the refuge. Birders are then restricted to driving the loop road and using a scope to get distant views of Eared Grebes, American Bitterns, White-faced Ibis, Trumpeter Swans, Cinnamon Teal, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Virginia Rails, Soras, Sandhill Cranes, American Avocets, Willets, Long-billed Curlews, Wilson's Phalaropes, Franklin's Gulls, Forster's and Black Terns, and Short-eared Owls. Many of these species can be seen at closer range in the private meadows that border the loop road. The road gets close to marsh habitat along the south, northeast, and north portions of the loop. An overlook just south of headquarters provides an additional scoping location; look for nesting White-crowned Sparrows in the draw next to the overlook.

Part of the refuge is open to foot exploration from October 10 to March 31, but the area is usually snow-bound from November through April. Portions of the loop road may be impassable in winter. Fall and winter birdlife is greatly affected by open-water availability. Species to look for include various waterfowl, Northern Goshawk, Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks, Sage Grouse, Horned Lark, American Crow, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, and Dark-eyed Junco.

**OTHER:**

You may be able to get fuel and a few supplies at Henry. Other services are available in Soda Springs. Several FS campgrounds are available in the area. If you stay at Tin Cup Campground, listen for American Redstart. (But watch out for the mosquitoes!) For more information contact the refuge (208/574-2755) or the FS (208/547-4356) in Soda Springs.



## HAWKINS RESERVOIR

Authors: Chuck Trost, Eric Lepisto

Site SE-30 — Map SE-30

**Highlights:** Sharp-tailed Grouse, Pinyon Jay

**Major Habitats:** Juniper, Wetland, Farmland

**Location:** Bannock Co., 9 miles west of Virginia

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

*Fifteen-acre Hawkins Reservoir is a popular fishing and boating area amid scenic mountain views. The BLM has made special efforts to make this area easily accessible for recreationists.*

### DIRECTIONS:

From I-15 Exit 36 follow Virginia Road west 8.5 miles to Hawkins Reservoir. Watch for Willet and Sandhill Crane along the way. After mile 7.0 most of the land along this route is public (BLM).

### BIRDING:

Hawkins Reservoir is surrounded by agricultural fields and rolling juniper hills. In the farmlands look for Northern Harrier and Swainson's and Red-tailed Hawks. The junipers are home to Pinyon Jays, Juniper Titmice, Mountain Bluebirds, and Chipping Sparrows.

The west end of Hawkins Reservoir is shallow and marshy, offering habitat for Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and waterfowl. During late summer and early fall, the reservoir is lowered for irrigation, exposing mudflats for shorebirds. Western, Baird's, and Least Sandpipers are regular, and Long-billed Dowitchers and Lesser Yellowlegs are frequently present. Dunlins and Sanderlings should be looked for, September to November.

To continue birding, take graveled Sheep Creek Road (a.k.a. FR 180, a.k.a. Dairy Creek Road) southwest from the south side of Hawkins Reservoir for 7.4 miles. At the junction with West Daniels Road, turn left (south) and go 8 miles to Daniels Reservoir. Be aware that Sheep Creek Road is often impassable during winter.

The route to Daniels Reservoir passes through high-elevation agricultural fields. There are several Sharp-tailed Grouse leks in this area, which are best viewed in April and early May. One lek is next to a deserted farmstead (private) on the east side of Sheep Creek Road, just after you crest the hill above Hawkins Reservoir. Another potential site is in a winter-wheat field (private) on the southeast side of Wide Hollow Road (a.k.a. 10200 West, a.k.a. White Hollow Road), about a half mile north of Daniels Reservoir. Other leks have been seen in fields between Hawkins and Daniels Reservoirs, but they seem to change location year to year.

Daniels Reservoir has a small Great Blue Heron colony in dead trees at the upper end. Search the nests carefully, and you may also find Ospreys and Great Horned Owls. Say's Phoebe's can be found at several deserted homesteads south of Daniels Reservoir.

### OTHER:

There are a boat ramp, picnic shelters, and restrooms at Hawkins Reservoir. Pocatello is the closest full-service community. Fuel, food, and motels are available in Malad City. For a map and more information, contact the BLM (208/766-4766) in Malad City.

## OXFORD SLOUGH AREA

Authors: Chuck Trost, Eric Lepisto

Site SE-31 — Map SE-31

**Highlights:** Snowy and Cattle Egrets, White-faced Ibis

**Major Habitats:** Wetland, Farmland, Meadow

**Location:** Franklin Co., 11 miles northwest of Preston

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

There are three great birding spots in this area: Swan Lake, Oxford Slough, and Twin Lakes. Each offers something different. Swan Lake is a spectacular, shallow, 30-acre wetland which provides close views of waterfowl and wading birds. Oxford Slough is a huge, inaccessible marsh that supports Franklin's Gull and White-faced Ibis colonies. Twin Lakes is a large, deep reservoir used by migrant loons and grebes.

### DIRECTIONS:

All three birding sites are within a few miles of US 91 between Swanlake and Preston; all can be easily birded in a loop. To access this area from I-15, take Exit 36 and head south on US 91 through Downey. At milepost 39.1 look on the right (west) side of the highway for Burrowing Owl in a small, bare area surrounded by grass. At milepost 30 watch for nesting Golden Eagles, White-throated Swifts, and Violet-green Swallows on the cliffs of Red Rocks Pass. (This is where the famous "Bonneville Flood" began 15,000 years ago, inundating the Snake River Plain with 380 cubic miles of water!) In the tiny town of Swanlake zero your mileage and continue south.

### BIRDING:

At mile 1.5 park in the pull-out on the right (west), overlooking Swan Lake (private). From March to April Swan Lake teems with a fantastic concentration of migrant Tundra Swans and Northern Pintails. This wetland is also good for nesting Soras, Virginia

Rails, and Marsh Wrens. Watch for nesting Sandhill Cranes throughout the area, and for flying herons and White-faced Ibises.

Continue south on US 91. At mile 3.0, angle right (south) on Coulam Road (a.k.a. 4000 West). Coulam Road passes through seasonally-flooded agricultural lands and alkaline flats that can harbor tremendous numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds. In spring look for thousands of Northern Pintails and Mallards, with good numbers of Northern Shovelers and both Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teals. Shorebirds include breeding American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, and Long-billed Curlews. In migration thousands of Wilson's Phalaropes have been present.

At the T intersection at mile 6.5, turn right (west) on paved 7200 North. At mile 7.0 curve left (south) on graveled 4200 West. At mile 8.8 turn left (east) and follow the Sportsman Access signs up a ramp road to Twin Lakes Reservoir.

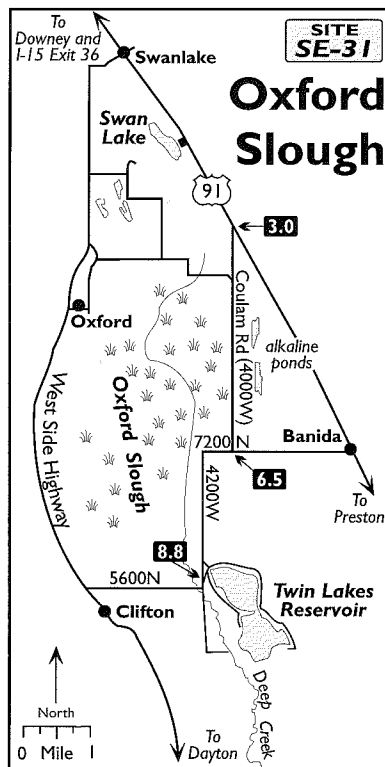
Twin Lakes is open to the public and is very popular with boaters, campers, and anglers, so plan your birding excursions to avoid summer weekends. There are graveled access roads around most of the two connected lakes, with the exception of the south side of the southern lake. The lakes are surrounded by tall cottonwoods, with sagebrush hillsides above them. It is possible to ride a mountain bike completely around the lakes in about an hour, or to bird most of the area from your car. Look for dancing Western and Clark's Grebes in spring. Eared and Pied-billed Grebes are also common. In April Common Loons stage at Twin Lakes, with as many as 125 having been seen in a single day.

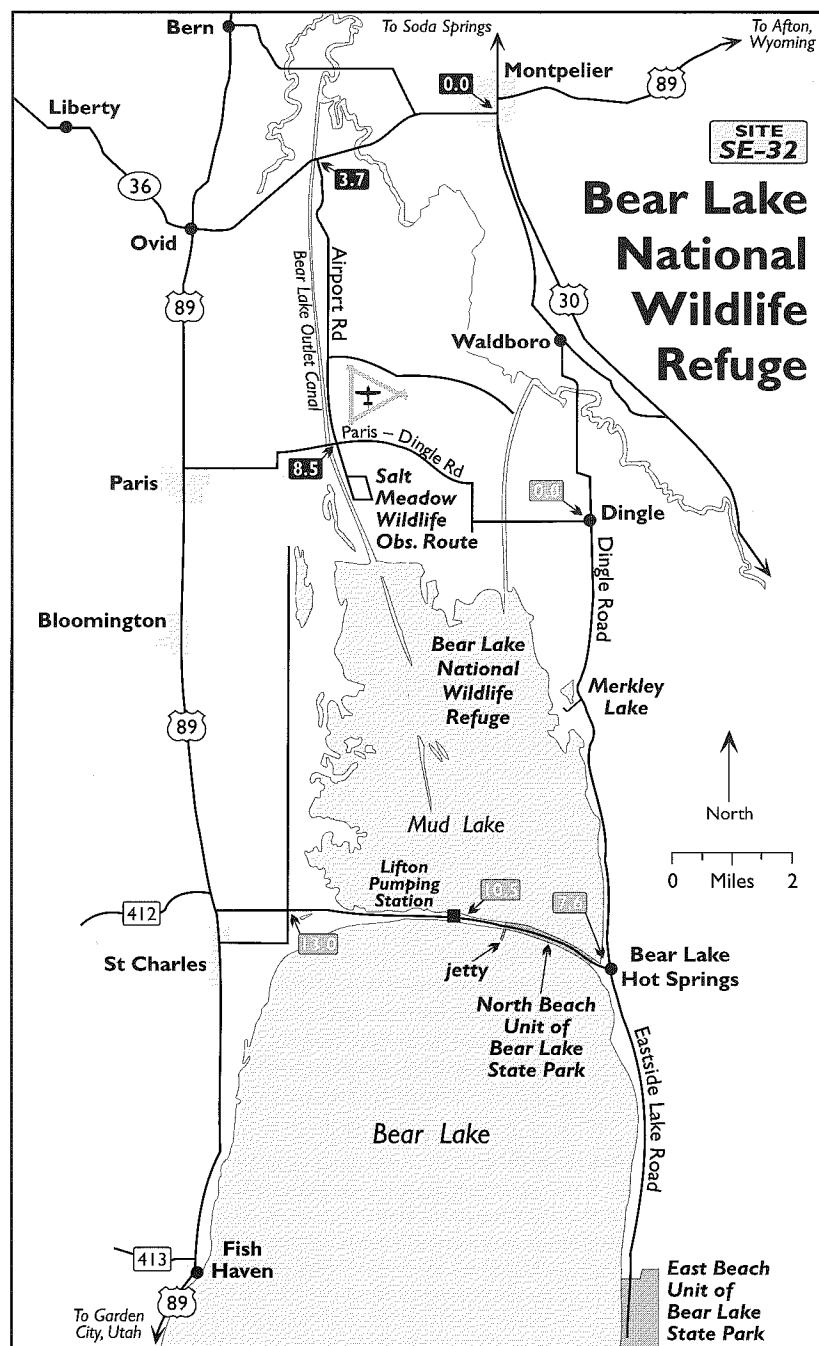
After exploring Twin Lakes, backtrack to 4200 West and turn left (south) for 0.2 mile, then turn right (west) on 5600 N, crossing the railroad tracks. You'll reach West Side Highway in 1.8 miles, where you should turn right (north) and drive 4.2 miles to Oxford. In Oxford, turn right (east) on North Street for 0.2 mile, then left (north) on Harkness Street. After 0.5 mile turn right (east), and follow the road 2.8 miles back to Coulam Road, completing the loop. Watch for Short-eared Owls and Grasshopper Sparrows in this area, as well as Sandhill Cranes.

There are White-faced Ibis and Franklin's Gull colonies in the reeds throughout Oxford Slough. A good number of Black-crowned Night-Herons, Great Blue Herons, and Snowy Egrets nest here, too, while a small colony of Cattle Egrets is mixed in with the Snowies. Black Terns nest at the north end. Waterfowl (especially Redheads) are abundant. The northern portion of Oxford Slough is managed as a Waterfowl Production Area and is open to hiking year round. (Watch for the green-and-white boundary signs.) The remainder of the area is private.

### OTHER:

There is a general store in Swanlake with camping and cooking supplies. Additional services are available in Preston. For more information contact the Pocatello offices of the USFWS (208/237-6615) or the IDFG (208/232-4703).





## BEAR LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Authors: Peder Svingen, Sue Barton

Site SE-32 — Map SE-32

**Highlights:** White-faced Ibis, Franklin's Gull, Black Tern

**Major Habitats:** Wetland, Meadow

**Location:** Bear Lake Co., 12 miles southwest of Montpelier

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

This 18,000-acre refuge is a bird photographer's delight! Waders, waterfowl, and shorebirds can be closely studied right from your car. The 2.5-mile-long Salt Meadow Wildlife Observation Route is particularly productive, especially for some of the 5,000 White-faced Ibises and 13,000 Franklin's Gulls which nest here.

### DIRECTIONS:

Zero your mileage at the junction of US 89 and US 30 in Montpelier and head west on US 89. Stop at refuge headquarters along US 89 before leaving town and get a map, a checklist, and information on current travel restrictions. At mile 3.7 turn left (south) onto Airport Road at the refuge sign. Continue straight (south) at the airport turn-off. You'll enter the refuge at mile 8.5.

### BIRDING:

Watch flooded meadows and pastures along Airport Road for Snowy and Cattle Egrets, White-faced Ibises, Cinnamon Teal, Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, and Willets. Check out the scattered willow clumps for migrating passerines.

Airport Road intersects Paris-Dingle Road at the refuge's north boundary. Continue south, following Bear Lake Outlet Canal, watching for Double-crested Cormorants and swallows. The marsh on the left (east) should garner most of your attention. The first half-mile is good for American Bitterns, Virginia Rails, Soras, and Short-eared Owls. The habitat also looks promising for vagrant Yellow Rails.

At mile 10 the road splits; bear left and look for Clark's Grebes. Continue on to the well-marked Salt Meadow Unit's Wildlife Observation Route. Eared Grebes, egrets, White-faced Ibises, Short-eared Owls, and a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds may be seen at close range. Forster's and Black Terns are common, and Marsh Wrens are abundant.

When you've completed the Observation Route, return to Paris-Dingle Road, and turn right (east) toward Dingle. Willow thickets and pastures along this road can afford good birding during passerine migration.

In Dingle re-zero your mileage and head south on Dingle Road (a.k.a. Merkley Lake Road). At mile 4.4, begin listening for Sage Thrasher and

Brewer's and Sage Sparrows on the left (east) side of the road. Watch the cliffs for Turkey Vultures, Golden Eagles, and Peregrine and Prairie Falcons. At mile 7.6 turn right (west) toward the North Beach Unit of Bear Lake SP. The park's entrance station is at mile 8. The road follows Bear Lake's north shore for several miles. Scan this popular beach for shorebirds, gulls, and terns. This is one of the best local spots for Caspian Terns. If you have a scope, scan Mud Lake on the right (north) side of the road for grebes, American White Pelicans, shorebirds, and terns. Beyond the jetty at mile 9.6 the beach is private property. At mile 10.5 is the Lifton Pumping Station. The small residential area looks good as a migrant trap. You'll reach the intersection with Power Line Road and the end of this route at mile 13.

For additional birding, try the East Beach Unit of Bear Lake SP (see map). Although little is known of the birdlife there, residential areas along Eastside Lake Road on the way to the park look promising for vagrant Purple Martins, while the beach may attract a lost Snowy Plover.

#### OTHER:

Camping is available at the East Beach Unit of Bear Lake SP (water, pit toilets, no showers), and the Montpelier KOA Campground. Fuel, food, and accommodations are available in Montpelier. For more information contact refuge headquarters (208/847-1757).

## MULTI-PURPOSE CHECKLIST

The following Multi-purpose Checklist of Idaho birds should assist the visiting and resident birder in determining the seasonal abundance of our birds state-wide and by the four regions as defined in this book. It is an adaptation of the list developed by the Idaho Bird Records Committee. Not only can you quickly determine the status of these species, but you can also check off the species using the boxes available.

The symbols in this checklist are the following:

#### Season:

- R — Resident
- M — Migrant
- W — Winter
- S — Summer

#### Other:

- B — Breeder
- b — Circumstantial evidence of breeding
- End — Threatened or endangered
- Int — Introduced
- \* — Please report and document sightings

#### Abundance:

- 1 — Abundant, easily found
- 2 — Common, but sometimes difficult to find
- 3 — Uncommon or local
- 4 — Rare or local
- 5 — Casual, 3-10 accepted records
- 6 — Accidental, 1-2 accepted records
- 7 — Experimental

	BREEDING	Statewide	Panhandle	Central	Southwest	Southeast
<input type="checkbox"/> Red-throated Loon		M4				
<input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Loon		M4				
<input type="checkbox"/> Common Loon	b	S3 M2 W4				
<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-billed Loon *			M5			M5
<input type="checkbox"/> Pied-billed Grebe	B	S1 W3				
<input type="checkbox"/> Horned Grebe	b	MW3			S4	S4
<input type="checkbox"/> Red-necked Grebe	B		R3		S4	S4
<input type="checkbox"/> Eared Grebe	B	W4	M4	M3	S2	S2
<input type="checkbox"/> Western Grebe	B	S1	W3		W3	W3
<input type="checkbox"/> Clark's Grebe	B		S4	S4	S2 W6	S2
<input type="checkbox"/> American White Pelican	B		S4	S4	S1 W5	S1 W5