WEST YELLOWSTONE BIRDING TRAIL

You are invited to enjoy the awesome scenery and natural diversity of the West Yellowstone area and the Hebgen Lake Basin. Settling between 6,000 and 7,000 feet elevation, the area provides a stunning array of habitats for birding and watching many other forms of wildlife, such as elk, moose, deer, and beavers.

Springtime brings bird migrants—who can forget the raucous call of sandhill cranes flying overhead? Many species of ducks pass through the area, resting and feeding en route to nesting grounds further north. Summer days provide long hours of bird-watching enjoyment along the clear Madison River, the shores of Hebgen and Henry’s Lakes, the aspen groves with their own special birds, and sagebrush hills and flats that are home to many kinds of birds. Geese, bald eagles, and pelicans are common on the waterways. Fall brings bird migrants from the north amid golden-colored aspen and the bugle of not-so-distant elk. Ducks often collect in large rafts along the lakeshores, feeding before flying further south. Haunting calls of loons punctuate the air. Winter brings a soft whiteness as snow covers the landscape and frost covers the trees. Wintering trumpeter swans congregate and sound their distinctive call. Bald eagles frequent the snags along the open waters of the Madison River.

The birding trail guides you from the community of West Yellowstone, around the north shores of Hebgen Lake and Earthquake Lake, across the 8,386 foot elevation of Raymond’s Pass, along the edge of Henry’s Lake to the 7,072 foot Tanghee Pass, across the South Fork of the Madison River, and back to West Yellowstone. Allow a full day to enjoy the 50 mile route, which has many stops along the way where you can walk along a trail or enjoy a vista. Several side trips from the main route are also described and can easily fill a second or third day of exploring.

We hope you will enjoy the vast diversity of the terrain and scenery along the West Yellowstone Birding Trail. During the Spring you can expect to see 50 or 60 different species of birds in a day—a persistent observer may see more. So, grab your binoculars and discover the birds of this unique high country of aspen groves, lakeshores, sagebrush, and riparian area.

BIRDING TRAIL ETHICS

Be a respectful and responsible birder. Although many people try to observe birds and other wildlife as unobtrusively as possible, we need to always be aware that our presence may disturb and disrupt their normal activities. There are many things we can do to respect these animals to assure their survival:

- To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, and sound recording or filming.
- Keep your distance and observe with binoculars and spotting scopes. This is especially important during nesting season. Stay away from nesting sites, feeding areas, and roost sites.
- Nesting birds of all species are easily disturbed. If an adult on a nest flies off when you approach or circle you or your car or vehicle, you are too close to the nest. Unattended nestlings readily succumb to predation or exposure to heat, cold, and wet weather.
- Disturbing or harassing federally threatened or endangered species such as the bald eagle is illegal.
- Good birding areas often attract other wildlife. Maintain a safe distance from large mammals: 300 feet from bears and 75 feet from other large animals. Do not get between a female and her young.
- Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist and respect private property.

All sites listed in the West Yellowstone Birding Trail are public land. However, several are adjacent to private land, which should be respected. Stay on established roads and trails.

SAFETY IN BEAR COUNTRY

In addition to a wide variety of birds that frequent wild country, you may also expect to encounter numerous other forms of wildlife, such as moose, elk, deer, wolves, and both grizzly and black bear. That is part of what makes the area so special. Should you be fortunate enough to see a bear, there are a few things you can do to make the encounter a safe and pleasant one.

- If you are not sure whether it is a grizzly or black bear, remember that the grizzly is usually the more aggressive so treat it as if it were a grizzly.
- Has the bear noticed you? Is it occupied with eating or observing something else? If so, back up and leave quietly.
- Has the bear noticed you? Has it stood up on its hind legs? The bear will try to determine what you are. Stay alert, and talk in a firm voice so it can hear you.
- Let the bear react. Avoid any threatening actions such as quick movement or excited shouts.

- If the bear starts to bound on its front feet, it is trying to scare you and may " bluff charge ".
- If the bear moves toward you with its head down and gaining speed, you know it is charging. Often a charging bear will run past a person, especially if there is a route to escape. If the bear knocks you down, stay down until you are sure it has left the area.
- Remember, do NOT run. This will elicit a " chase " response because the bear will think you are prey running away.
- Travel in groups. Bears are not known to attack a group of 4 or more.
- Carry bear pepper spray as a safety precaution and know how to use it.
1 BAKER'S HOLE CAMPING

Directions: Take I-95 to Exit 137. Take New Blackstone Rd south 1.5 miles then left onto Route 119. In 1.5 miles turn right onto Route 33. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 124. In 1 mile turn left onto Route 136. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 151. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 213. In 0.5 miles turn right onto Route 161. In 1 mile take the second right onto Route 171. Arrive on the left at the boat launch.

General Information: This boat launch is a great launch for those with boats and trailers. The boat launch is open year-round. There are some very nice campsites available around the launch. Some of the campsites have electrical hookups and water. The parking lot has a large, paved area.

2 FMR RIDGE

Directions: Take I-95 to Exit 137. Take New Blackstone Rd south 1.5 miles then left onto Route 119. In 1.5 miles turn right onto Route 33. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 124. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 151. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 161. In 0.5 miles turn right onto Route 171. Arrive on the left at the boat launch.

General Information: This boat launch is a great launch for those with boats and trailers. The boat launch is open year-round. There are some very nice campsites available around the launch. Some of the campsites have electrical hookups and water. The parking lot has a large, paved area.

3 VENICE IN A BEECH CREEK CAMPING

Directions: Take I-95 to Exit 137. Take New Blackstone Rd south 1.5 miles then left onto Route 119. In 1.5 miles turn right onto Route 33. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 124. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 151. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 161. In 0.5 miles turn right onto Route 171. Arrive on the left at the boat launch.

General Information: This boat launch is a great launch for those with boats and trailers. The boat launch is open year-round. There are some very nice campsites available around the launch. Some of the campsites have electrical hookups and water. The parking lot has a large, paved area.

4 BRICKSTONE CREEK CAMPGROUND

Directions: Take I-95 to Exit 137. Take New Blackstone Rd south 1.5 miles then left onto Route 119. In 1.5 miles turn right onto Route 33. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 124. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 151. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 161. In 0.5 miles turn right onto Route 171. Arrive on the left at the boat launch.

General Information: This boat launch is a great launch for those with boats and trailers. The boat launch is open year-round. There are some very nice campsites available around the launch. Some of the campsites have electrical hookups and water. The parking lot has a large, paved area.

5 WHITES LAKE ROAD (FR 971)

Directions: Take I-95 to Exit 137. Take New Blackstone Rd south 1.5 miles then left onto Route 119. In 1.5 miles turn right onto Route 33. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 124. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 151. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 161. In 0.5 miles turn right onto Route 171. Arrive on the left at the boat launch.

General Information: This boat launch is a great launch for those with boats and trailers. The boat launch is open year-round. There are some very nice campsites available around the launch. Some of the campsites have electrical hookups and water. The parking lot has a large, paved area.

6 BAYVIEW CREEK VIEWING SITE

Directions: Take I-95 to Exit 137. Take New Blackstone Rd south 1.5 miles then left onto Route 119. In 1.5 miles turn right onto Route 33. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 124. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 151. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 161. In 0.5 miles turn right onto Route 171. Arrive on the left at the boat launch.

General Information: This boat launch is a great launch for those with boats and trailers. The boat launch is open year-round. There are some very nice campsites available around the launch. Some of the campsites have electrical hookups and water. The parking lot has a large, paved area.

7 BILL FARM CREEK ROAD (FR 187)

Directions: Take I-95 to Exit 137. Take New Blackstone Rd south 1.5 miles then left onto Route 119. In 1.5 miles turn right onto Route 33. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 124. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 151. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Route 161. In 0.5 miles turn right onto Route 171. Arrive on the left at the boat launch.

General Information: This boat launch is a great launch for those with boats and trailers. The boat launch is open year-round. There are some very nice campsites available around the launch. Some of the campsites have electrical hookups and water. The parking lot has a large, paved area.