

NORTHEASTERN
COLORADO
TRAIL GUIDE



Meet the Partners

Audubon Colorado

Audubon Colorado exists to inspire and work with people to conserve, restore and enjoy natural habitats in our state. We focus on birds and other wildlife through education, research, careful use of our resources, and by serving as strong voices for the natural world.
co.audubon.org



Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Our Mission is to perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state parks system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources.
cpw.state.co.us



Colorado Field Ornithologists

CFO is a non-profit statewide organization open to anyone interested in birds, including recreational birders and professional ornithologists. The diversity of our members' interests creates a dynamic organization and offers learning opportunities for all.
www.cfo-link.org

Great Outdoors Colorado

Known as GOCO to its friends, this board provides Colorado Lottery funds for worthwhile projects statewide. Without the GOCO funds allocated for the printing of this Colorado Birding Trail Guide, the project could not have been completed. Show your support for wildlife by playing the Colorado Lottery!
www.goco.org



National Park Service

The National Park Service preserves the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations. Colorado features 12 unique NPS sites.
www.nps.gov



Additional Credits:

Nathan Pieplow and Andrew Spencer for all their bard work, Mary McCormac, Donna Forrest, Jennifer Churchill, Jennifer Standlee, Krysta LeCavalier, Tom Kroening, Jeff Thompson, Rebecca Ferrell, and Dan Zimmerer from Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Glenn Giroir for additional photography, and the friendly people of Colorado who have embraced and implemented the Colorado Birding Trail vision for healthy wildlife resources and vigorous economies in their communities.



Playa Lakes Joint Venture

The Playa Lakes Joint Venture's (PLJV) mission is to conserve playa lakes, other wetlands and associated landscapes through partnerships for the benefit of birds, other wildlife and people.
www.pljv.org



Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Our mission is to conserve birds and their habitats from the Rockies to the Great Plains, Mexico and beyond through an integrated approach of science, education and land stewardship.
www.birdconservancy.org



USDA Forest Service

Our mission is to lead in the conservation and wise use of the nation's forests and grasslands. We provide outdoor enthusiasts with amazing opportunities on 11 National Forests and 2 National Grasslands in Colorado.
www.fs.fed.us



CryBaby Design

CryBaby Design is a design studio specializing in web design & development, branding and print design for clients ranging from non-profit organizations to the Fortune 500. A great deal of their work focuses on conservation, ecology, wildlife and organic/natural lifestyle industries.
www.crybabydesign.com



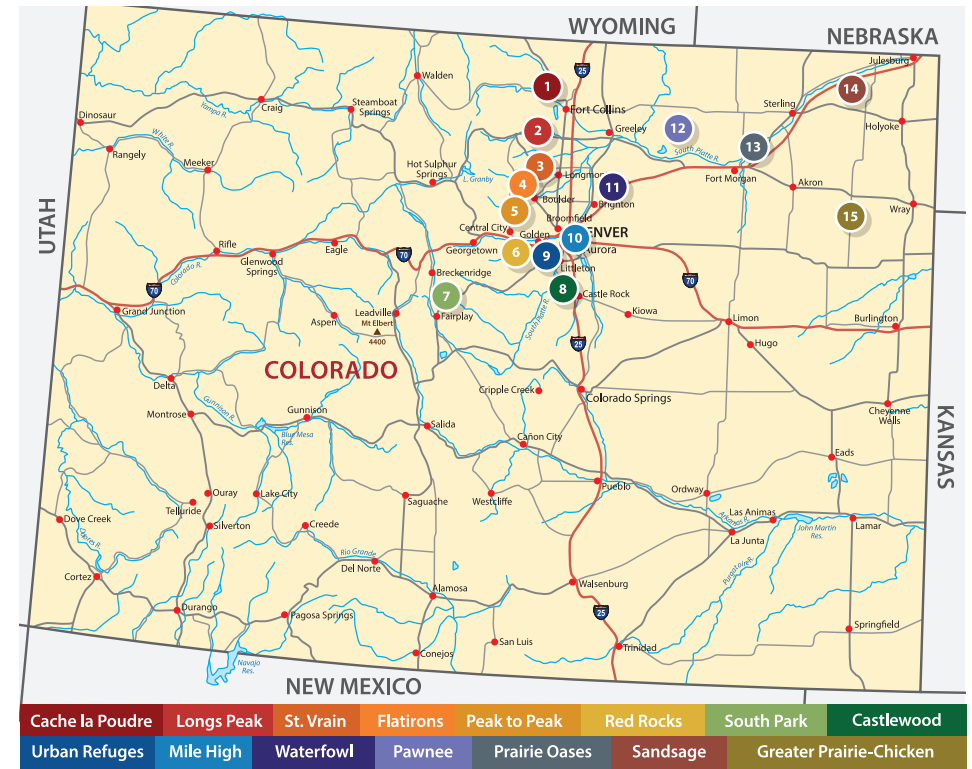
Bill Schmoker

Bill Schmoker is a science teacher, birder, and skilled photographer. Many of the wildlife images in this guide are provided through his generosity. You can learn more about Bill by visiting his website.
www.schmoker.org

The Colorado Birding Trail

Join us on the Colorado Birding Trail to experience a wildlife adventure of your own! Explore Colorado's incredible diversity of wildlife and the habitats they depend on in unbelievably spectacular settings. From the dry grasslands of the short-grass prairie to the snowy peaks of the Rocky Mountains, Colorado has nearly 1,000 species of wildlife for you to seek in an endless variety of fantastic habitats.

Colorado's wildlife - It's something to see! From the sleek pronghorn of the vast, high plains prairie to the camouflaged White-tailed Ptarmigan of the alpine tundra, an exciting outdoor adventure awaits you on the Colorado Birding Trail. The easily-navigated web site, Birding Trail Guide and trail maps will assist you in planning your personalized wildlife viewing experience.



Amenities Legend

- * Site may require a fee to visit. Please see below for information on visiting particular sites.
- Some accessible facilities are available.
- Hiking trails provide access to wildlife habitats.
- On-site services available.
- On-site facilities available.
- Staffed facility available during business hours.
- Provide enhanced wildlife viewing opportunities for visitors.
- On-site facilities available.
- Camping permitted - sites may vary from primitive camping to RV sites with hook-ups. There may be an additional fee for camping. Call specific sites for more information.
- Hunting licenses are required for all hunters.
- A fishing license is required for people between the ages of 16 and 64. One dollar licenses are available for seniors, age 64 and older.

*Admission:

State Wildlife Areas (SWA): Open to the public for wildlife-based recreation subject to management closures, as posted. An annual license or user fee may be required.
State Parks: You must purchase a day pass or have a State Parks Annual Pass for your vehicle.
National Parks: You must purchase a day pass or have an Annual Pass for your vehicle.
US Forest Service: Most picnic and campgrounds require a user fee.
Private Sites: For most sites, contact the owner at least 48 HOURS prior to visit. Fee depends upon services/facilities provided. Please remember, many private sites are working ranches as well as a private residence, and there may be times when the landowner cannot accommodate visits. While you are on a private site, remember to stay on roads, leave gates as you find them (whether open or closed), and refrain from taking anything off the ranch or leaving trash behind.

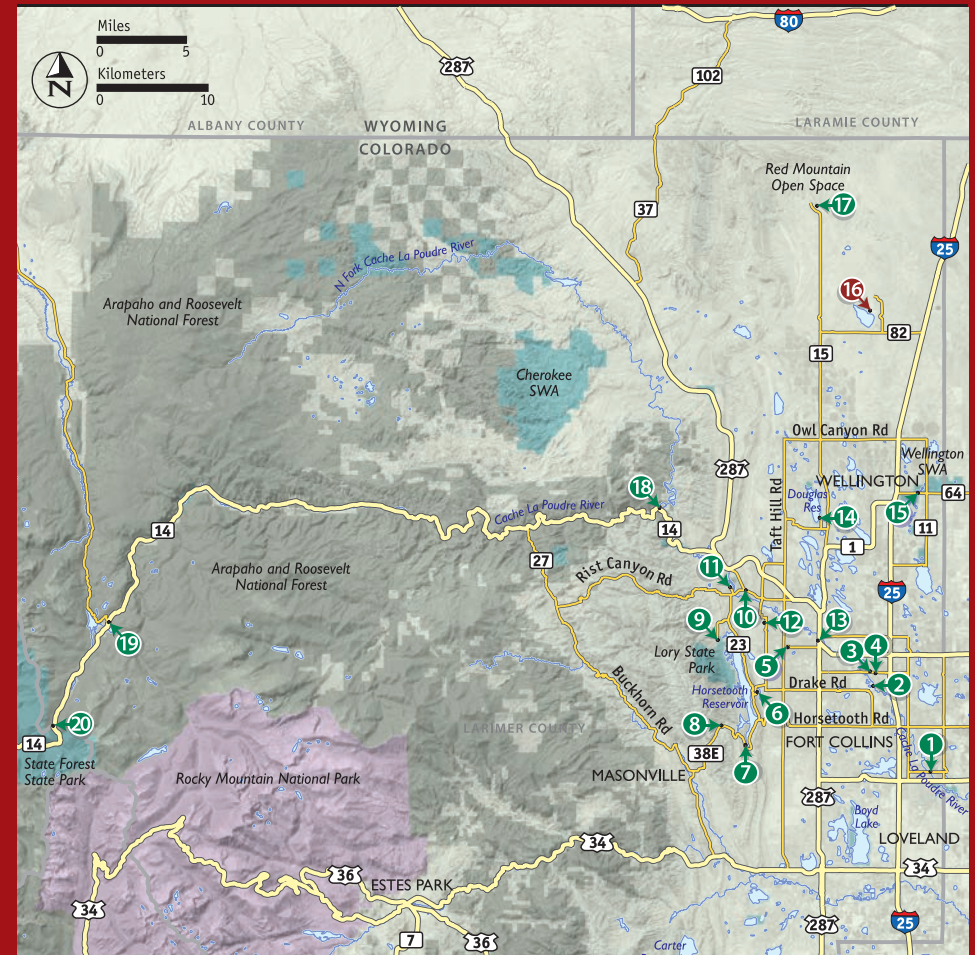




Cache la Poudre Trail

Birding Top to Bottom

This trail, based in Fort Collins, allows easy access to almost every habitat in northern Colorado, from high-elevation forest to high-quality shortgrass prairie. Some of the sites here are right in the middle of town; some are breathtakingly remote. High in the mountains, the Cache la Poudre River is born as a trickle beneath the feet of ptarmigan. Descending into the spruce woods, it grows into a stream serenaded by Boreal Owls and boreal toads, battled over by bighorn sheep. In the canyon it enjoys a rebellious adolescence, moshing with whitewater rafters and Common Mergansers, before finally maturing into a cottonwood-lined river of the plains. This trail offers 20 sites to explore and none of them will disappoint you.



Sites on the Cache la Poudre Trail:

1. River Bluffs Open Space
2. CSU Environmental Learning Center
3. Riverbend Ponds Natural Area
4. Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area
5. Fort Collins City Park / Grandview Cemetery
6. Pineridge Natural Area/Dixon Reservoir
7. Horsetooth Reservoir
8. Horsetooth Mountain Open Space
9. Lory State Park
10. Rist Canyon
11. Watson Lake State Wildlife Area and Bellvue-Watson Fish Hatchery
12. Reservoir Ridge Natural Area
13. Poudre Trail
14. Douglas Reservoir State Wildlife Area
15. Wellington State Wildlife Area
16. Hamilton Reservoir
17. Soapstone Prairie Natural Area
18. Lower Poudre Canyon / Gateway Natural Area
19. Laramie River Road
20. Cameron Pass and upper Poudre Canyon



1. River Bluffs Open Space

Description:

A small but scenic open space, River Bluffs' location adjacent to the Poudre River provides ideal habitat for waterfowl and wading birds. Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, and owls call this area home, and Red-tailed Hawks and Great Horned Owls have been found nesting in the park's cottonwoods. As part of the Poudre River Trail, the path here joins to the larger 21-mile system, allowing for endless outdoor explorations and discoveries.

Directions:

From I-25: take Exit 262 east for 1.5 miles to County Road 3. Go north on CR 3 for 0.5 miles to CR 32E. Head east on CR 32E for 0.3 miles to the entrance of River Bluffs, on the right.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



2. CSU Environmental Learning Center

Description:

With over 200 acres of cottonwood forest, riparian areas, and prairie grasslands, and crisscrossed by a few dirt trails, the ELC provides great opportunities to observe a variety of birds and other wildlife. Breeding birds include Great Horned Owl, Lazuli Bunting, and Blue Grosbeak. In migration, look for flocks of migrant warblers, and for waterfowl on the ponds. Note: dogs are not allowed at this property.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at Prospect Road and go west for 2 miles. At Timberline Road, head south and in 1 mile, go east on Drake Road. In 0.8 miles, Drake will curve south; go east on Environmental Drive. In 0.3 miles, go north on CR 9 and follow to the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



3. Riverbend Ponds Natural Area

Description:

Open, brushy ponds and a network of winding trails attract ducks and geese, especially in the colder months, and migrant warblers, wrens, and sparrows in the thickets in spring and fall. The tall trees of the Cache la Poudre River corridor run down one side of the property, so keep your binoculars handy! This natural area is a good place to find Osprey, Eastern Kingbird, and possibly Green Heron in summer.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at Prospect Road and head west 1 mile to the parking lot, on the north.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 11:00 PM



4. Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area

Description:

This natural area along the Cache la Poudre River provides wet meadow habitat, which is uncommon in the area and draws a variety of animals. The area contains a few ponds and marshes that can attract ducks, rails, Northern Harrier, and other wetland-loving birds. Other wetland creatures call this area home, such as Muskrats and Painted Turtles. Note: dogs are not allowed on this property.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at Prospect Road and go west for less than a mile to the Cottonwood Hollow parking lot, on the south. Trails continue south into the natural area.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 11:00 PM



5. Fort Collins City Park / Grandview Cemetery

Description:

Grandview Cemetery, which borders Fort Collins City Park, is a wonderful place to walk underneath a canopy of mature deciduous and evergreen trees. A popular pair of Great Horned Owls nests here in most years, and the evergreens can attract Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Pine Siskin, and occasionally crossbill in winter. Sheldon Lake, in the City Park, hosts waterfowl in winter.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at CO 14/Mulberry Avenue and go west 5.5 miles to Sheldon Lake, on the right. To get to the cemetery, follow Bryan Avenue north around the lake, turn west to stay on Bryan, and turn west onto Mountain Avenue to continue to the cemetery entrance.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



6. Pineridge Natural Area/Dixon Reservoir

Description:

The dense thicket at the north end of Dixon Reservoir is well-known among birders as one of the best migrant traps in Fort Collins. May is the best month to look for migrant warblers, sparrows, flycatchers, and orioles. The footpaths are often flooded in spring, but a higher, drier dirt path encircles the area, providing some viewing even when water is high.

Directions:

From I-25 in Fort Collins: exit at Prospect Road and go west to Overland Trail. Head south on Overland to CR 42C/Dixon Canyon Road and go west. Dixon Canyon Rd. will curve south and just before it curves west again, turn east into the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year - can be closed if trails are wet and muddy. Information can be found at fcgov.com/trailstatus, 5:00 AM to 11:00 PM



7. Horsetooth Reservoir

Description:

Horsetooth Reservoir is a deep, steep-sided reservoir that freezes late. In late fall it attracts Bald Eagles, gulls, and ducks. Pine woodlands surround the lake, providing breeding sites for Western Tanagers, Townsend's Solitaires, golden-mantled ground squirrels and pine squirrels. An entrance fee is required for most areas around the reservoir.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at Harmony Road and go west. At College Ave, Harmony Road changes to CR 38E, which runs along the south side of the reservoir. To reach the Visitor's Center, the entrance road will be to the east, right after the road curves to the right, around the southern end of the reservoir.

Access:

Open all year, campgrounds on the west side are open 24 hours, day use areas on the east side are open sunrise to sunset



8. Horsetooth Mountain Open Space

Description:

This large open space has 29 miles of rugged trails through shrubby slopes and open Ponderosa woodlands. One might see Bullock's Oriole near the

parking lot and Mountain Bluebird higher up. Keep an eye out for White-throated Swifts and raptors in the sky overhead. Mountain Lions roam here, though it requires tremendous luck to see one. This area is extremely busy, particularly on weekends and in the summer, so get there early!

Directions:

From I-25: exit at Harmony Road and go west. Harmony Road changes to CR 38E; continue around the south side of the reservoir. About 1.5 miles past the reservoir, go north into the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space parking lot and look for the Horsetooth Mountain Trailhead.

Access:

Open all year



9. Lory State Park

Description:

Lory State Park preserves excellent examples of prairie, shrublands, and pine forest habitats, bounded by granite cliffs along Horsetooth Reservoir. At lower elevations, birds of the shrublands meet birds of the prairie, providing a wealth of opportunities to observe a variety of birds! Also look for soaring eagles, hawks and falcons in the sky above. Other species of interest include: American Three-toed Woodpecker, White-throated Swift, and Greater Roadrunner. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From I-25 in Fort Collins: exit at CO 14/Mulberry Street and go west. At US 287, head north out of town, and follow as it bends west. Where the road bends north again, stay straight to continue west on 287B through the town of LaPorte. Turn left on Rist Canyon Road and in the town of Bellvue, turn left on CR 23. Turn right on CR 25G and follow the signs to the park.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 9:00 PM



10. Rist Canyon

Description:

This is a premier area for foothills and mountain birds. In the lower parts of the canyon, riparian areas host Lazuli Bunting and Yellow-breasted Chat. Higher up in the pines, one can find Dusky and Hammond's Flycatchers, Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Mountain and Western Bluebirds, and Red Crossbill. Half a mile above the turnoff to Stratton Park Road, listen for breeding Ovenbird and



Virginia's Warbler. Note: it may be difficult to find places to stop along the road, so please use caution when exploring this area.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at CO 14/Mulberry Street and go west. At US 287/College Avenue, head north and continue as it bends west. Where it bends north again, stay straight to continue west on 287B through LaPorte. In La Porte, go west on Rist Canyon Road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



11. Watson Lake State Wildlife Area and Bellvue-Watson Fish Hatchery

Description:

This small State Wildlife Area sits at the base of a cliff that is a traditional nesting site for Golden Eagles, White-throated Swifts, and Canyon Wrens. The lake attracts waterfowl in late fall and early spring, including Hooded Mergansers. Stop by the nearby Bellvue-Watson Fish Hatchery, as self-guided tours, fishing, birdwatching, and nature trails make this an excellent education and recreation destination. Note: public access is prohibited on the northwest side of the SWA.

Directions:

From I-25 in Fort Collins: exit at CO 14/Mulberry Street and go west. At US 287/College Avenue, head north. Once outside Fort Collins, the road will fork; stay to the left on 287B. Continue west on 287B to CR 52E/Rist Canyon Road. Go west on Rist Canyon and just past the Cache la Poudre River, go north on the access road to Watson Lake.

Access:

Open all year, except for the northwest side, access is prohibited as posted, daylight hours



12. Reservoir Ridge Natural Area

Description:

This popular hiking trail includes grassland, mountain mahogany shrub steppe, and some ponderosa pine habitats. There are three entrances, but the trail from the parking lot on Overland Trail Road passes through an area that can host Bobolinks during summer months. This has been one of the most (if not the only) reliable places to find Bobolinks in Larimer County.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at CO 14/Mulberry Street and go west until it ends at Overland Trail Drive. Go north on Overland to the Reservoir Ridge Natural Area trailhead on the east. Another trailhead is available at Michaud Lane. Continue north on Overland Trail and after the curve to the west, Overland Trail will curve north; continue straight onto Michaud Lane to the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 11:00 PM



13. Poudre Trail

Description:

This 10-mile paved bike trail follows the Cache la Poudre River, connecting the towns of Bellvue, La-Porte, and Fort Collins, and running through a rich strip of riparian forest. Look for a variety of migrant birds in May, including flashy Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and warblers. Species such as Eastern Kingbird and Western Wood-Pewee may breed side-by-side here. There are a number of parks and other trail connections along this route, allowing for hours of outdoor exploration! For a longer day, stop by the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery to learn more about the area's local natural history, as well as see their live black-footed ferrets on display.

Directions:

From I-25 in Fort Collins: exit at CO 14/Mulberry Street and head west 3.3 miles. Make a slight right onto Riverside Avenue, which becomes Jefferson Street. In one mile, go north on US 287/College Avenue to Cherry Street. Head west onto Cherry Street, then west onto Mason Court. Make an immediate turn into the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery parking lot, which has trail access. The trail can also be accessed from other locations, including the CSU Environmental Learning Center.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



14. Douglas Reservoir State Wildlife Area

Description:

This large reservoir can be very good for waterbirds, especially in late fall before it freezes. Watch for Bald Eagles, various ducks and gulls, the occasional loon, and Northern Shrike in winter. Keep your eye on the surrounding shrublands for visiting and nesting birds.

Directions:

From I-25 in Fort Collins: exit at CO 14/Mulberry Street and go west. At US 287/College Avenue, head north to CO 1/Terry Lake Road. Take CO 1 north and where it curves to the west, go north on CR 15 to CR 60. Go east on CR 60 to La Vina Drive. Go north on La Vina Road until you reach the lake.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



15. Wellington State Wildlife Area

Description:

This SWA has limited access, but when you can visit, this can be a good place to look for migrants in the junipers and other shrubs. In winter, keep an eye and ear out for roosting Short-eared and Long-eared Owls. The Cobb Lake unit is open all year; its namesake lake sometimes attracts waterfowl and shorebirds. Note: hunting occurs here, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before heading out.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at Cleveland and go east to the NE Frontage Road. Head north on the NE Frontage Road for 0.5 miles to CR 64 (Nunn Road). Go east on CR 64; you will find several parking areas on both sides of the road in the next 2 miles.

Access:

Wellington Unit: closed March 15 – July 15, and September 1 to February 28 except on weekends, Mondays, and holidays. Cobb Unit open year round, daylight hours



16. Hamilton Reservoir

Description:

This cooling lagoon for the Rawhide Energy Plant stays open all year. In cold spells when all other water in the region is frozen, waterbirds congregate here in huge numbers. From the visitor viewing area, birds are easily seen with a scope. The native prairie to the west hosts Lark Buntings, Grasshopper Sparrows, Common Nighthawks, and other prairie birds in summer. Also watch for the bison herd the utility maintains on the land.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 288, CO 82/Buckeye Road and head west for 2 miles to the power plant entrance on CR 9. Go north on CR 9 and after the curve, go south into the nature viewing area, located before the security building.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

17. Soapstone Prairie Natural Area

Description:

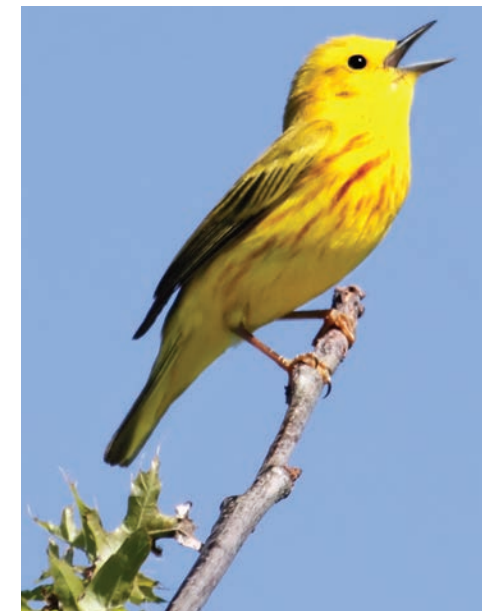
This beautiful and remote open space preserves a corridor of protected lands connecting the mountains to the native grasslands. Lark Buntings, Grasshopper Sparrows, and pronghorn can be seen along the entrance road; also look for the bison herd in its enclosure. A hike into the mountain mahogany could produce Spotted Towhee, Brown Thrasher, and even Virginia's Warbler. The endangered black-footed ferret was reintroduced to this property and now once again hunts on the open prairie. The area is very remote, and hikers should be prepared to deal alone with potential emergencies. This natural area is closed December - February and dogs are not allowed.

Directions:

From I-25: use exit 288, CR 82/Buckeye Road and go west. CR 82 ends at CR 15/Terry Lake Road. Head north on CR 15 and at CR 84, take a slight right to continue north on CR 15/Rawhide Flats Road and to the entrance station.

Access:

March 1 - November 30, daylight hours; This natural area is closed December-February





18. Lower Poudre Canyon / Gateway Natural Area

Description:

As Colorado Highway 14 follows the Cache la Poudre River west up into the mountains, it passes several trailheads and parks along the way that provide access to the river and adjacent habitats. Gateway Natural Area just may be the best of these. Look for American Dippers bobbing on the rocks in the middle of the river, and Common Mergansers floating on the water. Also watch along the highway for bighorn sheep and mule deer that can sometimes be seen from the road.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at CO 14/Mulberry Street and go west. Head northeast at Riverside Avenue to US 287. Go north on US 287 for about 10 miles, then go west on CO 14, which runs through the canyon. Gateway Natural area is located about 6 miles in the canyon, on the north side.

Access:

March 1 - November 30; This natural area is closed December-February



19. Laramie River Road

Description:

This remote road runs about 20 miles from high-elevation spruce-fir forest down to open sagebrush and wet meadows, with a tremendous diversity of birds and other wildlife in between. Much of the land along the road is public. With luck, Veery can be heard in some areas of dense willows.

Directions:

From Fort Collins: head north on US 287 about 10 miles to Ted's Place, then go west on CO 14/Poudre Canyon Road. Continue for approximately 60 miles to CO 103/Hohnholz Lakes Road. Go north on CO 103 and just past Chambers Lake, the road changes to Laramie River Road.

Access:

July 1 to November 30, daylight hours



20. Cameron Pass and upper Poudre Canyon

Description:

The spruce-fir forest here is home to birds such as Pine Grosbeak, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Cassin's Finch, and Red Crossbill. The highly elusive Boreal Owl is best heard late at night, between February and April, within 2 miles of the pass. Also watch for bighorn sheep crossing the road in daylight, and porcupines crossing at night.

Directions:

From Fort Collins: head north on US 287 about 10 miles to Ted's Place, then go west on CO 14/Poudre Canyon Road. Continue for approximately 65 miles to Cameron Pass.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



Attracting Birds, Not Bears

Living responsibly with bears is everyone's responsibility – do your part to help keep bears wild!

One of the easiest ways to attract and observe birds is to hang birdfeeders around your home and wait to see who visits. However, if you live in bear country, birds may not be your only guests! Unfortunately, birdfeeders can be the beginning of a tragic ending for black bears and other wildlife.

Since they den in winter, bears have a short window of time to raise young, mate, and pack on pounds for another winter season. So when a bear is active, one thing dominates its existence: food. Although biologically considered carnivores, bears are really omnivores, meaning they will eat just about anything! Surprisingly, over 90% of a black bear's diet is berries, grasses, nuts, and other vegetation.

As essentially large, walking stomachs that can smell odors miles away, bears are opportunistic in their pursuit of food, searching for the most accessible, highest calorie food they can find. Particularly in late summer through fall, bears need to consume 20,000 calories a day to put on enough fat for the winter. Living so close to people, many bears find those calories in birdseed and garbage. When you consider a bear has to spend a lot of time working a hillside for 2,000 calories from one pound of berries, compared to a couple minutes of work for 1,740 calories from one pound of birdseed, it's easy to understand why bears prefer to feast on the feeders on your porch. Bears have great memories, so once a bear learns human homes provide "fast food" opportunities, they could soon lose their fear of people and become dangerous.

Keep in mind, birdfeeders can also attract rodents and the animals that prey on them (like coyotes), as well as other wildlife such as raccoons, foxes, skunks, and even deer! Be a responsible bird-feeder by:

- Only feeding birds in winter if you live in bear country
- In spring - fall, bringing feeders in every night before sundown, or hang them out of reach (including hummingbird feeders) – see website (listed below) for details
- Keep the area underneath feeders clear of hulls and debris (or switch to a shelled or pre-hulled bird seed); also clean-up any spilled sugar water that may collect under hummingbird feeders

For more detailed information on attracting birds not bears, visit cpw.state.co.us/bears

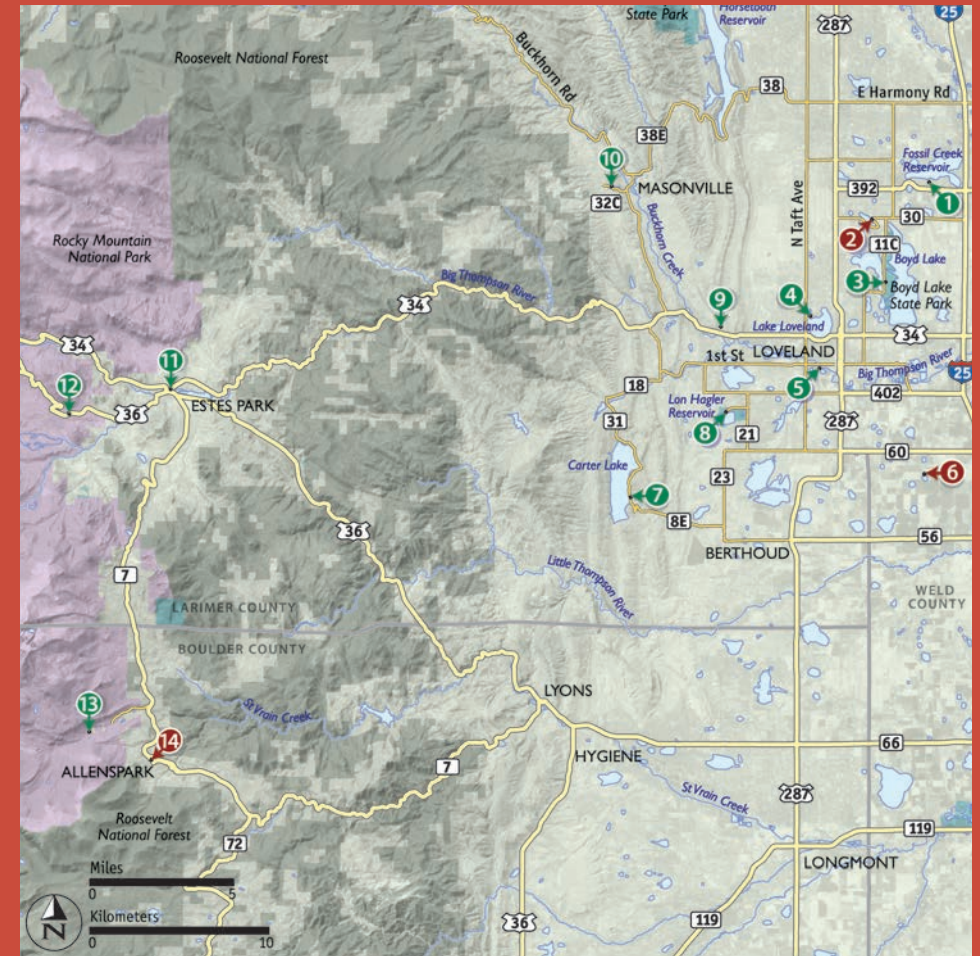




Longs Peak Trail

The Mountains' Greatest Hits

Rocky Mountain National Park is the showcase of the southern Rockies, home to the nation's highest continuous paved road and some of the best alpine scenery in North America. To follow this trail is to see the mountains' highlight reel—snowcapped peaks, sheer-sided canyons, jagged ridges, and idyllic reservoirs. And this tremendous scenery has birds to match: Mountain Bluebirds, Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, Violet-green Swallows, Steller's Jays, and Green-tailed Towhees. In winter, birders visit the upper reaches of this trail to find flocks of rosy-finches at feeders, and then descend to the lakes to watch huge flocks of gulls come to roost for the evening. This is the Colorado on your postcards.



Sites on the Longs Peak Trail:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Fossil Creek Reservoir Natural Area | 9. Devil's Backbone |
| 2. Donath Lake | 10. Bobcat Ridge Natural Area |
| 3. Boyd Lake State Park | 11. Estes Park |
| 4. Lake Loveland | 12. Rocky Mountain National Park
(RMNP - Larimer section) |
| 5. River's Edge Natural Area | 13. Wild Basin - Rocky Mountain National Park |
| 6. De France Reservoir (and nearby ponds) | 14. Allenspark |
| 7. Carter Lake County Park | |
| 8. Lon Hagler State Wildlife Area | |



1. Fossil Creek Reservoir Natural Area

Description:
Designated as an "Important Bird Area" by the National Audubon Society, this is one of the best birding locations in the area. Huge numbers of geese often stage here in late fall, including thousands of Cackling Geese, with some Snow, Ross's, and Greater White-fronted Geese usually mixed in. A Bald Eagle nest located on the opposite side of the lake can be viewed from the gazebo east of the Visitor Center. Note: pets are not allowed at this property.

Directions:
From I-25: take exit 262, CR 392/E County Rd 32, and head west. Fossil Creek Reservoir is on the north side in 1 mile. Go north onto the access road across from Eagle Ranch Rd to the parking lot for the Reservoir.

Access:
Open all year, daylight hours

2. Donath Lake

Description:
This small lake can be scanned from one safe pullout on the east side of the road. The water here can attract Western Grebes, ducks, and sometimes gulls, mostly between late fall and spring when the water is not completely frozen. One of the most unexpected birds ever to be found in Colorado, a Kelp Gull from South America, was once spotted here.

Directions:
From I-25: take exit 262/CR 32 and go west for 1.5 miles to CR 9. Head south on CR 9 and in one mile, go west on CR 30. In 1.5 miles at CR 13, go south and then west into the dirt pullout.

Access:
Open all year, daylight hours

3. Boyd Lake State Park

Description:
In warmer months, Boyd Lake is a hot spot for boating, yet you can still see spring and summer birds of interest, including Bald Eagle, White-faced Ibis, Chimney Swift, Red-headed Woodpecker, and many interesting shorebirds, such as Black-necked Stilt and Willets. Once it starts to get chilly, Boyd becomes a great place to look for Gulls, Loons, Terns, and Scoters, with possibly a rare species or two among the more common. The park boasts over 300 species of birds on their bird list, so be on the lookout when visiting here! A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:
From I-25: take exit 257/US Hwy 34 and go west for 3.3 miles to Boise Ave. Go north on Boise Ave to E CR 24E and go east. The road will curve north and change into N CR 11C. Continue for 1 mile and head east at the Boyd Lake State Park sign to the entrance station.

Access:
Open all year, 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM

4. Lake Loveland

Description:
This lake is right in the middle of the city of Loveland, and several city parks provide excellent access. The lake can attract various waterbirds, especially in the colder months, as long as there is some open water. The highlight is usually the gulls, which sometimes gather here in large numbers. Rare gulls such as Glaucous, Thayer's, and Lesser Black-backed can be regularly found in these flocks.

Directions:
From I-25: take exit 257/US Hwy 34, and go west for 5.5 miles to Taft Ave. Head north on Taft and in 1.6 miles, turn east on Lake Park Rd into the park.

Access:
Open all year, daylight hours

5. River's Edge Natural Area

Description:
River's Edge Natural Area has a number of ponds that attract dabbling and diving ducks in winter, and Western Grebes and Ospreys in summer. The adjacent section of the Loveland Recreation Trail allows biking, walking, and wildlife viewing along a beautiful stretch of the Big Thompson River.

Directions:
From I-25: exit at US Hwy 34 and go west to US Hwy 287. Head south on US Hwy 287 for one mile and turn west on 1st St. In approximately 2-3 miles, go south onto the access road for the parking area, located directly across the street from the Centennial Park parking lot.

Access:
Open all year, 6:00 AM to 10:30 PM

6. De France Reservoir (and nearby ponds)

Description:
De France Reservoir and the other nearby private lakes are easy to scan from the road. These waters sometimes host good numbers of waterbirds, such as ducks, geese, and pelicans, as well as hold potential for shorebirds. Check the trees around the lake for roosting Great Horned Owls and other birds.

Directions:
From I-25: take exit 252/CR 48 and go west for 1 mile on CR 48 to CR 7. Head north on CR 7 for 1 mile to CO 60/County Rd 14. Go west on CO 60, and in 1 mile, go south on CR 5. CR 5 curves around the west side of the Reservoir. De France Reservoir is 1 mile south, on the east side.

Access:
Open all year, daylight hours

7. Carter Lake County Park

Description:
Carter Lake is a scenic park nestled between foothill pine forests and the rocky Dakota Hogback ridge. It's a good place to find birds such as Mountain Bluebird; and in summer, Rock Wrens and Cliff Swallows can be found at the dam. In winter, watch for ducks, loons, and gulls on the water before it freezes. On the trails, be sure to look for the tassel-eared Abert's squirrel. Note: there is an entry fee for this site.

Directions:
From I-25: take exit 250/CO 56 and go west through the town of Berthoud. CO 56 changes to CR 8; continue on CR 8 as it bends north to become CR 23.

Head west onto CR 8E for 3 miles to the entrance station.

Access:
Open all year, 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM

8. Lon Hagler State Wildlife Area

Description:
Lon Hagler SWA in Loveland is a bird magnet, especially in late fall and early spring. The reservoir attracts ducks, loons, grebes, gulls, and sometimes shorebirds when water levels are right. Occasionally, a few Trumpeter or Tundra Swans spend much of the winter on the lakes in this area. Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before visiting.

Directions:
From I-25: take exit 255, CO 18/14th St SE and go west to CR 21. Head south on CR 21 and in 3/4 miles, go west at W CR 16E. Continue for 1.5 miles to the parking lot.

Access:
Open all year, daylight hours

9. Devil's Backbone

Description:
This open space features a trail that runs along the scenic Dakota Hogback Ridge. The area around the southern trailhead is terrific for birding, especially on spring and summer mornings. Prairie Falcons have nested along the hogback for many years. The short Morrison Trail provides interpretive signage about the unique geology of the ridge.

Directions:
From I-25: take exit 257/US Hwy 34 and head west through Loveland for 7.8 miles to Hidden Valley Dr. Go north on Hidden Valley Dr to access the parking lot, on the west.

Access:
Open all year, daylight hours



10. Bobcat Ridge Natural Area

Description:

This remarkable place is best visited in spring and summer. The cliffs near the parking lot are the summer home of a colony of White-throated Swifts. The trails lead across grassy meadows, with meadow-larks and Vesper Sparrows, up to the ponderosa forest. For several winters, an American Woodcock has been a regular visitor to the site. A short interpretive trail describes the history of the homesteaders who lived here from the 1880s to the 1950s. Also keep an eye out for mule deer, elk, and if you're very lucky, the area's namesake cat. Note: pets are not allowed on this property.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 257/US Hwy 34 and go west toward Loveland; after about 4.5 miles, turn north on CR 27 (by Big Thompson Elementary) and go 4.5 miles to CR 32C. Head west on CR 32C for 1 mile to the Bobcat Ridge parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



11. Estes Park

Description:

The gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park, the town of Estes Park is a world-class tourist destination. Violet-green Swallows and American Dippers nest in town. Lake Estes can attract Mergansers, Goldeneyes, and other ducks in the colder months. The Reeser Wildlife Sanctuary on the west end of the lake attracts migrant Warblers in spring and fall. Herds of elk are almost always in town, and though they seem tolerant of people, they can be dangerous. Please observe elk and other wildlife from a safe distance.

Directions:

Estes Park is at the junction of US 36 and US 34, 30 miles west of Loveland and 37 miles northwest of Boulder. A multi-level parking garage for the Visitor's Center is located on US 36, just east of the intersection of US 34 and US 36. The parking garage is also adjacent to a paved path that runs along the north side of Lake Estes. You can also find public parking downtown.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



12. Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP - Larimer section)

Description:

RMNP is one of the crown jewels of the national park system and a terrific place to see elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, coyotes, and other animals, as well as almost any type of mountain bird species. Different elevations in the park support very different wildlife communities. At roadside pullouts below treeline, it is hard to miss Steller's Jay, Gray Jay, and Clark's Nutcracker. Above treeline, you are likely to see yellow-bellied marmots, pikas, American Pipits and Common Ravens. If you're lucky, you might even find a Brown-capped Rosy-finch or White-tailed Ptarmigan in the land above the trees.

Directions:

From Estes Park: go west on US Hwy 36 to the Beaver Meadow Entrance Station. Alternate entrance: go west on Fall River Rd to the Fall River Entrance Station into the northern area of the park. Once in the park, utilize the park map to navigate to several great birding areas, including West Horseshoe Park, Upper Beaver Meadow, Moraine Park and the alpine region along Trail Ridge Road.

Access:

Open all year



13. Rocky Mountain National Park - Wild Basin

Description:

Near the Wild Basin entrance station to Rocky Mountain National Park, look for ponderosa pine birds like Williamson's Sapsucker and Western Tanager. On the main Wild Basin Trail, watch for Dusky Grouse and American Three-toed Woodpecker. The hike to Ouzel Falls could turn up the rare Black Swift.

Directions:

From Lyons: head northwest on CO 7 to CO 84 and go west on CO 84 until the road forks. Go to the right onto CO 115, which is located at the Sandbeach Lake Trailhead. Continue west on CO 115 until you reach the Wild Basin Ranger Station and parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



14. Allenspark

Description:

A tiny mountain hamlet, Allenspark is best known for its bird feeders. Both chickadees and all three nuthatches visit feeders year round. In winter, various finch species sometimes drop by, especially in inclement weather. In July and August, you can often pick out Rufous and Calliope Hummingbirds from the throngs of Broad-taileds, and you might see Band-tailed Pigeon in town. Keep in mind, Colorado Parks and Wildlife recommends following bear aware principles when feeding birds in bear country. See the CPW website for more information.

Directions:

Allenspark is south of Estes Park and northwest of Lyons on CO 7.

Access:

Open all year



Did You KNOW?

Prairies in Peril



In a state renowned for its "purple mountain majesties," where everything from license plates to the state logo reflect an affinity for mountains, it's not surprising that Colorado's prairie oftentimes gets overlooked. Colorado may be known for its snow-capped mountains, but about 1/3 of the state consists of a prairie/grassland ecosystem. Much of eastern Colorado is part of the Great Plains, grasslands that extend from northern Canada to southern Texas and east from the Rocky Mountains. Known by many local regional names throughout the world, such as prairie, savannah, steppe, and pampas, all grasslands are defined by a lack of rainfall, producing landscapes rich in grasses and lacking trees. This scarcity of water has created a fragile environment; and when coupled with its agricultural benefits and appeal to developers, grasslands are now considered one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world. Here in Colorado, over 50% of the prairie has been lost or altered, the most of any ecosystem in the state.

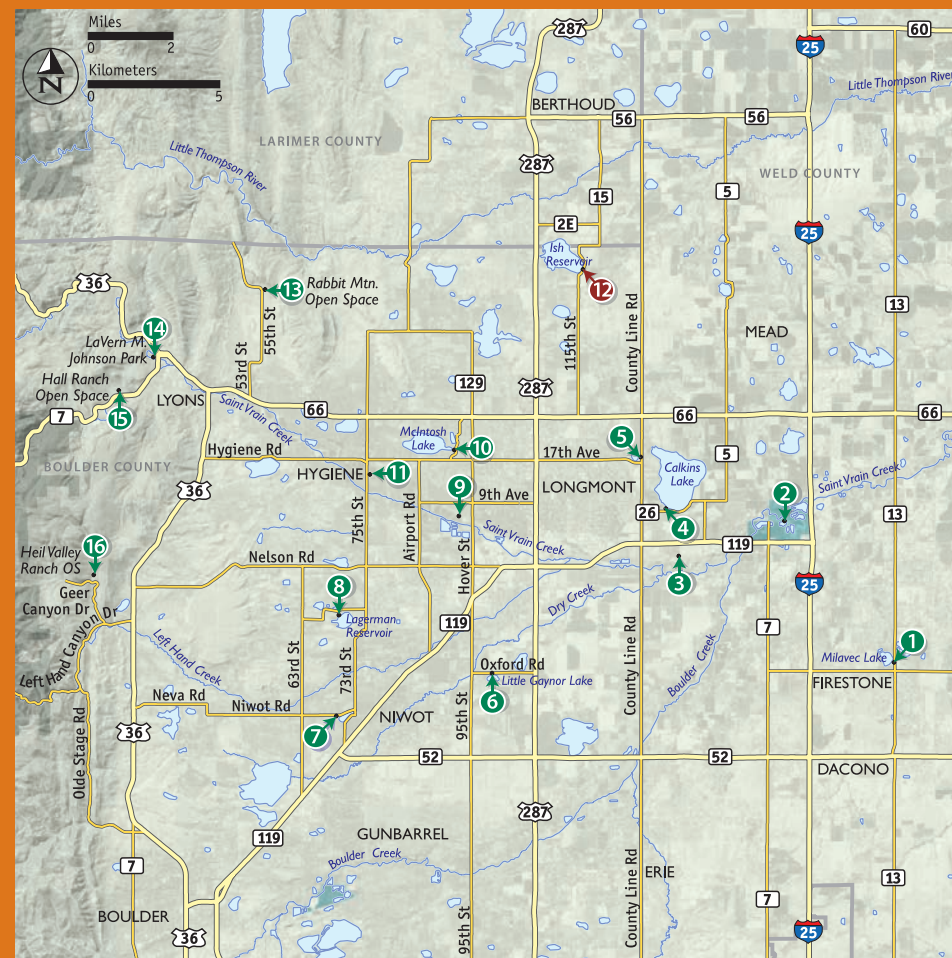
With much of Colorado's grasslands in private hands, prairie birds, such as our state bird the Lark Bunting, and other local wildlife rely on help from private landowners. Colorado Parks and Wildlife, along with our partner conservation organizations, work closely with landowners on a number of habitat programs that benefit grassland wildlife. You can learn more about these programs at cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/PrivateLand.aspx. Thank you landowners for your support in maintaining critical habitat for Colorado's wildlife!



St. Vrain Trail

A Charismatic Land

The towns of Longmont and Lyons, along the St. Vrain River north of Boulder, support an amazingly high density of places to watch birds and other wildlife. The foothills here are lower and less dramatic than those abutting Boulder, and their sparser, shrubbier vegetation generally makes it easier to find birds of open, dry country such as Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay and Common Poorwill. The lakes and ponds in and around the towns are excellent places to see waterfowl, Western and Clark's Grebes, and gulls, especially in spring and fall. This is a wonderful area in which to get better acquainted with the arresting landscapes of the American west.



Sites on the St. Vrain Trail

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Frederick Recreation Area | 10. McIntosh Lake |
| 2. St. Vrain State Park | 11. Pella Crossing Park |
| 3. Sandstone Ranch Community Park | 12. Ish Reservoir |
| 4. Union Reservoir Nature Area | 13. Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain Open Space |
| 5. Jim Hamm Nature Area | 14. Lyons Area |
| 6. Little Gaynor Lake | 15. Hall Ranch Open Space |
| 7. Dodd Reservoir | 16. Heil Valley Ranch |
| 8. Lagerman Reservoir | |
| 9. Golden Ponds Park | |



1. Frederick Recreation Area

Description:

The lake here is popular with people, but also with ducks, grebes, pelicans and cormorants, particularly in late fall and early spring. The marsh southeast of the lake is home to Red-winged Blackbirds and rails. Paved trails run along a tree-lined creek where Yellow Warblers and Downy Woodpeckers breed.

Directions:

From I-25: exit 235 for CO 52 and continue east one mile to CR 11/Silver Birch Blvd. Go north on CR 11 for one mile to CR 18/Godding Hollow Pkwy. Head east on CR 18 for one mile to CR 13/Colorado Blvd. Go north on CR 13 and the parking lot for the reservoir is on the west side, across from the shopping center.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



2. St. Vrain State Park

Description:

Located along the St. Vrain River, this state park provides excellent birding. St. Vrain features many ponds, marshes, willow thickets, fields, and stands of cottonwoods that provide rich and varied habitat for birds. Winter bird viewing includes Bald Eagle and various waterfowl and shorebirds. St. Vrain is a great place to see Western and Clark's Grebe, Osprey, and several species of swallows. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 240/Hwy 119 and go west to CR 7. Go north on CR7; it will curve to the east and turn into Weld Co Road 24 1/2. Continue east on Weld Co Road 24 1/2 to the entrance station.

Access:

Open all year, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM



3. Sandstone Ranch Community Park

Description:

Much of this park is sports fields, but the native prairie along the St. Vrain River is home to Lark Sparrow, Say's Phoebe, prairie dogs, and native wildflowers such as Prickly Poppy. Great Horned and Barn Owls sometimes roost in the bluffs. The park is part of the St. Vrain Greenway and has a visitor center on-site, open seasonally with restricted hours.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at CO 119, Firestone Blvd/Ken Pratt Blvd and go west. In approximately one mile, head south at Sandstone Drive to the second parking lot on the west.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; Visitor's Center hours are seasonal, be sure to check the website



4. Union Reservoir Nature Area

Description:

One of the best places in the area to look for ducks, grebes, loons, and other waterbirds; many rarities have shown up here. The reservoir is usually frozen in January and February, but Clark's and Western Grebes are reliable the other ten months of the year. Scan from county roads to the north and south, or pay to enter the Longmont City Park on the southwest corner. Be sure to contact City of Longmont or visit their website for details.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at CO 119, Firestone Blvd/Ken Pratt Blvd, go west 4 miles then head north on County Line Rd. To access the south side of the reservoir, head east on CR 26 to the parking lot. To access the north side, continue north on County Line Rd and in 2.2 miles, go east on CR 28. Parking is along the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; walk-in access only from November 1 to February 28



5. Jim Hamm Nature Area

Description:

This small park near Union Reservoir can quickly be checked for birds. Sometimes there is little of interest, but sometimes, gulls or shorebirds from Union stop in here, allowing a closer look. As a designated bird sanctuary, the pond is the main attraction, but the line of trees north of it might also be worth checking for birds.

Directions:

From I-25: exit 240, CO 119/Firestone Blvd/Ken Pratt Blvd and head west for 4 miles. Go north on County Line Rd for 2 miles to the park entrance, on the west.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



6. Little Gaynor Lake

Description:

The nature preserve that contains this small prairie pothole lake is often worth a check. Scanning from the blind on the north shore can turn up a good variety of ducks, often including Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, and Ruddy Duck, plus American Avocets and Wilson's Phalaropes.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at CO 52/Mineral Rd and go west to US Hwy 287. Head north on US 287 to Oxford Rd. Head east on Oxford Rd for approximately 0.5 miles to the parking lot on the south.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

Rd for 0.5 miles, then north on 73rd St. In 2.5 miles, head west on Pike Rd. In 0.5 miles, go south onto the access road to the parking lot for the reservoir.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



9. Golden Ponds Park

Description:

Surrounded by a magnificent view of Longs Peak and the Front Range, the reclaimed gravel pits here should be checked for ducks in the colder months, as a Tufted Duck famously stopped by for a few days one winter. Wood Ducks, Bald Eagles, and Ospreys are regularly seen, as well as all six of Colorado's swallow species swarming over the water in late April and May. In spring and fall, check for migrants in the woods along the St. Vrain Greenway bike path, which begins here and runs all the way to Sandstone Ranch east of town.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at CO 119/Firestone Blvd/Ken Pratt Blvd and head west. Transition onto Nelson Rd to continue west to Hover St. Go north on Hover St and in 1.7 miles, head northwest onto 3rd Ave. The parking lot is at the end of the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



7. Dodd Reservoir

Description:

Birders' attraction to Dodd Reservoir can be summed up in one word: geese. From fall through spring, this is one of the most reliable places in the area to find thousands of geese. Most are Canadas, but other species can be found here as well. The geese spread out during the day to feed in the surrounding fields, but when they all crowd back onto Dodd Reservoir, it can be quite a sight to behold! Note: dogs are not allowed at this property.

Directions:

From US 36: go north on CO 157/Foothills Pkwy. CO 157 will transition to CO 119/ Diagonal Highway; continue northeast to Niwot Rd. Head west at Niwot Rd for 0.5 miles, then north on 73rd St, then west again at Niwot Rd. In approximately 0.5 miles, there is a small parking area for the reservoir on the south side.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



8. Lagerman Reservoir

Description:

Lagerman is known as a good place to find grebes, diving ducks, and gulls, especially in fall, and shorebirds such as Long-billed Curlew occasionally show up. A pair of Ospreys nest on a platform near the reservoir, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds breed just across the road. In winter, a large prairie-dog town just to the west regularly attracts Ferruginous Hawk.

Directions:

From US 36: go north on CO 157/Foothills Pkwy. CO 157 will transition to CO 119/ Diagonal Highway; continue northeast to Niwot Rd. Go west at Niwot



10. McIntosh Lake

Description: From the city park on the south shore, scan McIntosh in the colder months for waterbirds. Shore-birding can be good if the water levels are right. Bonaparte's Gulls often hang out here in November. A number of rarities have been found here; you never know what you might find.

Directions: From I-25: exit at Hwy 66 and go west to 95th St. Go south on 95th St to 17th Ave. Head west to Harvard St, and then north to the parking lot on the west. Lakeshore Dr accesses the park on the south shore of the lake, with parking on the road.

Access: Open all year, daylight hours

11. Pella Crossing Park

Description: Devastated by the floods of September 2013, Pella Crossing Park re-opened in 2017. Adjacent private hayfields to the east have attracted Dickcissel and Grasshopper Sparrow in some summers. Follow the trails west to the trees to find spring migrants. A colony of Great Blue Herons nests just across the river to the west.

Directions: From I-25: exit at Hwy 66 and head west to 95th St. Go south on 95th St to 17th Ave. Head west on 17th Ave; it will change to Hygiene Rd at Airport Rd. Continue west to 75th St and head south on 75th St to the park entrance, located on the east (south of the railroad tracks on the south end of Hygiene).

Access: Open all year, daylight hours

12. Ish Reservoir

Description: This private lake can be well scanned from a quiet county road. It is one of the better places in the area to look for shorebirds, especially in late summer and early fall, when Blue Grosbeaks are often still singing along the road. Please be sure to respect private property.

Directions: From I-25: exit at Hwy 66 and go west to US Hwy 287. Head north on US Hwy 287 for 3 miles to CR 2/ Yellowstone Rd and head east on CR 2/Yellowstone Rd. In 1 mile, go north on 115th St. In 0.5 miles, the

lake will be on the west. Go west on CR 2 to drive around the north side of the reservoir. Roadside parking only.

Access: Open all year, daylight hours

13. Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain Open Space

Description: Rabbit Mountain's unique habitat makes it one of the best places in the area to find species of dry country such as Bushtit, Common Poorwill, and (if you are lucky) Pinyon Jay. Be on the lookout for Say's Phoebe and Rock Wren breeding near the parking lot. This is also a great place to see elk, as well as find lizards and snakes in summer, including rattlesnakes, so be alert when hiking.

Directions: From I-25: exit Highway 66 and go west toward Lyons to 53rd Street. Head north on 53rd; the road will curve northeast and change to Vestal Road. The road will curve north again and change to 55th Street. Continue north on 55th Street for approximately 3 miles to the parking lot for Rabbit Mountain.

Access: Open all year, daylight hours

14. Lyons Area

Description: LaVern M. Johnson Park in the town of Lyons has nesting White-throated Swifts, Violet-green Swallows, Canyon Wrens, and Golden Eagles. Apple Valley Road and South Saint Vrain Road can be good for birds like Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay and Bushtit; these two roads are best birded on foot, so beware of traffic and respect private property. Note: there is a parking fee for LaVern M. Johnson Park.

Directions: From I-25: exit at Hwy 66 and go west to Lyons. CO 66 changes to US Hwy 36 on the eastern edge of Lyons. To reach LaVern M. Johnson Park, continue on US Hwy 36 through town till the "T" at CO 7/ 5th Ave. Head south on CO 7 to Railroad Ave, then go west and the park will be on the south.

Access: Open all year, daylight hours

15. Hall Ranch Open Space

Description: The trails in this large park near Lyons rise rather steeply onto a forested ridge. On the way up, they run past dry shrubs full of Spotted Towhees, beneath bluffs where Canyon Wrens live. Townsend's Solitaire and Steller's Jay are often easy to find and Lazuli Bunting has been spotted here. Watch for rattlesnakes on the trails, and Golden Eagles soaring overhead. Note: dogs are not allowed at this property.

Directions: From I-25: exit at Hwy 66 and go west to Lyons. Go south on CO 7/St. Vrain Dr for approximately 1.5 miles. Hall Ranch parking lot is on the west side. The best birding is at the less-popular Antelope Trailhead. To reach this trail from Lyons, continue northwest on US Hwy 36 toward Estes Park and head west onto Apple Valley Rd. At the "Y" stay to the left on Antelope Dr, which ends at the trailhead.

Access: Open all year, daylight hours

16. Heil Valley Ranch

Description: Several trails on this 5,000 acre property wind through ponderosa pine forests and foothill meadows. The trails are very popular with hikers and mountain bikers, but with luck, especially first thing in the morning, you could run into Wild Turkeys or Dusky Grouse. Easier to find species include Western Tanager, Pygmy Nuthatch, and Black-headed Grosbeak, not to mention several species of squirrels. Note: dogs are not allowed at this property.

Directions: From Boulder: go north on US Hwy 36 about 4 miles to Lefthand Canyon Dr. Head west on Lefthand Canyon Dr and in 0.7 miles, go north onto Geer Canyon Dr. Head north for approximately 1 mile; the road will curve to the west and the Heil Ranch parking lot will be on the north.

Access: Open all year, daylight hours

Did You KNOW?

Peregrine Falcons

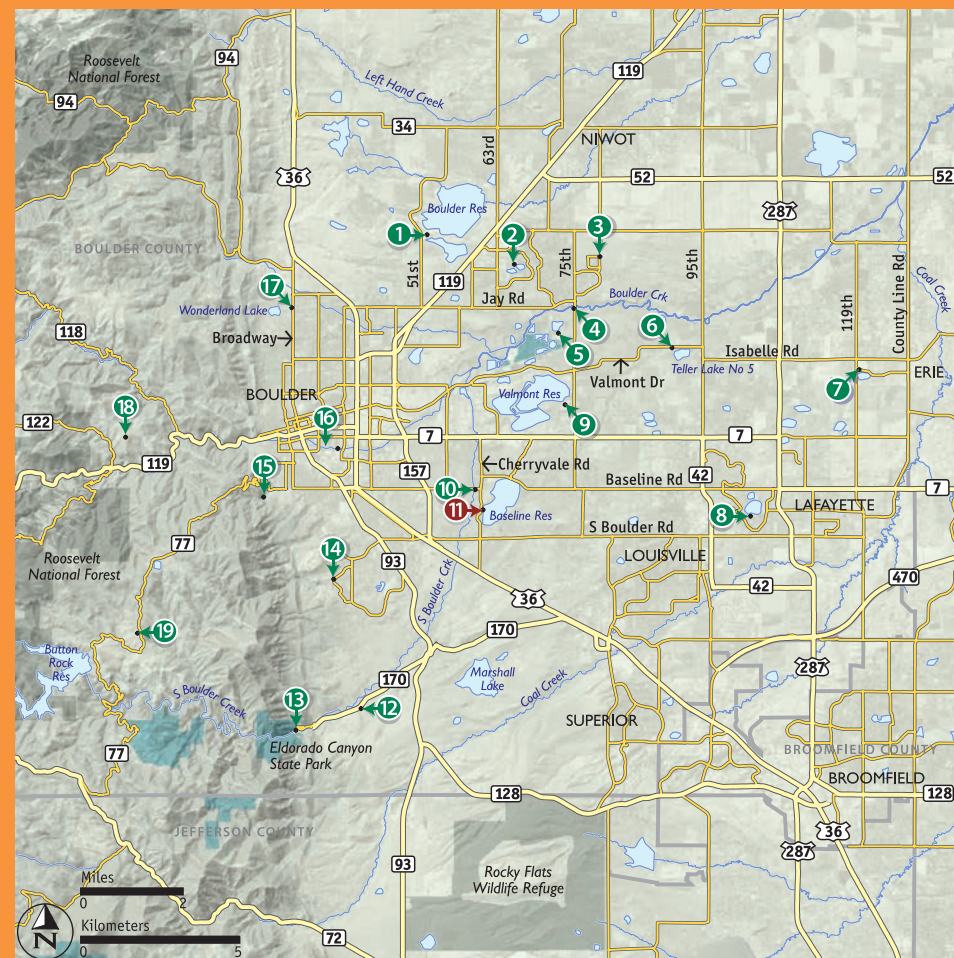


Peregrine Falcons are birds of prey that are increasingly found living the high life in cities across the country. Once threatened by pesticide (DDT) poisoning, recovery efforts by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and others have helped create today's stable populations, both here in Colorado and elsewhere. One reason - these cliff-nesters discovered skyscrapers and other tall buildings provide the protection needed to rear young! Cities also provide a smorgasbord of the birds they prefer to eat, especially pigeons. As the fastest-flying birds in the world - clocking in dives over 200mph - peregrines catch their prey in mid-air. Next time you are downtown, make sure to look to the sky... you may just spot one of these amazing raptors!

Flatirons Trail

The Greatest Outdoors

Famous as a symbol of the 1960s counterculture, former home of the beat poets, and now a hub of the tech industry, the university town of Boulder lies right at the base of the Rocky Mountains proper. Thanks to decades of open space preservation and land conservation, the Boulder area is packed with places to view wildlife. The mountain parks host nesting falcons and Golden Eagles; the foothill trails run through territories of MacGillivray's and Virginia's Warblers; and the wetlands make good nesting grounds for Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal. Boulderites love the outdoors more than almost anybody, and if you come to visit, you'll immediately see why.



Sites on the Flatirons Trail:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Boulder Reservoir | 11. Baseline Reservoir |
| 2. Twin Lakes Open Space | 12. Doudy Draw and the South Mesa Trail |
| 3. East Boulder Trail – Gunbarrel Farm / White Rocks Trail | 13. Eldorado Canyon State Park |
| 4. Boulder Creek & 75th Street | 14. Lower Bear Canyon Trail |
| 5. Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat and Sawhill Ponds | 15. Gregory Canyon |
| 6. Teller Lake #5 | 16. Boulder Creek (downtown section) |
| 7. Erie Lake and Thomas Reservoir | 17. Wonderland Lake |
| 8. Waneka Lake / Greenlee Wildlife Preserve | 18. Betasso Preserve |
| 9. Valmont Reservoir complex | 19. Walker Ranch Open Space |
| 10. Bobolink Trailhead | |



1. Boulder Reservoir

Description:

Anyone looking for waterbirds in Boulder County must make sure to check Boulder Reservoir, especially in autumn. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, a fee is charged for entry, but the birding is best after the weather cools down. Rarities that have been found here in fall include Red-necked Grebe, Pacific Loon, Arctic Tern, Long-tailed Jaeger, and Ruff. More likely finds are Osprey, Bald Eagle, Forster's Tern, and California Gull. Also consider visiting the adjacent Coot Lake for more viewing opportunities. Note: dogs are not allowed May 15 - Labor Day.

Directions:

From Denver: take US Hwy 36 west and exit CO 157/Foothills Pkwy north to CO 119/Diagonal Highway. Go northeast out of town on CO 119 to Jay Rd. Go west on Jay Rd, and just past the highway, head north onto 51st St. Continue north on 51st St for about 2 miles to Reservoir Rd. Go east on Reservoir Rd to the entrance station.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



2. Twin Lakes Open Space

Description:

These two lakes rarely attract many interesting waterbirds, but the trees around them can be terrific in spring migration for warblers, flycatchers, and other migrants. A well-known pair of Great Horned Owls nests in a hollow snag just across the creek from the path. In spring, when the young become visible in the nest, it is common to find a gaggle of owl-watchers blocking the trail.

Directions:

From Denver: take US Hwy 36 west toward Boulder and go north on CO 157/Foothills Parkway to CO 119/Diagonal Highway. Go northeast out of town on CO 119 to Jay Rd. Head east at Jay Rd for 1.5 miles to 63rd St. Go north on 63rd St for 0.7 miles to Nautilus Dr. Go east on Nautilus Dr, keeping left at the fork, and park along the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



3. East Boulder Trail – Gunbarrel Farm / White Rocks Trail

Description:

The open space and White Rocks Trailhead provide access to the same area from two different directions. Gunbarrel Open Space rises on a high prairie bluff with nesting Grasshopper Sparrow in summer, along with Western Kingbird, Horned Lark, and Blue Grosbeak. Traveling south, the trail drops down to cross the creek, where Tree Swallow, Warbling Vireo, and Bullock's Oriole nest, then runs to the White Rocks Trailhead. Note: dogs are not allowed at the White Rocks Nature Preserve.

Directions:

From Denver: take US Hwy 36 west toward Boulder and exit CO 157/Foothills Parkway north to CO 119/Diagonal Highway. Go northeast out of town on CO 119 to Jay Rd. Go east on Jay Rd for 3 miles to 75th St. Head north on 75th St for about 0.25 miles to Heatherwood Dr. Go northeast on Heatherwood to Cambridge St. Heatherwood will curve north and then west; Cambridge is just before Heatherwood heads west. Go north on Cambridge St and parking is at the end of the road, at the corner of Cambridge St and Boulderado Dr.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



4. Boulder Creek & 75th Street

Description:

Located next to Walden Ponds and connected via footpath, the bridge over the creek here is a traditional nesting site for American Dipper, and Eastern Phoebe has also nested here in some recent years. The trees attract spring migrants, including vagrant warblers.

Directions:

From Denver: Take US 36 west toward Boulder. Exit at CO 157/Foothills Pkwy and head north to Valmont Rd. Go east on Valmont Rd to 75th St heading north. In about a mile, the parking lot will be on the west side.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



5. Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat and Sawhill Ponds

Description:

These properties are some of the most important birding areas in Boulder. On the ponds, look for ducks, shorebirds, and the occasional vagrant. Near the parking lot for Walden Ponds, a boardwalk across Cottonwood Marsh provides up-close looks at Tree Swallows in nest boxes, and Red-winged Blackbirds on territory. Watch for garter snakes, frogs, and other critters along the edges of the ponds.

Directions:

From Denver: head west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36 and exit at Foothills Pkwy. Take Foothills Pkwy north and turn east on Valmont Rd. Head north on 75th St for 0.5 miles, then go west on Walden Ponds Rd to the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



6. Teller Lake #5

Description:

This lake sits amidst farmland utilized for livestock grazing, crop production, and even bee keeping! The water sometimes attracts interesting waterbirds and Dickcissel has at times bred in the fields to the south. Lark Bunting and Blue Grosbeak have also been spotted here. The nearby black-tailed prairie-dog colonies are sure to attract raptors and other predators. Note: dogs are not allowed at this property.

Directions:

From Denver: head west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36 and exit at Foothills Pkwy. Head north and turn east on Valmont Rd. The Teller Lakes trailhead is on the south side of Valmont Rd, about two miles east of 75th St.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



7. Erie Lake and Thomas Reservoir

Description:

These small lakes are best known as places to find gulls in the colder months, when the water is partly frozen. They can also attract ducks and other waterbirds, and rarities have been found in the area; Erie Reservoir even once boasted a Yellow-billed Loon.

Directions:

From Denver: head west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36. Exit CO 121/US Hwy 287 in Broomfield and head 7 miles north to Arapahoe Rd. Erie Reservoir is 0.25 miles north on US Hwy 287; the parking lot is on the east side. Thomas Reservoir is located at 119th and Austin Ave and the parking lot is on the south side of Austin Ave, just east of 119th.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



8. Waneka Lake / Greenlee Wildlife Preserve

Description:

This lake is a great place to look for birds in all seasons. In summer, Pied-billed and Western Grebes can be found on the lake, and Swainson's Hawk is easily seen. In migration, warblers and thrushes skulk in the undergrowth. In winter, ducks, geese, and gulls can congregate here, and the flocks can include rarities.

Directions:

From Denver: head west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36. Exit at CO 121/US Hwy 287 in Broomfield, and go north on US Hwy 287 for 6 miles to South Boulder Rd. Head west on South Boulder Rd to Centaur Village Dr. Go north on Centaur Village Dr, go west (left) on Caria Dr, and continue for about 0.25 miles to the Waneka Lake Park entrance.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours





9. Valmont Reservoir complex

Description:

This complex of three reservoirs is an important birding spot in Boulder. In spring and fall migration, look for Western Grebes, Eared Grebes, and many ducks; Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, and Ferruginous Hawk are also regularly seen hunting in the area. The reservoirs can be scanned with a scope at any time from the Legion Park overlook. Alternatively, during weekday business hours, one can drive in from 75th Street, park at the Open Space offices, and walk west, climbing the butte for the best view.

Directions:

From Denver: head west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36 to CO 157/Foothills Pkwy. Go north on CO 157 to CO 7/Arapahoe Rd and head east. Legion Park is on the north at the top of the hill, 2.5 miles east of Foothills Pkwy. To reach the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks Annex, continue east on CO 7/Arapahoe Rd to 75th St. Head north on 75th St to Red Deer Dr, and then west to the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

10. Bobolink Trailhead

Description:

From late May through mid-July, the stars of the show along this trail are - you guessed it - Bobolinks! This is one of the few reliable nesting sites for the species along the Colorado Front Range. A nice riparian walk along South Boulder Creek provides viewing of some water and forest birds and adjacent tallgrass prairie provides habitat for grassland birds.

Directions:

From Denver: take US Hwy 36 toward Boulder and go north on CO 157/Foothills Pkwy to Baseline Rd. Head east on Baseline Rd for about a mile, just west of Cherryvale Rd, to the parking lot and trailhead on the south.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



11. Baseline Reservoir

Description:

This private lake is a good place to look for migrating loons and diving ducks, including scoters, in late fall. Sometimes gulls roost on the southwest shore, near the road, where they are easily viewed. In winter, if the water is open, you may see some rare birds on the lake. The easiest viewing of the

reservoir is on the southwest side, off Cherryvale's wide shoulder. Please watch for traffic.

Directions:

From Foothills Parkway (CO 157) in Boulder: head east on Baseline Rd about one mile and turn right (south) on Cherryvale Rd. Pull over where the shoulder is wide, near the south end of the reservoir, to scan it from the roadside.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

12. Doudy Draw and the South Mesa Trail

Description:

These open space trailheads near Eldorado Springs provide access to miles of hiking trails and some riparian habitat along the creek. Look for Spotted Towhee, Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in dense scrub, and Lazuli Bunting and the occasional Red-eyed Vireo in the taller trees. Keep an eye out for herds of mule deer and elk along the trails. Note: there is a fee to park at this property.

Directions:

From Denver: head west toward Boulder on US 36. Exit at Louisville/Superior/McCaslin Blvd. and go south to Marshall Road/CO 170. Go west on CO 170 and at CO 93, cross 93 to continue on CO 170 for two more miles. The parking lot for Doudy Draw is on the south side and the South Mesa Trail is on the north.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



13. Eldorado Canyon State Park

Description:

Driving into Eldorado Canyon, you will be rewarded with spectacular views of enormous cliffs where Canyon Wrens, White-throated Swifts, and Violet-green Swallows nest. South Boulder Creek carves a path through the canyon, providing the potential for seeing American Dipper in the rushing stream. Farther inside the park, mixed conifer forest offers typical foothills species ranging from Western Tanager to the striking Abert's squirrel. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From Denver: head west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36. Exit at Louisville/Superior/McCaslin Blvd and go south to Marshall Rd/CO 170. Go west on CO 170 and at CO 93, cross CO 93 to continue on CO 170; after about 3 miles, the road dead-ends at the town

of Eldorado Springs. The road continues as a dirt road that dead-ends at the park, on the left.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



14. Lower Bear Canyon Trail

Description:

This easy trail leaves a neighborhood and parallels a shrub-filled drainage up into the ponderosa pines. Look for Bushtit, Spotted Towhee, and both Blue and Steller's Jay. It is good place to see migrant birds in late spring, and Virginia's and MacGillivray's Warbler in summer.

Directions:

From Denver: go west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36. US Hwy 36 changes to 28th St; continue north and at Table Mesa Dr, go west. In about 2 miles, head south on Lehigh St to Bear Mountain Dr. At Bear Mountain Dr, go southwest for 0.4 miles to the trailhead, located on the west side. Parking is on the street.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



15. Gregory Canyon

Description:

Right on the edge of Boulder, Gregory Canyon is excellent for a diversity of species, including Broad-tailed Hummingbird, three species of Empidonax flycatcher, Warbling and Plumbeous Vireo, Canyon Wren, Gray Catbird, Virginia and MacGillivray's Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Lesser Goldfinch. The cliffs overhead are home to Canyon Wrens and a few pairs of Peregrine and Prairie Falcons. Note: there is a fee to park at this property.

Directions:

From Denver: go west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36. Exit at Baseline Rd and head west. Baseline Rd will curve sharply north at the base of the foothills. Just past the curve on the west is Gregory Canyon Rd. Go south on Gregory Canyon Rd until it ends at the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



16. Boulder Creek (downtown section)

Description:

A paved walking and biking trail follows Boulder Creek through much of the city of Boulder, canopied by mature cottonwoods and willows. Breeding birds include White-breasted Nuthatch, Warbling Vireo, and the rare Eastern Screech-Owl. Migrants pass through in spring and fall and American Dipper can be found along the creek, especially in winter.

Directions:

The trail has many access points. To get to one of the best areas for birding, from Denver: go west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36, which becomes 28th St. Go west at Colorado Ave, then north on Folsom St. At the bottom of the hill, just past the bridge, go west into a university parking lot. There are some metered public parking spaces near the creek path.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



17. Wonderland Lake

Description:

Nestled in a scenic neighborhood in north Boulder, this area offers open space, short and easy trails, and water access that attracts a diversity of waterfowl. Trails leading away from the lake cross foothills grassland and tallgrass prairie stands, providing plenty of habitat for a variety of birds.

Directions:

From Denver: head west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36. US Hwy 36 will curve to the right and changes to 28th St. Continue north and at CO 119/Iris Ave, go west to CO 7/Broadway. Head north on Broadway for 2-3 miles; the parking lot is at 4201 North Broadway, adjacent to the Foothills Nature Center.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours





18. Betasso Preserve

Description:

This popular park west of Boulder, with miles of trail through meadows and pine savannahs, is a great place to find specialty species of the ponderosa belt, including Mountain and Western Bluebirds, Pygmy Nuthatch, Wild Turkey, and the tufted-eared Abert's squirrel.

Directions:

From US Hwy 36: head west toward Boulder and continue as the road curves north and changes to 28th St. Go north on 28th St to CO 119/Boulder Canyon Dr. Head west on CO 119 to CR 122/Sugarloaf Rd. Go north on CR 122 to Betasso Rd. Head east on Betasso for about 0.5 miles and at the fork, continue north to the main parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



19. Walker Ranch Open Space

Description:

This open space in the foothills above Boulder is a good place to find low-elevation mountain species like Pygmy Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, Mountain Bluebird, and both sapsuckers. In winter, you can find flocks of Dark-eyed Junco, including all five Colorado subspecies. Keep your eye to the sky, as Golden Eagles sometimes fly over the mountain. Be sure to stop by the Flagstaff Nature Center at the summit of Flagstaff Mountain Road.

Directions:

From Denver: go west toward Boulder on US Hwy 36. Exit at Baseline Rd and head west. Continue on Baseline; it turns sharply and changes to Flagstaff Rd. The first Walker Ranch trailhead is on the west side. To reach additional trails and the historic homestead, continue south on Flagstaff Rd.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



Northeast Region Plains to Peaks

What makes the northeast region unique from other places in Colorado? In the span of about 1.5 hours or less, you can drive from Denver's prairie grasslands (below 4,000 – 5,500 feet) to the alpine tundra at the top of Mt. Evans (14,264 feet). That means you can explore almost all of the ecosystems found in Colorado in just one day. Outside of Colorado, if you wanted to experience the diversity of habitat and species transitioning from montane areas (5,500-10,00 feet) to the subalpine forest (8,500-12,500 feet), to the alpine tundra (12,000 feet+), you would have to drive 3,000 miles north to the Arctic Circle!

If you would like to take a journey discovering birds and other wildlife found in a diversity of ecosystems, check out the Mount Evans Scenic Byway. At 14,264 feet, Mt. Evans is the 14th highest peak in Colorado, and the road taking you to the top is the highest paved road in North America. As one of only two “fourteeners” in Colorado accessible by vehicle, Mt. Evans is a popular destination for people of all ages and abilities to experience life at the top of the world.

Make sure to stop by Summit Lake (12,830 feet), an easily accessible high alpine lake with parking just a few hundred feet away. Summit Lake Flats is found just east of the lake and is the only known area of permafrost located in the United States outside of Alaska.

Please keep in mind, the alpine tundra is an incredibly fragile environment. With a harsh climate creating short growing seasons, some alpine plants take 10 years or more to flower. Make sure to travel on designated trails, leave the flowers for others to enjoy, keep your dog leashed at all times, and pack your trash out with you. Be aware the animals that live above the trees at Mt. Evans may appear tame, as they can be very tolerant of people. However, they are still wild animals and can be potentially dangerous. Always maintain a safe distance and never feed wildlife.

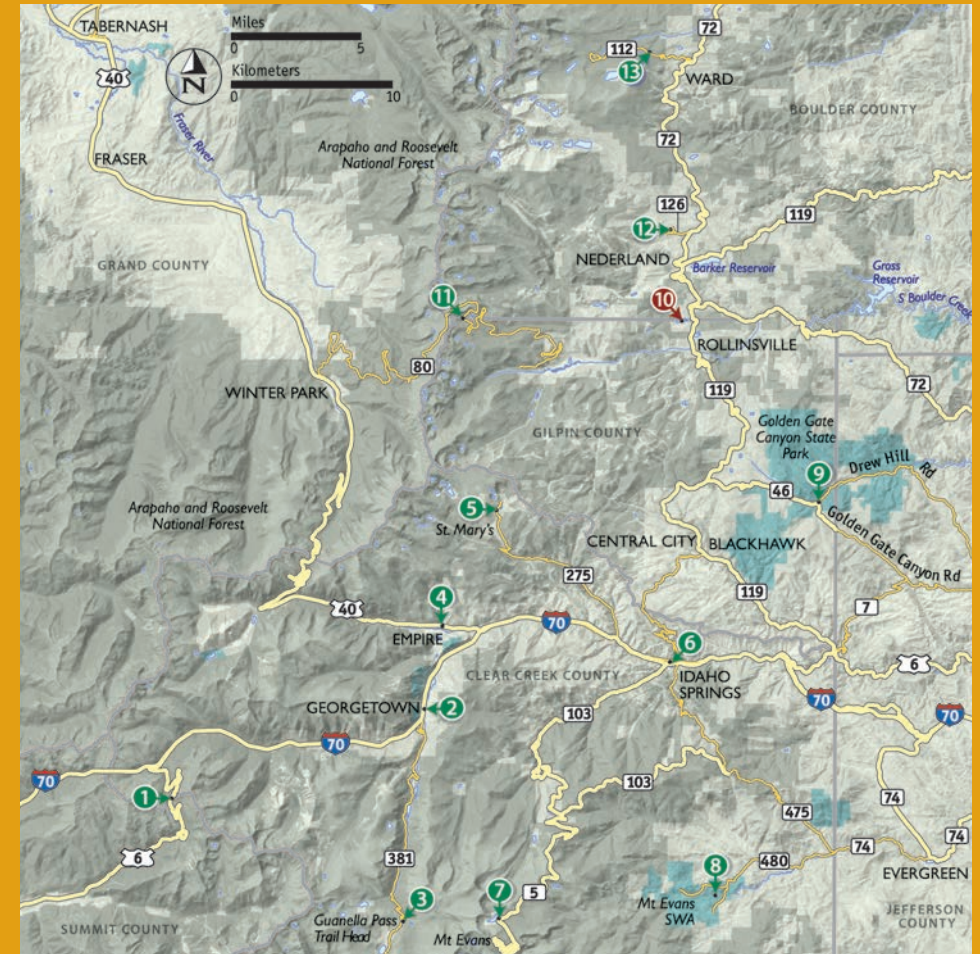




Peak to Peak Trail

Denver's Mountainous Backyard

The Front Range is a phalanx of snow-capped mountains that guards the center of Colorado against any approach from the east. Today it is possible to explore the east flank of the Front Range on roads that follow these peaks, and in summer, it is possible to drive right to the top of some of them. Here you will find the nearest alpine tundra to Denver, the closest opportunity to rise above treeline into the realm of pika, marmots, White-tailed Ptarmigan, and Brown-capped Rosy-Finch. Here are ponderosa forests with sapsuckers and crossbills, spruces harboring Gray Jays and nutcrackers, bighorn sheep licking salt off the highway shoulder, and old mining towns that have reinvented themselves in myriad ways. This is Denver's mountainous backyard, a must-visit area for anyone interested in Colorado nature.



Sites on the Peak to Peak Trail:

1. Loveland Pass
2. Georgetown and Silver Plume
3. Guanella Pass
4. Empire
5. St. Mary's Glacier
6. Idaho Springs
7. Mount Evans
8. Mount Evans State Wildlife Area
9. Golden Gate Canyon State Park
10. Los Lagos Reservoir #3
11. Rollins Pass (East side)
12. Caribou Ranch Open Space
13. Brainard Lake Recreation Area



1. Loveland Pass

Description:

Some of the most easily accessed alpine tundra near Denver, Loveland Pass is the classic spot for White-tailed Ptarmigan during the colder months. In summer, look for American Pipit, Horned Lark, and sometimes Brown-capped Rosy-Finch. The pass can also be a good area for hiking in the summer and skiing in the winter, and offers some of the best high-land butterflying in the state, with several rare species possible, such as Polixenes Arctic and Magdalena Alpine.

Directions:

From I-70: exit 216, US Hwy 6/Loveland Pass Rd, just before the Eisenhower Tunnel. Head southeast on US Hwy 6, past Loveland Basin Ski Area. There is a large pull-out area at the top of the pass, on the east side.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



2. Georgetown and Silver Plume

Description:

These two historic mining towns are a good place to experience some of Colorado's history. For birds, check for feeders during the colder months, and various breeding species in the trees around town in the warmer months. American Dippers are sometimes found in the streams that pass through both towns. You are also almost guaranteed to see Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in this area in November and December when rams migrate down the mountain to clash for mating rights with ewes. Visit the Georgetown Bighorn Sheep Festival, stop by the Gateway Visitor Center, or hit the Viewing Station just east of town to catch the sheep in action.

Directions:

Georgetown is on I-70 at exit 228. Head south and pass under the freeway; immediately to the west is the Gateway Visitor Center. Silver Plume is two miles west on I-70 at exit 226.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



3. Guanella Pass

Description:

One of Colorado's Scenic Byways and mostly closed in the winter, Guanella Pass makes for a beautiful back route between I-70 and South Park. American Three-toed Woodpeckers can often be found in the forest,

along with Fox Sparrows in the willows, and (with luck) White-tailed Ptarmigan on the tundra. Guanella is a very popular trip for leaf-peepers looking for fall aspen colors, so be prepared for long lines of traffic traveling over the pass in autumn.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 228 and go south under the freeway; at the roundabout, go west onto Argentine St. At the "Y" continue west onto Brownell St, which ends at 6th St. Head south on 6th St to Ross St, and go west on Ross St to 2nd St. Head south on 2nd St - it leads onto Guanella Pass Rd/FR 381.

Access:

Closed during the winter months, daylight hours



4. Empire

Description:

The little town of Empire sits right at the junction of US 40 and I-70, and offers a good stopover for anyone looking to re-stock. Bird-wise, look for American Dipper along the creek in town, and (in winter), rosy-finches and Evening Grosbeaks at feeders. This area can also be favorable to viewing bighorn sheep.

Directions:

From I-70: just west of Downieville, take exit 233 and transition to US 40. Continue on US 40 to Empire.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



5. St. Mary's Glacier

Description:

If you're looking to spend a pleasant day hiking through a variety of montane habitats, with a chance to see most of the species desired by visiting birders, then look no further than the St. Mary's Glacier Trail. Rising from willow carrs through spruce woodland and onto alpine tundra, the full suite of mountain species can be found here, including White-tailed Ptarmigan (with luck) higher up. Also, look out for other mountain species, including bighorn sheep and mountain goat. Note: there's a daily parking fee at this location.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 238/Fall River Rd, just west of Idaho Springs. Head north on Fall River Rd for 9 miles; there are 2 parking areas on the west side of the road, one south of the trail head and the other one just north of the trail head.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; difficult to access during the winter months



6. Idaho Springs

Description:

The largest town in Clear Creek County is also the best place to base yourself for a trip up Mt. Evans. Idaho Springs is a good place to stock up before a trip to the backcountry, or visit a restaurant to celebrate your return. Birding opportunities in town are more limited, but a bike path along the nearby river sometimes has American Dipper and others.

Directions:

Idaho Springs is on I-70 between exits 241A, on the east end, and exit 240, on the west end. Idaho Springs is approximately twenty miles west of Golden.

Access:

Open all year



7. Mount Evans

Description:

The most accessible "fourteener" in the country, Mount Evans is also home to the highest road in the US. From Echo Lake at the foot of the road to expansive tundra near the top, you could spend all day looking for different species. In the forested areas, look for Williamson's Sapsucker, Clark's Nutcracker, Pine Grosbeak, and much more, while higher up, watch for Brown-capped Rosy-finch, White-tailed Ptarmigan, American Pipit, and mountain goat. When open, Mt. Evans is very busy and though animals may seem tame, they are still wild and potentially dangerous. Be sure to visit early and always keep a safe distance from wildlife.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 240, CO 103/Squaw Pass Rd and go south for 13 miles to Echo Lake Lodge. Continue south onto CO 5/Mount Evans Rd to the fee station. Summit Lake is on the west side of CO 5, 9 miles above the lodge; the peak is another 5 miles above Summit Lake.

Access:

Open Memorial Day to Labor Day to the Summit. Open Memorial Day to First Weekend in October to Summit Lake



8. Mount Evans State Wildlife Area

Description:

Not to be confused with the famous Mt. Evans, this SWA actually has some beautiful mature Ponderosa Pine forest, with possible species including Williamson's Sapsucker, Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, and Cassin's Finch. However, the SWA is completely closed to public access between January 1 and June 14, as it is critical winter and breeding grounds for elk. Additionally, use is restricted to only fishing and hunting activities from the day after Labor Day to (typically) mid-November. Vehicles are restricted from entering the day after Labor Day until June 14. Be sure to check current regulations before visiting.

Directions:

From I-70: exit at CO 74/Evergreen Pkwy and go 6 miles south to Evergreen Lake. At the lake, go west on Upper Bear Creek Rd for 6.5 miles. The road will fork - stay to the right and continue west, as Bear Creek Rd turns into CR 480. CR 480 will fork a second time; stay to the left and continue to the SWA.

Access:

June 15 to December 31, daylight hours



9. Golden Gate Canyon State Park

Description:

Golden Gate Canyon is a large state park beautifully situated in the upper foothills with a wide range of montane habitats, along with an extensive network of walking trails. The best roadside birding is along Mountain Base Road, and several trails heading off it allow further exploration, while lower lying areas near the Visitor's Center have extensive willows worth checking out. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 265/Hwy 58. Continue west on Hwy 58 to Hwy 93. Go north on Hwy 93 for 1 mile to Golden Gate Canyon Rd. Head west on Golden Gate Canyon Rd for 13 miles to the park entrance. At Crawford Gulch, make a sharp right and then another right turn at the Visitor's Center Parking Lot. See website for more detailed directions.

Access:

Open all year





10. Los Lagos Reservoir #3

Description:

The epitome of a birdy mountain lake, this small private reservoir sits right next to the highway on the Boulder/Gilpin county line and can be scanned from the road. It is best viewed during the summer and fall, and can have everything from Ring-necked Duck to Eared Grebe to nesting Osprey and Wilson's Snipe.

Directions:

From I-70: exit at US Hwy 6 and go east. US Hwy 6 "Ts" at CO 119; head northwest and continue through Black Hawk and Rollinsville. From Rollinsville, the reservoir is 1.7 miles. From CO 119, go west on Sayre Rd to the reservoir.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

11. Rollins Pass (East side)

Description:

While no longer a through-road to the western side of the divide, the Rollins Pass road still provides 4WD access to alpine tundra, as well as spruce-fir forest and willow thickets, which can hold Fox and Lincoln's Sparrows, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers, and Dusky Flycatcher. In the spruce-fir, look for American Three-toed Woodpecker, and on the tundra, you might find White-tailed Ptarmigan and Brown-capped Rosy-finch. Be aware the condition of the road can be rocky; a high-clearance vehicle with 4-wheel drive is recommended.

Directions:

From Rollinsville on CO 119: head west on CR 16/E Portal Rd for 7.5 miles to CR 117/Rollins Pass Rd. Go north on CR 117 for approximately 12 miles, to the end of the road.

Access:

Summer



12. Caribou Ranch Open Space

Description:

This open space is closed each year from April 1 to June 30 to protect migratory birds and the resident elk herd during calving season. At other times of year, one can hike through high-elevation mixed conifer forests where Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Gray-headed Junco, and Abert's squirrels breed. Note: dogs are not allowed at this property.

Directions:

From Boulder: head west on CO 119/Canyon Blvd to the town of Nederland. At the traffic circle, take

the second right onto CO 72/the Peak-to-Peak Hwy. In 1.7 miles, go west on CR 126. The open space trailhead will be 0.9 miles ahead on the north.

Access:

July 1 - March 31, daylight hours



13. Brainard Lake Recreation Area

Description:

The Brainard Lake area is a good place to look for Gray Jays, American Three-toed Woodpeckers, and Dusky Grouse. In the winter months, the Brainard Lake road is closed near the highway, and one must walk (or better yet, snowshoe or ski) to reach the lake. Boreal Owls have occasionally been reported at night. Moose increasingly call Brainard home, and hunting is to be expected in this area in season. Be advised, this area is crowded on weekends, and parking is a challenge; there is also an entrance fee to the area in summer - cash or check only. Beware of afternoon thunderstorms and bring a detailed map.

Directions:

From Boulder: go west on CO 119/Canyon Blvd to the town of Nederland. At the traffic circle, take the second right onto CO 72/Peak-to-Peak Hwy. In 11.5 miles, just north of the town of Ward, go west onto the Brainard Lake Rd to the entrance station.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; walk in access only from mid-October to June



Colorado's "Sandhill Dancers"

As the sun rises over the eastern plains on a crisp spring morning in early April, a group of male Greater Prairie Chickens vocalize through clucks and "booms" as they approach their lek (also called a booming ground), a selected area where they "dance" to attract females. Under the right conditions, the booming sound of males, which can be described as a deep-hooting moan, can be heard up to 4 miles away. In addition to vocal sounds, the males will rapidly drum their feet, snap their tail feathers together, and inflate distinctive orange air sacs on their neck to gain the attention of a nearby female. Males also sport yellow combs over each eye and will hold up their long neck feathers, which look like ears when held erect.

Also known as "Sandhill Dancers," Greater Prairie Chickens are known for this extraordinary performance put on by males during mating season. Each year, 8-20 males gather together on the lek to start strutting in advance of the females' arrival. These elaborate mating rituals may last for up to 2 months and the birds will use the same lek year after year. An individual male will set up territory within the boundary of the grounds, defending his area through cock fighting and stand-offs with intruders.

These energetic little birds (weighing only 2 lbs.) are related to grouse and are native to Colorado. Native American legend says the Greater Prairie Chicken was created to show the other animals how to dance. In Colorado, they can be found in sandsage grasslands on sandhills in the northeastern part of the state within Yuma, Washington, and southern Phillips counties. They feed on seeds, plant buds, fruits, grains and insects. Females lay 7-17 eggs in a nest hidden on the ground in tall grasses, lined with grass, leaves and feathers. After hatching, the young are able to feed themselves and follow mom around. They will remain with her for about 3 months.

Once listed on the state's endangered species list, the Greater Prairie Chicken has made a comeback through conservation and recovery efforts. Due to habitat loss, by 1973, only 600 Greater Prairie Chickens remained. Conservation partnerships between Colorado Parks and Wildlife and landowners on the eastern plains focused mainly on habitat improvement and by 2012, the population was estimated to be 10,000-12,000 - a healthy population that could sustain regulated hunting with a limited harvest.

During the months of March and April, wildlife viewers can join tours to see the birds perform their extravagant courtship dance on their established leks. These tours provide bird viewing enthusiasts with an opportunity to witness one of the best shows put on by mother nature in the natural world.

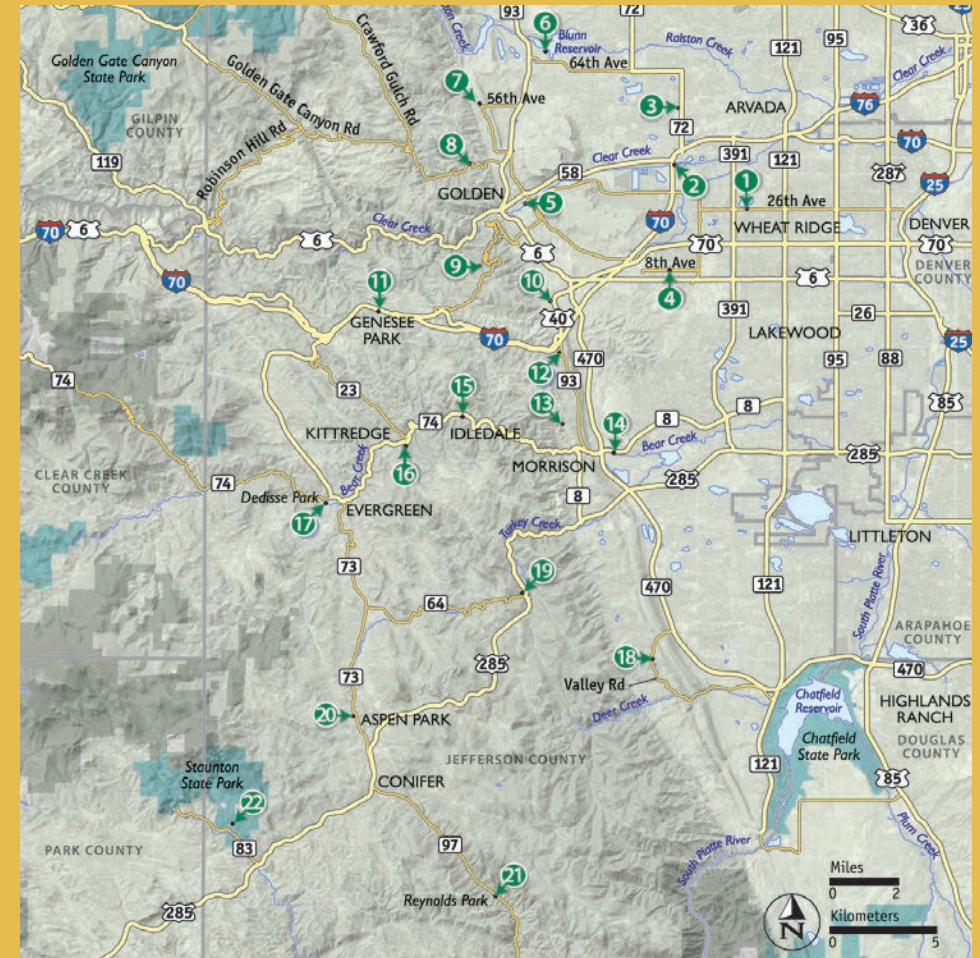




Red Rocks Trail

Where the City Meets the Mountains

The west side of urban Denver runs smack into the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. In a strip between the pine forest and the grass, you can explore an area of hogback ridges, huge red sandstone rock formations, and semiarid shrublands. Canyon Wrens and Yellow-breasted Chats sing, scrub-jays and magpies complain, chipmunks chatter, and Peregrine and Prairie Falcons build nests in the cliffs. Sometimes, herds of elk roam into view. Thanks to a spectacular system of parks established with nearly a century of foresight, huge tracts of beautiful and quality habitat have been preserved for posterity, only minutes from the city.



Sites on the Red Rocks Trail

1. Crown Hill Park and Crown Hill Cemetery
2. Wheat Ridge Greenbelt
3. Van Bibber Park
4. Welchester Tree Grant Park
5. Golden
6. Arvada Blunn Reservoir
7. White Ranch Park
8. Mt. Galbraith Open Space
9. Lookout Mountain Nature Center and Preserve
10. Apex Park
11. Genesee Park
12. Matthews / Winters Park and Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch
13. Red Rocks Park
14. Bear Creek Lake Park
15. Lair O' the Bear Park
16. O'Fallon Mountain Park
17. Evergreen Area
18. South Valley Park
19. Turkey Creek Park
20. Conifer Area
21. Reynolds Open Space Park
22. Staunton State Park



1. Crown Hill Park and Crown Hill Cemetery

Description:

Crown Hill Lake, in the park of the same name, is a good place to look for geese and diving ducks, including Red-breasted Mergansers in winter. A couple of groves on the north side of the park are worth birding. East of the park and lake is the massive Crown Hill Cemetery. Bird the evergreens in winter hoping for species like crossbills, Cassin's Finch, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, and Bohemian Waxwing.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 267/Kipling St and go south for two miles and the park will be on the east side. Head east at 26th Ave to reach the main parking lot for Crown Hill Park. To reach Crown Hill Cemetery, go east on 32nd Ave to Wadsworth Blvd, south to 29th Ave, and then east into the cemetery.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; The Wildlife Sanctuary and Kestrel Pond are closed during peak nesting season from March 1 to June 30



2. Wheat Ridge Greenbelt

Description:

Long famous as Denver's best migrant trap, the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt has some of the best riparian habitat in the metro area. It is also relatively compact for a greenbelt, with the best opportunities concentrated along Clear Creek between Youngfield and Kipling streets. This area encompasses mature cottonwood forest, four good-sized ponds, and quite a bit of brushy marsh and swampy second growth. The best time to visit is obviously during migration, when nearly anything can show up. The winter is, as expected, much slower, but a determined observer may see a few interesting species.

Directions:

West Parking Lot: from I-70 take exit 266/Ward Rd and go south to 44th Ave. Head west on 44th Ave and then south on Youngfield St. The parking lot is on the east side of Youngfield, just after the Clear Creek bridge. East Parking Lot: from I-70 take exit 267/Kipling St and go south about three quarters of a mile to 41st Ave. Head west on 41st Ave and look for signs to the greenbelt parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



3. Van Bibber Park

Description:

Van Bibber Park offers quality habitat for a diversity of wildlife and is a popular stop for migrating birds. The Van Bibber Creek wetlands attract a variety of waterfowl, as well as amphibians and insects. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was even once seen in this area. An observation deck on-site makes this a great destination to keep an eye out for visiting birds!

Directions:

From I-70: exit at Kipling St and go north to 58th Ave. Head west on 58th Ave to Ward Rd and then go south. A large parking lot is located on the west side of Ward Rd, just south of 58th Ave. Note: left-hand turns from northbound Ward Rd are prohibited. Another small parking lot is located on the west side of the park, just south of Indiana and 56th Ave.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



4. Welchester Tree Grant Park

Description:

This small park's beautifully dense trees, combined with a migrant trap effect due to its location, make this one of the better places in the city to hope for uncommon migrants. The list of rare warblers that have shown up here is impressively long, and migration here can be good.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 262/Colfax Ave and go east to Indiana St (the first stop light). Go south on Indiana for 0.3 miles to 7th Ave. Go east on 7th Ave; it will curve to the north and then back to the east before changing to 8th Ave. Continue on 8th Ave to the park, located on the north. Parking is along the north side of the street on the shoulder.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



5. Golden

Description:

Famous for its breweries, the Colorado School of Mines, and its beautiful location, Golden is a town worth visiting for non-birding reasons alone. The best places to bird here are Tony Grampas Memorial Sports Complex, the tree-filled School of Mines campus, or in one of the Jefferson County Open Space's numerous parks they manage in this area - check out their website for more information on

nearby parks.

Directions:

Golden is along US 6, just north of the junction of I-70 and C-470.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



6. Arvada Blunn Reservoir

Description:

This large reservoir, while not as productive as other Denver area lakes, can often have good numbers of waterfowl and the odd loon in the fall and spring. There are also some decent riparian thickets and groves along the walking trail on the western edge of the reservoir that should be checked during migration.

Directions:

From I-70: transition to westbound CO 58/Golden Highway. CO 58 ends at CO 93; head north to 64th Pkwy. Go east a quarter mile on W. 64th; the road changes to 66th Ave and the park entrance is on the north.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



7. White Ranch Park

Description:

One of the larger open space parks in the area, White Ranch has two different entrances that provide access to different montane habitats. The eastern entrance has abundant foothill scrub and some riparian woodland; the western entrance provides an area of ponderosa woodland and montane meadows. The whole area is also good for mountain biking and hiking, so if either of these activities is your cup of tea, White Ranch is a good place to combine them with some birding.

Directions:

Eastern Parking Lot (lower): From I-70: transition to westbound CO 58/Golden Highway. CO 58 will end at CO 93; head north on 93 about 1.5 miles to West 56th Ave. Go west and follow 56th about a mile until it ends at Pine Ridge Rd. Go north into the parking lot. Western Parking Lot (upper): from CO 58/Golden Highway and CO 93, go north for about one mile to Golden Gate Canyon Rd and head west. In about 4 miles, go north onto Crawford Gulch Rd. The park is on the east side, a few miles up the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



8. Mt. Galbraith Open Space

Description:

Situated low in the scenic Golden Gate Canyon, Mt. Galbraith Open Space is the first and best of several places to bird the canyon. A good walking trail passes both dense foothill scrub and cottonwood riparian habitats, eventually ascending into ponderosa pines. Lazuli Bunting can be common here during the summer months; look for Virginia's Warbler, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, and Canyon and Rock Wrens.

Directions:

From I-70: transition to westbound CO 58/Golden Highway. CO 58 ends at CO 93; head north on CO 93 for approximately two miles to Golden Gate Canyon Road. Go west for approximately 2 miles to the parking area, located on the south.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



9. Lookout Mountain Nature Center and Preserve

Description:

Lookout Mountain is an easy morning trip from the metro area that can add a lot of variety to your list on a visit to the city. All the typical ponderosa birds are possible, including Williamson's Sapsucker, Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, Cassin's Finch, the occasional Evening Grosbeak, and (with a good deal of luck) Dusky Grouse. Several mammal species not typically present this close to Denver could be seen, including bighorn sheep and elk. Be sure to stop in the Nature Center for a schedule of educational programs and more! Note: dogs are not allowed at the preserve.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 256/Lookout Mountain and go north to US 40. Head west on US 40 for 1/4 mile to Lookout Mountain Rd. Go north on Lookout Mountain Rd to Colorow Rd and continue north to the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, Nature Center - Closed Mondays; Tuesday - Friday: 12 PM - 4 PM; Saturday & Sunday: 11 AM - 4 PM; Nature Preserve - 8:00 AM to dusk





10. Apex Park

Description:

Like nearby Red Rocks Park, Apex has some beautiful foothill scrub with the associated birds. Unlike Red Rocks, there are rarely hordes of people here, allowing for a more pleasant walk while you're looking for Canyon Wren, Lazuli Bunting, Spotted Towhee, Yellow-breasted Chat, or other breeders in the area. This area is among the best places in Colorado to search for the rare Moss's Elfin butterfly.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 259, US 40/Colfax Blvd and go southwest for 1.2 miles. US 40 will curve to the south; use the entrance for Heritage Square on the west. After the turn into Heritage Park, immediately go north into the parking area for Apex Park.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



11. Genesee Park

Description:

As City of Denver's first and largest mountain park, Genesee is the classic ponderosa forest location near Denver. Look especially around the parking lot at the top of the road ascending off of I-70 for Williamson's Sapsucker (March-October), Pygmy Nuthatch, Cassin's Finch, Western Bluebird, and more. The lower Chief Hosa section of the park, on the other side of I-70, traverses a more riparian habitat and has species such as Western Tanager, Warbling Vireo, Lazuli Bunting, and Spotted Towhee. Make sure to stop by the Buffalo Herd Overlook to see Colorado's first bison herd, re-established in 1914.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 254/Genesee Park. Head south over the highway and go west at the "T" onto Genesee Mountain Rd. Follow this road as it winds west around Genesee Mountain to Genesee Dr. Continue west on Genesee Dr to the park.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



12. Matthews / Winters Park and Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch

Description:

Colorado's only hawk watch site, staffed every spring by volunteers, Dinosaur Ridge is one of the best places to look for raptors along the Front Range. The best time for viewing tends to be from

late March through early May. The juniper woodland often has flocks of Bushtits roving the hillsides, along with Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay and Rock and Canyon Wrens. Don't forget to stop at the Dinosaur Ridge Visitor Center to learn more about the area's dinosaurs and more!

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 259, CO 93/Morrison exit. Go south to pass under the highway and enter the Stegosaurus Park-n-Ride lot on the east. The Dakota Ridge Trail can be accessed from this lot. To reach Matthew-Winter's Park, continue south on CO 93 for a short distance to the parking lot entrance on the west side.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



13. Red Rocks Park

Description:

Famed the world over as a musical venue and for its spectacular scenery, Red Rocks is also one of the best birding locations in the Denver area foothills. During colder months, the feeders at the Trading Post can draw in large numbers of birds. As the year begins to warm, several foothill species like White-throated Swift, Canyon and Rock Wrens, and Lazuli Bunting begin to show up and hang around through summer. There is also a good shot at seeing both Prairie and Peregrine Falcons if you keep an eye to the sky, as both species nest here.

Directions:

There are multiple entrances to Red Rocks Park. From I-70: exit 259, CO 93/Morrison and go south to Alameda Pkwy. Head west on Alameda Pkwy to access the north parking lots. To access the south parking lots, continue south on CO 93 to Red Rock Parks Rd, southwest to Indian Post Rd, and northwest into the parking lots.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



14. Bear Creek Lake Park

Description:

Though overshadowed by Chatfield just to the south, Bear Creek Lake is worth visiting in its own right, especially during migration. Just about any species of waterfowl could show up at this large lake, and there are usually a few loons present during the fall, along with gulls of various stripes. The best viewing tends to be from Pelican Point. The

park also has abundant riparian habitat with a good system of trails along Bear Creek and Turkey Creek; they are most productive during migration, but even in the summer can be worth exploring. Note: there is an entrance fee for this property.

Directions:

From C-470: exit at CO 8/Morrison Rd and go east for approximately 0.25 miles. Head south on Kumpfmiller Dr; it will curve to the east to the entrance station for Bear Creek Lake Park.

Access:

Open all year, hours vary (check the website for current hours)



15. Lair O' the Bear Park

Description:

Situated along Bear Creek Canyon, Lair O' the Bear Park has some high-quality riparian habitat, as well as more typical foothill habitats. The creek itself is among the best places anywhere to see American Dipper, where one is almost always around any time of year. Migrants should be looked for in season, and with the quality of habitat here, you never know what could show up! This park is very popular, so be sure to arrive early.

Directions:

From C-470: exit at CO 8/Morrison Rd and go west through the town of Morrison. At the west end of Morrison, continue straight on CO 74 through the town of Idledale. The parking lot will be on the south side.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



16. O'Fallon Mountain Park

Description:

The habitat at O'Fallon Mountain Park has a higher-elevation flavor, with more ponderosa and mixed-conifer woodland and fewer riparian areas. There are some nice large willow trees along the river, and the overall mix of habitats results in a variety of species of both higher and lower elevations. Along the creek, check for Cordilleran Flycatcher and American Dipper, both fairly common here during the summer months. Be sure to stop at nearby Mount Falcon Park for more viewing opportunities.

Directions:

From C-470: exit at CO 8/Morrison Rd and head west through the town of Morrison. At the west

end of Morrison, continue straight on CO 74 to the town of Kittridge. At Lines Ln, go south; the road will curve to the north and the parking lot will be on the east side.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



17. Evergreen Area

Description:

Another of the charming foothill towns outside of Denver, Evergreen is a good place to vacation away from the city. It's also a decent birding location in its own right. The best spot is undoubtedly Evergreen Lake, surrounded by a park with good walking trails that provide easy access. Also, be sure to stop by the Evergreen Audubon & Nature Center located in the historic warming hut on Evergreen Lake. There are several other parks in the general area, most of which are covered in ponderosa woodland with a mix of foothills scrub. You may want to check out Jefferson County Open Space's website for ideas; the best option is probably Alderfer/Three Sisters Park.

Directions:

From I-70: exit at CO 74/Evergreen Pkwy. Go south on CO 74 for 8 miles to Evergreen Lake. To reach the parking lot, head west on Bear Creek Rd, then south into the parking entrance for the Evergreen Lakehouse. To reach Alderfer/Three Sisters Park, continue south on CO 74 around the lake. At the three-way signal, go southwest onto CO 73 to Buffalo Park Rd. Head west on Buffalo Park Rd to the parking entrance for the lower lot on the north. The upper parking lot is located about a 1/4 mile further up Buffalo Park Rd.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



18. South Valley Park

Description:

Not far from the famed Red Rocks, the topography at this foothills park is very reminiscent of its more well-known neighbor. Numerous rock outcroppings, tons of thick foothills scrub, and some good riparian habitat along Deer Creek offer a good variety of species to look for most of the year. Keep an eye out for White-throated Swift, Canyon and Rock Wrens, Golden Eagle, and Prairie Falcon nesting on the cliffs, as well as a variety of foothill scrub species.

**Directions:**

From C-470: exit at Ken Caryl Ave and go west. At South Valley Rd, head south for just under a mile to the parking area, on the east.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

**19. Turkey Creek Park****Description:**

Located near tourist attraction Tiny Town, this park has a nice mix of ponderosa and mixed conifer woodlands, along with smaller meadows and areas of foothills scrub. The lower parts of the trail are excellent for Red-naped Sapsucker and Wild Turkey; with luck, Dusky Grouse could be found throughout the area. More common montane species such as Pygmy and Red-breasted Nuthatches, Red Crossbill, and Cordilleran Flycatcher are also present. The park is well-known for its uncommon butterfly species you might find during spring and summer, including Hoary and Moss's Elfins, and Indra Swallowtail.

Directions:

From C-470: head south on US 285 for 5.5 miles to South Turkey Creek Road. The exit will be on the east and parallel US 285 South. Across the road from Tiny Town, park in the large dirt parking lot on the east. The trail starts behind the wire fence at the back end of the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

**20. Conifer Area****Description:**

Conifer is a beautiful little foothill town just west of Denver, and makes for a perfect base for exploring the lower montane habitats found in the area. There are a number of parks near Conifer that are quite similar to each other, and visiting any of them would probably net the target species. One of the best of the bunch is Flying J Ranch Open Space, where you can find abundant, high-quality mixed-conifer woodlands interspersed with aspen groves, large meadows, and even a small pond. Beaver Ranch Open Space, just south of Conifer, has all of the same habitats, while at Meyer Ranch Open Space, just northeast of Conifer, there is an extensive system of trails guiding you through some nice habitat.

Directions:

Conifer is along US 285, 15 miles from the junction

with C-470. For Meyer Ranch - from US 285: exit at South Turkey Creek Rd, pass under the freeway and the parking lot will be at the "T". To reach Flying J Open Space: exit at Barkley Rd and then head west at the 3-way intersection. Barkley Rd will end at CO 73; go north on CO 73 for about 0.5 miles to the entrance for Flying J on the west. To reach Beaver Ranch Open Space: continue south on US 285 to Foxtan Rd. Go about 0.5 miles to the entrance for Beaver Ranch, on the southeast.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

**21. Reynolds Open Space Park****Description:**

Containing some quality ponderosa and mixed-conifer woodland, along with a nice trail system, this open space park offers a nice variety of montane species. In the ponderosa dominated areas, look for Pygmy Nuthatch and Williamson's Sapsucker, while the mixed woodland could have Red-naped Sapsucker, American Three-toed Woodpecker, and Hammond's Flycatcher. Steller's Jays are common throughout, and a nighttime visit may turn up a Northern Saw-whet Owl, best searched for during the spring months.

Directions:

From US Highway 285: go south to Foxtan Rd, approximately 15 miles from C-470 and US 285. Head south on Foxtan Rd approximately 5.5 miles to the parking area, on the south side of the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

**21. Staunton State Park****Description:**

Near the town of Pine, Staunton is Colorado's newest state park. Elevations here range from 8,000 to 10,000 feet, with large granitic domes visually dominating the landscape. Forested areas provide excellent opportunities to view Williamson's and Red-naped Sapsucker, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Hammond's Flycatcher, and Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Look for singing Vesper and Savannah Sparrows in the montane grasslands across the park. Rocky outcrops and cliffs are habitat for White-throated Swift, falcons, and hawks. Celebrate the park's mascot, the yellow-bellied marmot, at the annual Marmot Fest in June. You might even catch a glimpse of these chubby critters sunning

themselves on rock outcroppings from spring to fall. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From US 285 and C-470: take US 285 south to Shafers Crossing, about 6 miles west of Conifer. Turn north on Elk Creek Rd and follow the signs 1.5 miles to the park entrance.

Access:

Open all year, Fall/Winter Hours: 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM; Spring/Summer Hours: 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM



Did You KNOW?

Colorado's State Insect – Colorado Hairstreak Butterfly



The Colorado Hairstreak Butterfly was designated the official state insect in 1996 after lobbying efforts by (primarily) a group of 4th graders from Wheeling Elementary School in Aurora. To spot a hairstreak butterfly, look for their beautiful and distinctive iridescent purple color, and black to brown borders with orange spots on the lower edges. They also have slender "tails" protruding from their hind wings.

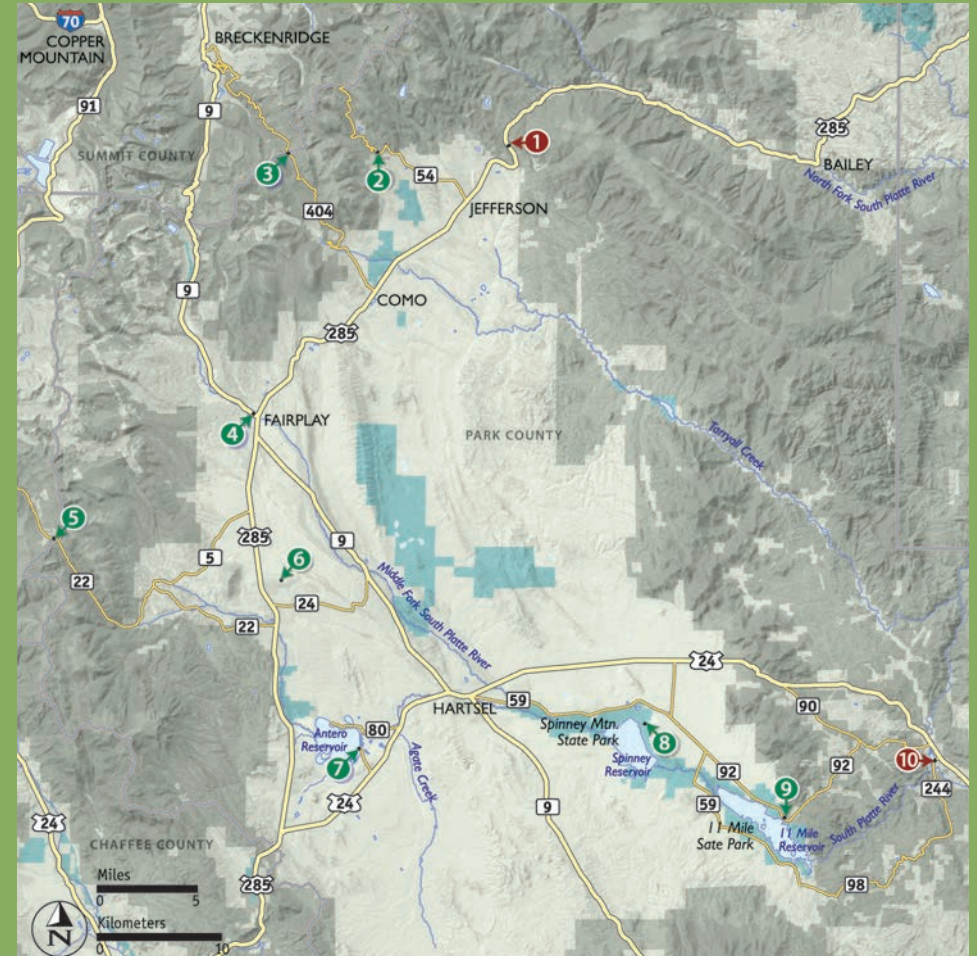
The hairstreak butterfly is native to the American southwest and northern Mexico; in Colorado, they can be found on both sides of the Continental Divide and prefer elevations between 6,500 feet to 7,500 feet. They depend on Gambel oak for survival, as their adult diet consists of tree sap, raindrops, and aphid honeydew (they do not visit flowers for nectar). In the caterpillar stage, they feed on Gambel oak leaves. While out on the Colorado Birding Trail, look for the Colorado hairstreak butterfly in Gambel oak forests at multiple locations throughout the state.

South Park Trail



A Prairie Between Peaks

Only 1-2 hours from Denver, South Park is a flat area nearly the size of Rhode Island at an elevation of 10,000 feet, which harbors remnants of a rich prairie and wetland ecosystem. Among the abundant Brewer's Blackbirds, Swainson's Hawks, and pronghorn, many waterbirds breed, including a few Mountain Plovers. Where the mountains rise to the west, Veeries and Swainson's Thrushes harmonize in the willows. In fall, South Park's reservoirs host huge numbers of ducks, occasionally including loons, and in winter, flocks of rosy-finches descend to the cold valley floor. If you like grand, sparsely populated landscapes, put this place on your list.



Sites on the South Park Trail:

- 1. Ponds along US 285
- 2. Georgia Pass Road
- 3. Boreas Pass Road (FR 404)
- 4. Fairplay
- 5. Weston Pass Road
- 6. High Creek Fen Preserve
- 7. Antero Reservoir
- 8. Spinney Mountain State Park
- 9. Eleven Mile State Park
- 10. Lake George



1. Ponds along US 285

Description:

The small ponds along the side of the highway around Kenosha Pass can make for a good quick stop on the way to/from Denver. During summer months, Eared Grebes are often present in decent numbers (and in good plumage!), and a variety of other duck species are possible. Also, look for the typical assortment of open-country montane species.

Directions:

From Denver: take C-470 south to US Hwy 285. Go south on US Hwy 285 for approximately 45 miles to Kenosha Pass, about seven miles southwest of Grant. Parking for the ponds around Kenosha Pass will be on the east side. Como Lake is just south of the town of Como, about ten miles southwest of Kenosha Pass.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



2. Georgia Pass Road

Description:

A pleasant backroad into the high country, the Georgia Pass Road is a good place to look for the full suite of montane perching birds. Look and listen for Cordilleran and Dusky Flycatchers, Red Crossbill, Mountain Bluebird, Violet-green Swallow, Fox Sparrow (in the extensive willow carrs), Wilson's Warbler, and more.

Directions:

From Denver: take C-470 south to US Hwy 285. Go south on Hwy 285 for approximately 58 miles to the town of Jefferson, which is about 5 miles southwest of Kenosha Pass. From Jefferson, head northwest on CR 35. In three miles, continue northwest onto CR 54/Michigan Creek Rd to get to Michigan Creek Campground and Georgia Pass.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; Michigan Campground open from May to October



3. Boreas Pass Road (FR 404)

Description:

Boreas Pass Road is among the best places near Denver to search for highly sought after species such as American Three-toed Woodpecker and Boreal Owl (look in August, especially around the campground). Be sure to check the extensive wil-

low habitats lower down for breeding Swainson's Thrush, Fox Sparrow, Wilson's Warbler, and an outside chance at Veery. The entire area is productive for spectacular alpine wildflowers and mammals such as elk, mule deer, and even the occasional black bear.

Directions:

From Denver: take C-470 south to US Hwy 285. Go south on Hwy 285 for approximately 65 miles to CO 33, FR 404/Boreas Pass Rd. From the town of Jefferson, CO 33 is about 7 miles southwest. Head northwest on CO 33, FR 404/Boreas Pass Rd towards the town of Como. Continue northwest to Boreas Pass.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



4. Fairplay

Description:

Fairplay is THE major town in South Park, and a good place to stock up or spend the night during a trip to the area. Bird-wise, during winter months, there are occasional flocks of rosy-finches in town, while other typical urban species such as Eurasian Collared-Dove can be found throughout the year. If you plan to make a trip of it, there are a number of State Wildlife Areas in the region to consider; however, check with Colorado Parks and Wildlife for seasonal restrictions.

Directions:

Fairplay is along US Hwy 285 at its junction with CO 9, 67 miles southwest of Denver (the junction of US Hwy 285 and C-470).

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; closures during certain school holiday periods and special events



5. Weston Pass Road

Description:

One of the few roads heading high into the Mosquito Range, the Weston Pass Road crosses a wide variety of montane habitats before breaking treeline. Look for Mountain Bluebird and others in the open meadows, Williamson's Sapsucker and American Three-toed Woodpecker in mixed conifer woodland, and Brown-capped Rosy-Finch above treeline, in addition to bighorn sheep and some of the rarer alpine butterfly species.

Directions:

From US 285 and C-470: go south on US Hwy 285 for 72 miles toward Fairplay. As you continue south through Fairplay, Weston Pass Rd/CR 5 is 4.5 miles south. Head west on CR 5, merge onto CR 22, and continue south. CR 22 will curve west; continue to Weston Pass.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; access can be difficult during winter



6. High Creek Fen Preserve

Description:

Providing access to some very unique habitat, High Creek Fen is home to fourteen state-rare plant species. It is also home to nesting Wilson's Phalaropes and a few Mountain Plovers, which have a little-known population in South Park. There are no established trails, so visitors will have to walk through this marshy territory with waterproof footwear. Please leave pets at home when exploring this special area.

Directions:

From US 285 and C-470: go south on US 285 for 75 miles toward Fairplay. Continue through Fairplay for 8.5 miles, and turn east on a private gravel road that is 0.2 miles south of milepost 175. (The milepost is on the west side of the road; the gravel road is on the east). Cross the cattle guard, then drive about one mile to a small parking area and visitor kiosk.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

7. Antero Reservoir

Description:

The large, shallow Antero Reservoir tends to have three stages: chock full of water (and birds!), completely dry, or completely frozen. When it is full in the liquid state, it is among the best birding lakes in the mountains, and can be absolutely carpeted in a wide variety of waterfowl.

Directions:

From US Hwy 285 and C-470: go south on US Hwy 285 through Fairplay. Continue south and in about a mile, head southeast onto Hwy 9 toward Hartsel. In 15 miles, go west onto Hwy 24. The north entrance road to the reservoir is CR 80 and the south entrance road is CR 78.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



8. Spinney Mountain State Park

Description:

Spinney Mountain provides great opportunities for viewing waterfowl, as the reservoir hosts an amazing number of birds, especially in the fall. In the prairie habitat around the reservoir, you may spot Horned Lark, Mountain Bluebird, and Vesper Sparrow, along with the occasional rosy-finch during inclement weather. Many rarities have shown up in the area, so keep an eye out! A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From US Hwy 285 and C-470: go south on US Hwy 285 through Fairplay. Continue south to the junction of US Hwy 24 and US Hwy 285 and head east on US Hwy 24 for 13 miles to the town of Hartsel. Go east onto CR 59 and continue to CR 92. Head southeast on CR 92 to Spinney Mountain Access Rd and go south to the entrance station.

Access:

Day use only, closed from ice-on to ice-off



9. Eleven Mile State Park

Description:

Eleven Mile is a great location for diving duck species, and it is not unusual to find several scoters, Barrow's Goldeneye, and loons. All six species of grebes found in Colorado have been observed here. The best waterfowl viewing is often found at the western end of the reservoir. In open terrain, rosy-finches are sometimes seen, especially during snow storms in the fall. Keep an eye out for grassland species, such as Horned Lark, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Bunting, and the occasional Lapland Longspur. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From US Hwy 285 and C-470: go south on US Hwy 285 through Fairplay. Continue south and from the junction of US Hwy 24 and US Hwy 285, head east on US Hwy 24 for 13 miles to the town of Hartsel. Go east onto CR 59 for 15.5 miles to the junction with CR 92. Continue straight on CR 92 to reach the entrance station, full service campgrounds and marina. Turn south on CR 59 to access several entrances and campgrounds along the south side of the reservoir.

Access:

Open all year, 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM





10. Lake George

Description:

This small lake can be quite productive for water-fowl. The best time to visit is during the late fall, though there are usually some birds present whenever the water is open. The marshes fringing the lake can have flocks of blackbirds, as well as Marsh Wren and Virginia Rail. There is no public access, but the lake can be seen from the county road. Parking is minimal, so use caution.

Directions:

From I-25 in Colorado Springs: take exit 142, US Hwy 24/Cimarron St. Head west on US Hwy 24 for 37 miles to the town of Lake George. The best scanning of the lake is from CR 96, southeast of town.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



Comeback Kits

Black-footed ferrets (BFFs) are small members of the weasel family that rely almost exclusively on prairie dogs for survival, as these rodents make up over 90% of their diet. With small, elongated bodies and masked faces reminiscent of raccoons, BFFs are solitary and nocturnal mammals that primarily live underground in vacated prairie dog burrows. Don't let their cute faces fool you - BFFs are skilled predators. Like masked bandits, they kill their favorite prey by entering burrows at night and attacking unsuspecting critters with a bite at the throat, essentially suffocating their victims.

Once thought to be extinct, today's population of ferrets may very well have their own bff to thank for their continued survival – a dog named Shep. In 1981, on a ranch in Wyoming, Shep proudly presented his family with an animal he caught while running the land. The couple had never seen the weasel-like creature before, so they took the remains to a local taxidermist for identification. The taxidermist determined the casualty was a black-footed ferret...and so the search for more ferrets commenced.

By 1984, researchers identified 129 ferrets surviving on the ranch in Wyoming. However, plague emerged, causing a decline in prairie dogs, and so a subsequent decline in BFFs; by 1987, less than 20 ferrets were thought to remain. At this point recognized as North America's most endangered mammal, officials decided to capture all remaining wild BFFs and attempt to save the species via captive breeding. The future of black-footed ferrets now rested on the breeding success of a mere 18 individuals.

Thanks to captive breeding facilities like the National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center and Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, more than 8,000 kits have been reared. Before BFFs are released back into their natural habitat, they undergo training that helps increase their chances of surviving in the wild. BFFs must learn how to navigate natural burrow systems, as well as hunt and kill live prairie dogs; they learn these skills in protected outdoor pens. This pre-conditioning of BFFs greatly increases their chance of survival in their native pen-less prairie.

The future of BFFs is still uncertain. First, considering all ferrets are descended from 18 original members, maintaining genetic diversity is paramount. Next, managing diseases such as plague and canine distemper will be critical to the survival of BFFs. Finally, and most importantly, conserving habitat for both BFFs and prairie dogs is critical. It is clear public lands alone will not save BFFs – partnerships with private landowners will most likely determine the fate of black-footed ferrets in Colorado and other western states. While the future of our BFFs is difficult to predict, it's probably wise to remain cautiously optimistic.

In the warm, early evening hours of September 3, 2014, the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program, along with partners and distinguished guests, held a BFF release event, returning 15 ferrets to the Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, located about 25 miles north of Fort Collins. Providing over 28 square miles (or 48,000 acres) of nearly pristine shortgrass prairie habitat, Soapstone is an ideal site for the ferrets' new home. Crawling slowly out of their crates and into black plastic tubes leading into their burrows, the masked faces of BFFs peek out of the first wild homes they have ever known. Black-footed ferrets are finally once again living freely in Colorado's grasslands.

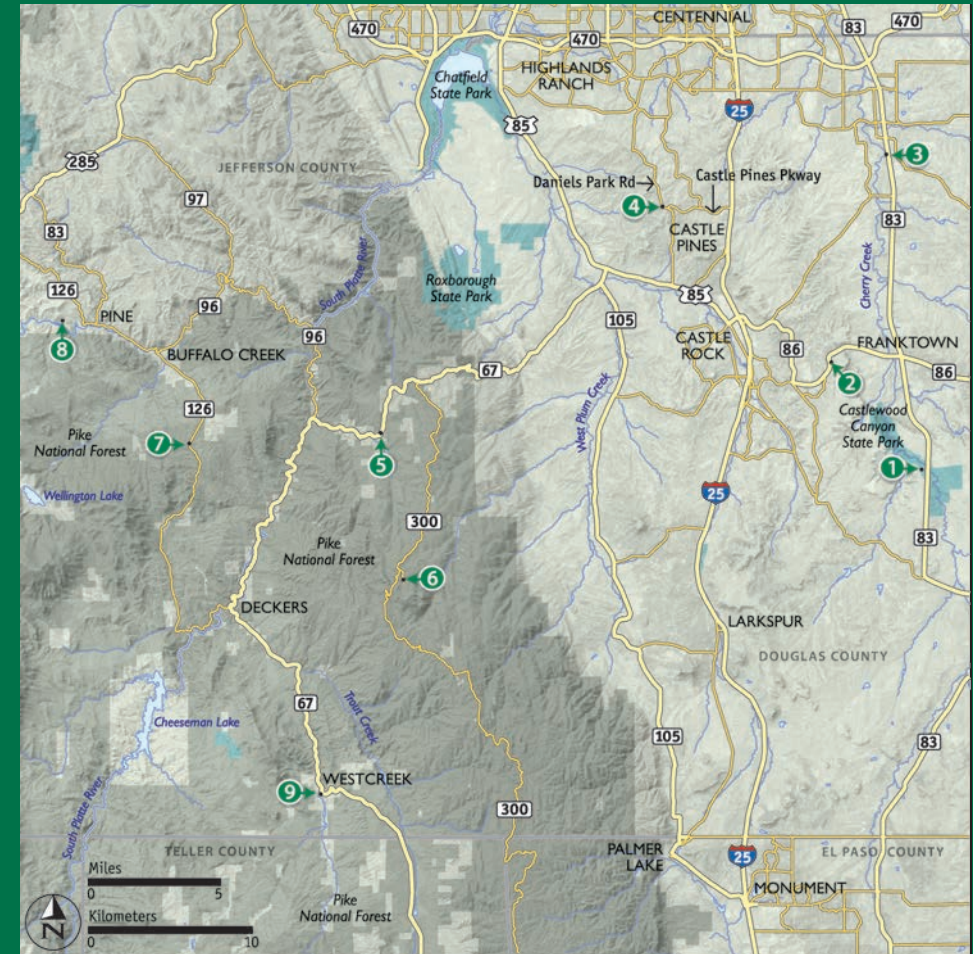
In 2015, BFFs were also reintroduced to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge – check out their indoor and outdoor enclosure at the Refuge's Visitor Center.



Castlewood Trail

Get Right Out Of Town

This trail is for those who want to get off the beaten path without traveling far. Just south and southwest of the Denver Metro Area are some “roads less traveled” that traverse scenic canyons, oak scrublands, conifer forests, and old burn scars in the foothills. Sites along the trail include Gateway Mesa Open Space, Devil’s Head and Castlewood Canyon State Park. These sites provide beautiful backdrops which frame beautiful birds such as Lazuli Buntings and Virginia’s Warbler. Ascending into the hills to the south and west, you might find a Lewis’s Woodpecker or, if you are very lucky, a Northern Pygmy-Owl staring down at you from a telephone pole beside the road. This isn’t a large area, but it deserves a slow and careful exploration.



Sites on the Castlewood Trail:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Castlewood Canyon State Park | 6. Devil's Head |
| 2. Gateway Mesa Open Space | 7. FR 550 |
| 3. Salisbury Park | 8. Pine Valley Ranch Park |
| 4. Daniels Park | 9. Westcreek |
| 5. Jarre Canyon Road and Platte River Road | |



1. Castlewood Canyon State Park

Description:

This beautiful state park is one of the best places to bird near Denver and contains an extensive trail system that runs through a variety of habitats including oak scrub woodlands, montane forest, and grasslands. Several raptors may be observed including Swainson's Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, and falcon species such as American Kestrel. Castlewood is home to one of Colorado's larger Turkey Vulture populations; the park celebrates their return from migration with Welcome Back Turkey Vulture Day each spring. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From Denver: take I-25 south to Castle Rock and exit onto Founders Parkway heading east. Take Founders Parkway to Hwy 86 and go east on Hwy 86 for four miles to Franktown. Turn south on Hwy 83 (S. Parker Rd) and go five miles south to the main park entrance.

Access:

Open all year, 8:00 AM to Sunset



2. Gateway Mesa Open Space

Description:

With a similar environment to Castlewood Canyon, this open space is a pleasant place to experience scrub oak and rimrock habitats south of the Denver metro area. These habitats are home to migratory birds, raptors, and Wild Turkey, among many others. Two trails lead you to explore the area; look for birds like Rock and Canyon Wrens, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Virginia's Warbler, and Bushtit.

Directions:

From Denver: take I-25 south to Castle Rock and exit at CO 86/Founders Pkwy. Go west on CO 86; it will curve to the right and continue south. In 4.5 miles at the 5th Ave intersection, go east to continue on CO 86. In 1.5 miles the parking area will be on the east side.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



3. Salisbury Park

Description:

With a trail along Cherry Creek, Salisbury is a nice spot to look for birds. This park has patches of woodland and a nice small pond and is best during migration, when any number of species could show up. The pond itself often has quite a few ducks on it during

the fall and early spring, and the open habitats sometimes have sparrow flocks and the odd Northern Shrike. Be sure to check out the Parker Arboretum, where the town of Parker grows a variety of trees that may one day take root in one of the parks.

Directions:

From Denver: go south on I-25 to Lincoln Ave. Head east on Lincoln Ave to CO 83/South Parker Rd and head south to South Pine Dr. Go west and then take an immediate turn north into the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



4. Daniels Park

Description:

Daniels Park is rich in history as well as habitat for wildlife! Covered in scrub oak, this Denver Mountain Park is a good place to look for Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Bushtit, Virginia's Warbler, and Rock Wren. Birding is best during the summer, though migration may bring a few other species like MacGillivray's Warbler, Plumbeous Vireo, and White-crowned Sparrow. A herd of bison roam much of the upper elevations, so there is limited access to most of the park to protect these majestic animals.

Directions:

From Denver: take I-25 south to Castle Rock and exit at CO 188/Castle Pines Pkwy. Head west and in about 4 miles, the road will curve sharply to the left and change to North Daniels Park Rd. At the peak of the curve you will find the entrance to the park, on the west side; the parking lot is just under a mile farther.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



5. Jarre Canyon Road and Platte River Road

Description:

Jarre Canyon Road (CO 67) passes through patches of scrub oak and horse pastures before climbing into the foothills ponderosa pine habitat. A few pull-offs, mostly on the right (north), provide possible places to explore for ponderosa birds year-round. In addition to birding, there are plenty of other recreational activities here, making this a good place to spend the day with family and friends.

Directions:

From US 85 in the town of Sedalia: go south on CO 67/Jarre Canyon Rd. The best habitat begins after about 10 miles; Sprucewood is 13 miles from Sedalia

and the North Platte River is 10 miles from Sprucewood.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



6. Devil's Head

Description:

The 1.4 mile trail up Devil's Head (9,748 feet) provides spectacular views over the plains that temper the climb to the lookout. Restricted to foot traffic, you pass through ponderosa, Douglas-fir and aspen zones. Look year-round for Steller's Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Common Raven, both chickadees, and all three nuthatches; in summer look for Olive-sided Flycatcher, Plumbeous and Warbling vireos, and more.

Directions:

From US 85 in the town of Sedalia: go south on CO 67/Jarre Canyon Rd for 10 miles to Rampart Range Rd. Head south on Rampart Range Rd for about 9 miles to the parking area.

Access:

Open all year - Rampart Range Rd closed to vehicles in the winter (Nov-Apr), daylight hours



7. FR 550

Description:

This remote dirt road provides good access to montane forest habitats (but can be difficult to travel - check conditions before heading out). Watch carefully along the road for Dusky Grouse, which is best looked for in the spring and late summer. The pine forests should have the typical specialty species including Williamson's Sapsucker, while higher up American Three-toed Woodpecker can be found, with luck. The Tramway Trail, 4.5 miles east of Pine Valley Road, accesses some burned habitat, which offers more chances for spotting woodpeckers.

Directions:

From Denver: go west on I-70 and transition to south C-470. From C-470, take US 285 south toward Fairplay. Go 22 miles to Pine Junction and turn southeast onto CR 126/Pine Valley Rd. At SW Platte River Rd, CR 126 turns into Decker Canyon Rd. FR 550 road is 14 miles from the US 285/CR 126 junction on the west.

Access:

Spring, summer, fall; the area is inaccessible after the first snowfall and during the winter months.



8. Pine Valley Ranch Park

Description:

This large park contains many of the typical mountain habitats, especially mixed-conifer woodland and riverside willow habitat. A good trail following the river for two miles through the property can be a good place to look for MacGillivray's Warbler and Lincoln's Sparrow. American Dipper can be common along the river and has nested just east of the parking lot. Also be sure to look for Canyon and Rock Wrens on the cliff edges south and east of the parking lot. More open meadows often contain Mountain Bluebird and White-crowned Sparrow, and Golden Eagles could soar overhead at any time.

Directions:

From Denver: go west on I-70 and transition to south C-470. From C-470, take US 285 south toward Fairplay. Go 22 miles to Pine Junction and turn southeast onto CR 126/Pine Valley Rd. Continue 5.8 miles and head west onto Crystal Lake Rd to the parking area, in about a mile.

Access:

Open all year, One hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset



9. Westcreek

Description:

Lying at the edge of the huge Hayman Fire burn area, Westcreek offers access to extensive tracts of burned woodland. Well into the regeneration process, this is still a good area to look for American Three-toed Woodpecker and other woodpecker species. Be aware the lake in the area is private property.

Directions:

From Sedalia: head south on CO 67 for 36 miles to Westcreek. The best burn areas are further south along CO 67.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

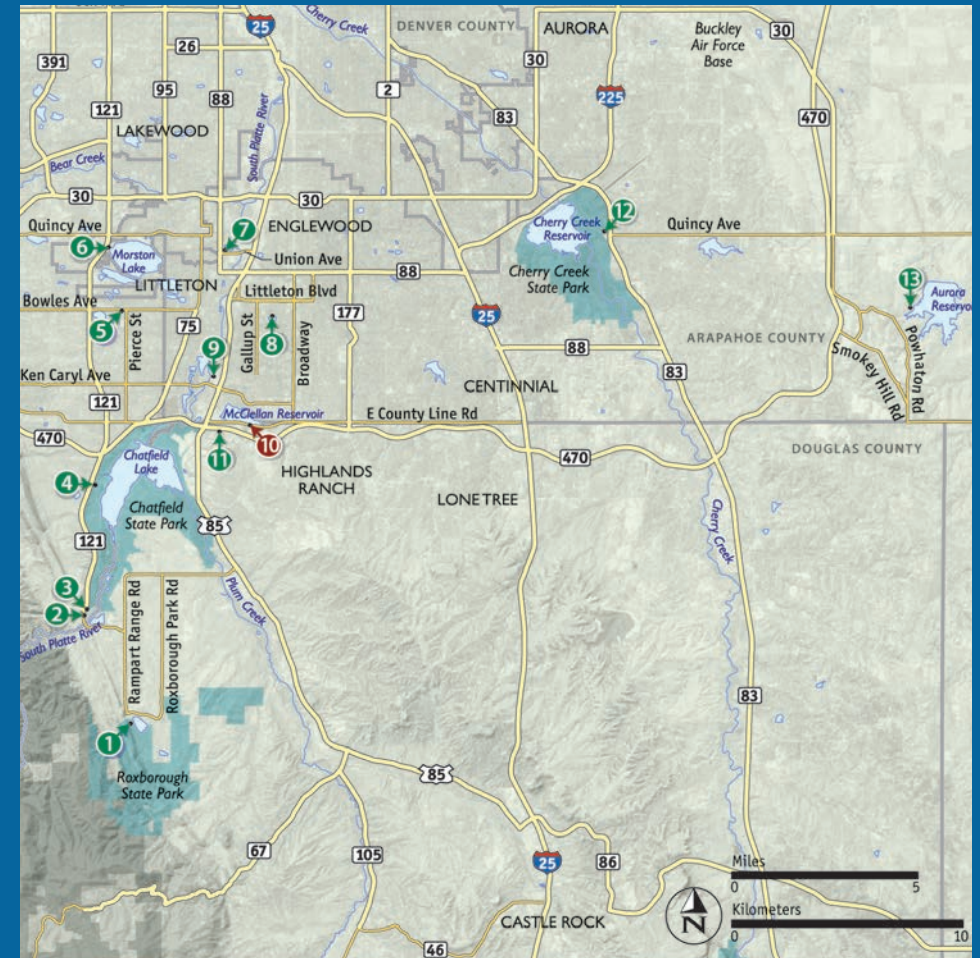
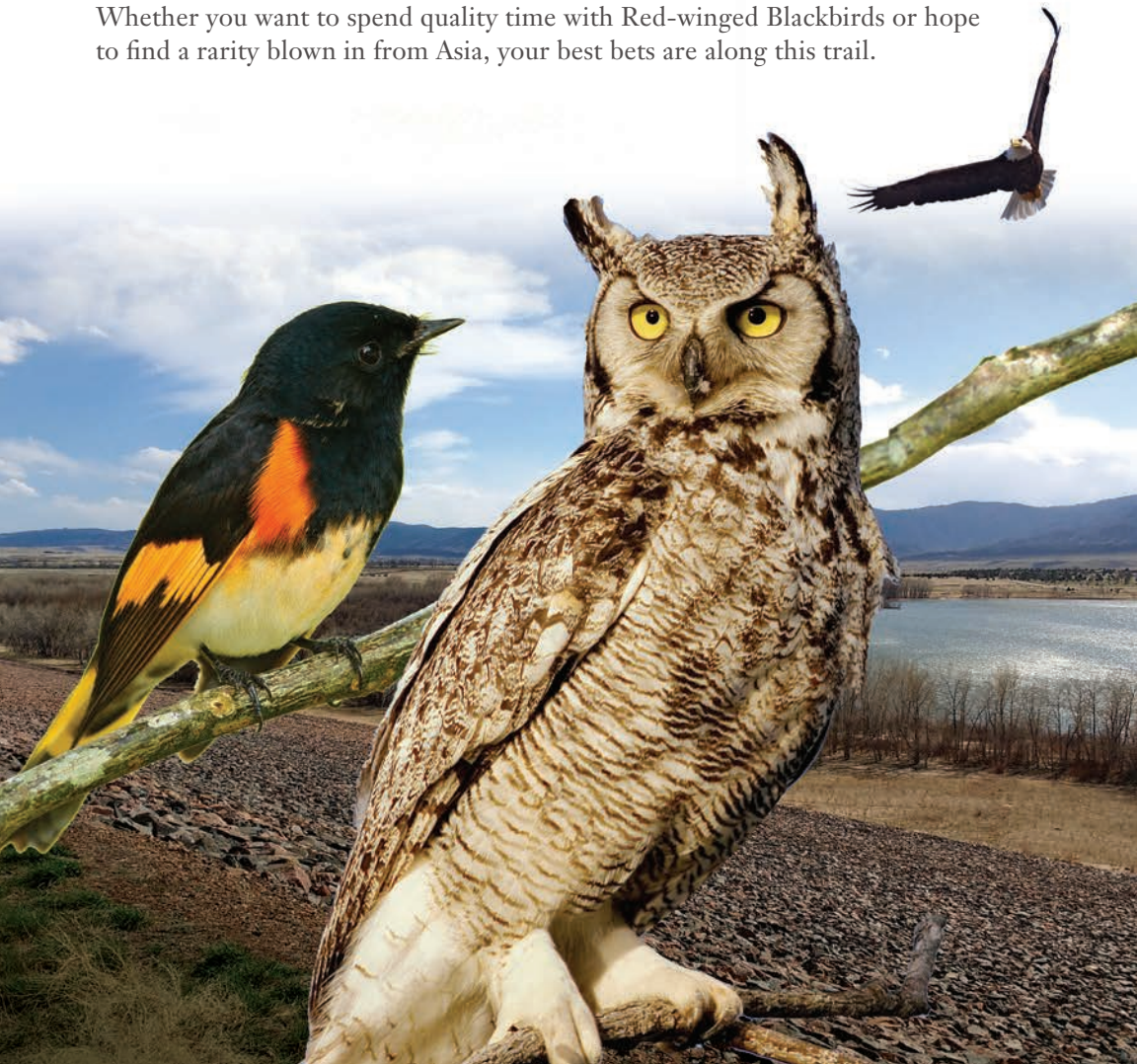




Urban Refuges Trail

Jewel of the South Platte

In the southwest corner of urban Denver, the South Platte River escapes from the dry Waterton Canyon, home to rattlesnakes and Bushtits, into a wooded corridor where it flows past some of Colorado's only breeding Least Flycatchers and American Redstarts. It pools in Chatfield Reservoir, underneath the nests of Great Blue Herons, before continuing into the heart of the city. Along its path, and that of Cherry Creek to the east, lie a rich collection of parks and pathways that allow astonishing nature study right inside the metro area. Whether you want to spend quality time with Red-winged Blackbirds or hope to find a rarity blown in from Asia, your best bets are along this trail.



Sites on the Urban Refuges Trail:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Roxborough State Park | 8. Ketring Pond |
| 2. Waterton Canyon | 9. South Platte Park |
| 3. Audubon Center at Chatfield | 10. McLellan Reservoir |
| 4. Chatfield State Park | 11. High Line Canal (Douglas County portion) |
| 5. Robert F. Clement Park | 12. Cherry Creek State Park |
| 6. Marston Lake | 13. Aurora Reservoir |
| 7. Centennial Park | |



1. Roxborough State Park

Description:

Located just south of Chatfield State Park, Roxborough is a world away in terms of landscape and habitat. Habitats of this beautiful park include excellent examples of rocky cliffs, mountain shrubland, and open prairie, with riparian wetlands and coniferous forest in the mix. Miles of hiking trails offer ample opportunities to view Canyon Wren, Rock Wren, and a variety of raptor species along the hog-back formations. Smaller riparian groves are worth a check during migration, and the spring is excellent for a wide variety of butterfly species. The park is also designated as a National Natural Landmark and an Important Bird Area through the National Audubon Society. Note: dogs are not allowed at Roxborough. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From C-470: exit at CO 121/Wadsworth Blvd and go south. Turn left/east on Waterton Rd, which will curve to the west and end at North Rampart Range Rd. Head right/south on Rampart Range Rd for approximately 2 miles and at the intersection of North Rampart Range Rd and Roxborough Park Rd (just before the entrance to Arrowhead golf course), turn left onto Roxborough Park Rd. Take the next right on East Roxborough Dr (about 50 yards away) to enter the park.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



2. Waterton Canyon

Description:

One of the Denver area's premiere foothill birding sites, this canyon is a good place to look for Virginia's Warbler, Lazuli Bunting, Spotted Towhee, and Say's Phoebe in trailside scrub; Yellow-breasted Chats and Cordilleran Flycatchers in riparian trees; and American Dippers in the river. Also check for Canyon and Rock Wrens, and if you do make it up into the pine forest, check for the typical suite of ponderosa-loving species, including Williamson's Sapsucker. The canyon is also good for mammals, and people often see bighorn sheep here. Please never approach sheep and observe all wildlife from a safe distance. Be sure to also check for a wide variety of butterfly species during the spring and summer.

Directions:

From C-470: exit at CO 121/Wadsworth Blvd and go south past the entrance for Chatfield State Park. At Waterton Rd, go left/southeast and the parking lot is the second entrance on the east. The entrance to the

Canyon is across the sometimes busy road; please be careful when crossing.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



3. Audubon Center at Chatfield

Description:

Just to the south of Chatfield State Park, the trails around the Audubon Nature Center connect with the trails in the park, and are just across the road from Waterton Canyon. Abundant willow scrub habitat here is often full of migrants in season, and it's a good spot to look for wintering sparrows or a variety of breeding species, including Least Flycatchers. There are also some nice marshes and a small pond with Virginia Rail and Sora, both regular, as well as a nice variety of ducks.

Directions:

From I-25 & C-470: go west on C-470 about 12 miles and exit onto CO 121/Wadsworth Blvd. Go south on Wadsworth Blvd for about 4.4 miles, PAST the main entrance for Chatfield State Park. Turn left /east on Waterton Rd and immediately turn left into the first parking lot at the Audubon Center sign.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



4. Chatfield State Park

Description:

Most birders in the Denver area will tell you Chatfield reigns supreme among the metro-area reservoirs. This state park is a contender for the most birds observed at any single location in Colorado. With miles of walking trails, good lakeside access, and abundant facilities, it would be easy to spend an entire day at the park, any time of the year. Most species of waterfowl and shorebirds that occur in Colorado can be found at Chatfield. The trails along the South Platte River and Plum Creek are shaded by cottonwood trees that provide habitat for a number of breeding species. These areas are among the few places in the state where Least Flycatcher and American Redstart breed. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From Denver: take US 85/Santa Fe Dr south to C-470. Go west on C-470 to Wadsworth Blvd. Take Wadsworth Blvd south to the park entrance.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM



5. Robert F. Clement Park

Description:

The main attraction at this park is the large Johnson Lake, good for waterfowl of various species (including Canvasback, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, and Common Goldeneye), as well as Eared Grebe and the occasional loon. There are quite a few trees in the area as well, though the lack of undergrowth cuts into the variety of birds that could show up.

Directions:

From C-470: take CO 121/Wadsworth Blvd and go north for 4 miles to W. Bowles Ave. Head east on Bowles; in 1/2 mile, there will be two entrances for the park on the south.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



6. Marston Lake

Description:

While not quite the same caliber as Chatfield or Cherry Creek Reservoirs, Marston is still one of the best lakes in the Denver area. Productive at almost any time of year (perhaps least interesting in the middle of the summer), the lake can have almost any of the waterfowl species that occur in the state. When an ice shelf forms, there can sometimes be large flocks of gulls. The property is private, and can only be viewed through a chain-link fence.

Directions:

From US 285: exit at CO 121/Wadsworth Blvd and go south. At the intersection of Wadsworth and Stanford Ave, head east on S. Wadsworth Blvd. This road parallels the SE shore; scan from any openings where you can see the reservoir.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

7. Centennial Park

Description:

The medium-sized pond here is probably the best pond for waterbirds in the area. Large flocks of dabblers and divers can be found during the colder months, and keep an eye out for grebes and maybe even the stray loon or two. Gull flocks could potentially hold an interesting species or two during the winter, and the thickets often have flocks of

sparrows and sometimes Cedar Waxwings.

Directions:

From US 285: exit at CO 88/Federal Blvd and go south. At Decatur St, go east and then south to the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



8. Ketring Pond

Description:

This little pond in the middle of Littleton Historic Park is usually good for ducks during the colder months, and is among the best places in the state to view Wood Ducks. A small trail system in the area offers some riparian habitat that could host migrants in season, and connects to a wider bike-trail system for anyone looking to embark on a longer trip.

Directions:

From US 85/Santa Fe Dr: exit at Alamo Ave and go east. Across the railway tracks, the road will change to Littleton Blvd; continue east to Gallup St. At Gallup, head south about 0.5 miles to Shepperd Ave, then go east about 0.5 miles to Lakeview St. Head south on Lakeview into a small parking lot by the lake.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



9. South Platte Park

Description:

The extensive South Platte Park, just to the north of C-470, has both an excellent trail system and a wide variety of habitat - the perfect birding spot for a short outing or a longer bike or walking trip in the south metro area. Several small but productive ponds can be found to the south of the Visitor's Center. Be sure to visit the Carson Nature Center, which has interactive nature exhibits and live animals on site.

Directions:

From C-470: exit at US 85/Santa Fe Drive and go north for one mile to Mineral Ave. At Mineral, go west and then immediately north onto Platte River Parkway. Go west at Carson Drive and continue by the large park-and-ride to the Carson Nature Center/South Platte Park parking lot.

**Access:**

Open all year, daylight hours; Nature Center Hours: Tue - Fri: 12:00 - 4:30 PM.; Sat - Sun: 9:30 AM - 4:30 PM; Closed Mondays and Holidays.

**10. McLellan Reservoir****Description:**

Sitting safe behind a high fence, McLellan Reservoir is not accessible to the public. However, a good pullout along County Line Road lets you safely park and scan the lake, which is often full of waterfowl. The Highline Canal bike trail has a spur that rings the northern end of the reservoir, and there are several places you can scan through the trees to get a different perspective.

Directions:

From C-470: exit at Lucent Blvd and go north for less than a mile to the "T" with County Line Rd. Go either west or east and pullout in any wide spot along County Line Rd to scan the reservoir, located on the north side of the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

11. High Line Canal (Douglas County portion)**Description:**

While rarely used as a canal these days, the extensive bike trails and beautiful riparian habitat make this woodland corridor the perfect place to combine a morning jog or bike ride with some birding. During migration, look for various migrant perching birds, and during summer, check for Lazuli Bunting, Yellow-breasted Chat, Spotted Towhee, Great Horned Owl, and more.

Directions:

From C-470: Go south on Highway 85 for 4 miles to Titan Rd. Turn west on Titan Rd for 2 miles to Roxborough Park Rd. Go north on Roxborough Park Rd for 1.5 miles. The trailhead is on the east side of the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

**12. Cherry Creek State Park****Description:**

One of the crown jewels of Denver area reservoirs, Cherry Creek is famed among birders in the state both as a rarity magnet and an all-round good birding location. The reservoir typically remains ice-free

throughout the winter and is known for its birding from late summer through spring. In summer months, the extensive cottonwood forest is home to breeding species such as Yellow-breasted Chat and Yellow Warbler. Check for raptors, sparrows, flocks of Horned Lark, and the occasional longspur in the open prairie habitats. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

For the east entrance: take Parker Rd (exit 4) south from I-225 for almost 2 miles to Lehigh Ave. Go east on Lehigh Ave to the entrance station. For the west entrance: take Yosemite St south from I-225 (exit 1) for 1/2 mile to Union Ave. Take Union Ave east for less than 1/2 mile to Dayton St. Turn right then an immediate left into the western entrance.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM; Check their website for office hours

**13. Aurora Reservoir****Description:**

Situated a bit east of the main Denver metro area, Aurora Reservoir sits outside much of Denver's urban sprawl; meaning, this lake is still surrounded by a good-sized block of native prairie habitat, and is also more likely to catch birds migrating away from the mountains. Check the lake itself for the full variety of waterfowl from fall through spring. The prairie habitat occasionally has Lark Buntings, Horned Lark, and Lapland Longspur during the winter, as well as a variety of sparrows and raptors. Be sure to stop by the Senac Creek Nature Center for interactive exhibits and other educational opportunities. Note: there is a fee for entrance.

Directions:

Take E-470 to the Quincy Ave exit and go east to Powhaton Rd. Go south on Powhaton to the entrance on the west for the Aurora Reservoir main parking lot. To avoid tolls, take I-225 to CO 83/Parker Rd. Head south on Parker Rd to Quincy Ave. Go east on Quincy to Powhaton Rd. Go south on Powhaton and west into the main parking lot, or continue straight into the lower parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



Did You KNOW?

Urban Birdin'



Over 3 million people live in the Metro Denver area, with roughly 70% of Colorado's population living in the northeast region alone. However, 94% of Denver residents live within a ten-minute walk to a local park; meaning, opportunities abound for connecting city dwellers to the outdoors right outside their backdoors!

Birdwatching is an easy and inexpensive way to encourage outdoor appreciation and exploration. With just a pair of binoculars and a field guide, you can discover the birds and other animals that thrive living close to people. You can save money by downloading a free app on your phone or checking a guide out from your local library. In addition, most State Parks and the County/City Parks with Visitor Centers offer guides and binoculars you can check-out for free!

To find a park near you, visit The Trust for Public Land: <https://parkserve.tpl.org/>

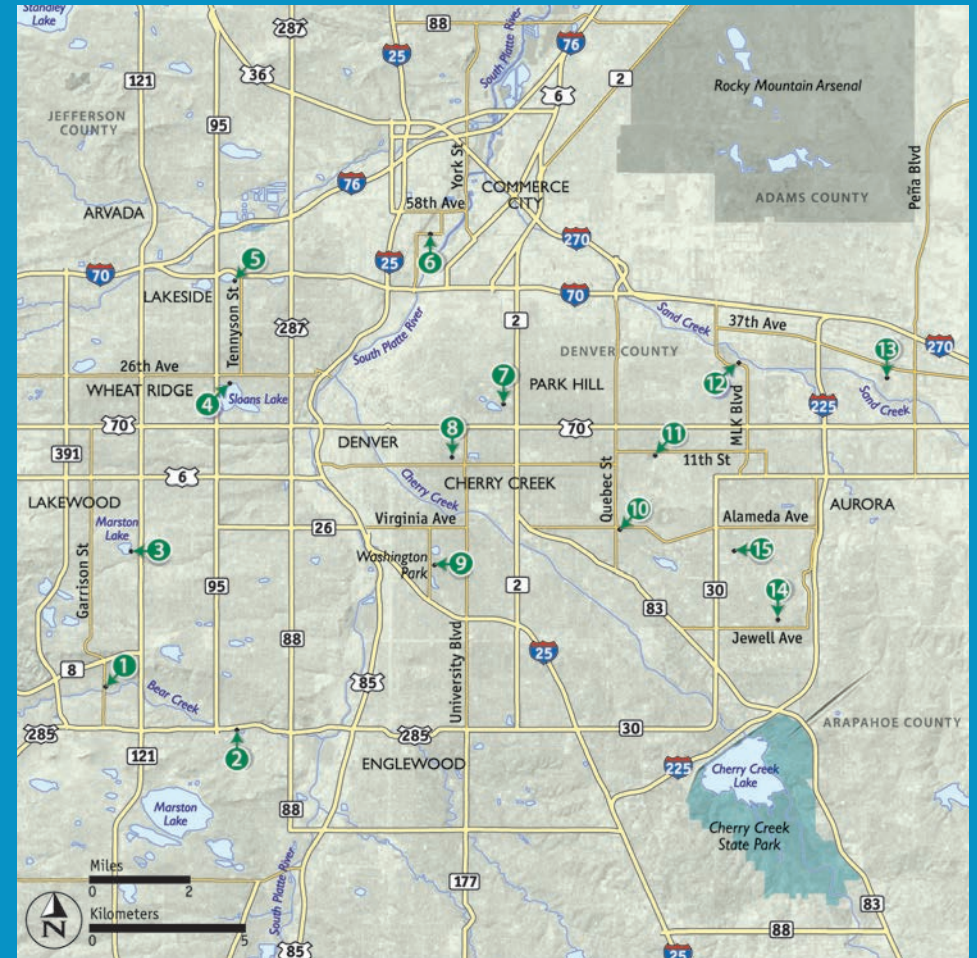
Already an avid birder? On your next trip, be sure to inspire the next generation of bird enthusiasts by taking a child with you! Introducing kids to the fascinating world of birds is easy - just make it fun! Maybe you make bird spotting a game or let them identify what you see. Birding is a great way to help reconnect today's "plugged-in" generation to the beauty and wonder of the natural world.

Mile High Trail



Capital Birding

Denver, the Mile High City, is famous as the gateway to the Rocky Mountains and as the capital city of Colorado. It also has an excellent system of parks and natural areas that make it possible to find nature right in town, including nesting night-herons and Snowy Egrets, wintering Cackling Geese, and Violet-green Swallows in summer. This trail covers only the central metro area; there are so many excellent birding sites on the outskirts of Denver that we had to split them off into the Waterfowl Trail (northeast), the Castlewood Trail (southeast), the Urban Refuges Trail (southwest), and the Red Rocks Trail (west).



Sites on the Mile High Trail:

1. Bear Creek Greenbelt (Jefferson portion)
2. Bear Creek Greenbelt (Denver section)
3. Belmar Historic Park
4. Sloan's Lake
5. Berkeley Lake and Rocky Mountain Lake
6. Heron Pond / Heller Open Space
7. City Park
8. Cheesman Park and Denver Botanic Gardens
9. Washington Park
10. Fairmount Cemetery
11. Aurora-Kelley Reservoir / Westerly Wetlands
12. Bluff Lake Nature Center
13. Sand Creek Greenway
14. Utah Park and Jewell Wetlands
15. High Line Canal (Denver Section)



1. Bear Creek Greenbelt (Jefferson portion)

Description:

One of the best greenbelts in the Denver area, Bear Creek Greenbelt is lined with old, tall trees and followed by a good bike path. The greenbelt is also well connected to the trail network that criss-crosses the Denver area, so you could combine this area with several other sites reachable by bicycle if you want to make a longer day of exploring.

Directions:

From US 285: exit at Kipling Pkwy and go north to Dartmouth Ave. Head west on Dartmouth; the road will curve north and change to Kipling St. Continue north on Kipling to Yale Ave. Go east on Yale to Estes St to reach the parking lot. Yale parallels the green belt on the north, and parking is along the road. At Estes St, go south to the parking lot on the east.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM



2. Bear Creek Greenbelt (Denver section)

Description:

This greenbelt has one of the best riparian corridors within the city limits, and is an excellent place to spend a spring or fall morning walking or biking, as the site is connected to a large bike trail system. The summer months tend to be a bit quieter, but local breeders like Yellow-breasted Chat and Lazuli Bunting are possible. Great Horned Owl is around all year, and a nighttime visit may turn up an Eastern Screech-Owl.

Directions:

From US 285: exit at Sheridan Blvd and go north to Dartmouth Ave. Head northeast on Dartmouth to Raleigh St. Go south on Raleigh and pass under US 285. The road will then curve to the west; follow to the parking lot at the end. To reach the southern portion of the greenbelt from US 285: go south on Sheridan to Kenyon Ave. Head east on Kenyon to the parking lot on the north.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



3. Belmar Historic Park

Description:

At first glance, this small park may not look like much, but it can be surprisingly birdy and well worth a stop from spring through fall. The trees in the park can attract any number of migrant species,

and Kountze Lake, in the middle of the park, often has a variety of waterbirds.

Directions:

From US 6/6th Avenue: exit at CO 121/Wadsworth Blvd. Go south on CO 121 to Ohio Avenue. Head west for two blocks to the Irongate parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM



4. Sloan's Lake

Description:

One of the large lakes in the area, Sloan's Lake can be a good spot to check from fall through spring for ducks of various sorts, as well as the occasional loon and grebe. Connected to the wider Denver-area bike trail system, Sloan's is a great option to hit on a longer trip that includes other areas, such as City Park or the South Platte Greenway.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at US 40/Colfax Ave. Go west on US 40 to Sheridan Ave. Head north on Sheridan to Byron Place and go east. There is access to three parking lots on Byron, along with the marina and peninsula.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



5. Berkeley Lake and Rocky Mountain Lake

Description:

These two lakes are nearly adjacent and nearly identical. Both are medium-sized lakes ringed by promising lines of cattails, and surrounded by walking trails. Look for breeding coots and Pied-billed Grebes in summer and for Western Grebe and numerous species of waterfowl in migration and winter.

Directions:

Berkeley Lake: from I-70, exit at Lowell Blvd and go south; pass under the highway to 48th Ave/South Dr. Head west on 48th Ave to the parking lot. To Rocky Mountain Lake: from I-70, exit US 287/Federal Blvd. Go south to 47th Ave and then head west to the parking lot. Both parks are on the north side of West 46th Ave, between Sheridan Blvd and Federal Blvd.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



6. Heron Pond / Heller Open Space

Description:

Close to downtown, this small lake ringed with trees is in the middle of an urban open space, but can attract surprising birds. Look for ducks in the colder months, and in migration, various land birds in the trees. This natural area is connected by trails to the adjacent Northside Park and the bike path along the South Platte River.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 215/58th Ave and go east. In 0.3 miles, head south on Washington St. In 0.4 miles, go east on 54th Ave, where roadside parking is on the south side of the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

7. City Park

Description:

Denver's large and impressive City Park is more than just a park - it is also home to the Denver Zoo and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. The park itself is a cornucopia of beautiful trees and several productive ponds. The best birding tends to be along the nature trail around Duck Pond, where breeding colonies of Black-crowned Night-Heron, Double-crested Cormorant, and Snowy Egret are occupied during the spring and summer, and the abundant trees can have migrants in season. Note: although the park is open daily from 5 AM to 11 PM, the gates allowing cars to enter are closed on Sundays (May through September), and occasionally during special events.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at CO 2/Colorado Blvd. Go south on CO 2 to 22nd Ave. Go west on 22nd past the museum parking lot, where the road curves north; head southwest to City Park's parking area. The park is bordered on the east by Colorado, on the north by 23rd Ave, the west by York St, and the south by 17th Ave. There is access to parking lots from all these roads, or from the myriad of small roads into the park.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 11:00 PM; Zoo hours - Winter: 10 AM - 4 PM; Summer: 9 AM - 6 PM; Museum Hours: 9 AM - 5 PM



8. Cheesman Park and Denver Botanic Gardens

Description:

Cheesman Park is another large city park with old trees and lots of potential for migrant birds. In some winters, the stands of coniferous trees can contain flocks of finches, and they could host roosting owls at any time of year. Across the road, the Denver Botanic Gardens are worth visiting just for the extensive and fascinating variety of plant life, but they can also be quite birdy at almost any time of year.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at 6th Ave and go east. To reach Cheesman Park at Williams St, go north to reach the park at 8th and Williams, where parking is along the park road. To reach the Botanic Gardens from Cheesman Park, go east on 11th Ave to York St. Go south on York to the parking garage located on the east. From 6th Ave, go north on Josephine to 11th Ave. Head west on 11th Ave to York St. Go south on York to the parking garage on the east.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; Botanic Gardens: 9 AM - 5 PM



9. Washington Park

Description:

Washington Park is full of old and impressive trees that should be checked any time of year for a variety of birds. Perhaps most productive during migration, they can also be worth a look in winter when flocks of finches sometimes visit. During colder months, the two ponds in the park could have ducks, particularly in the late fall. Look especially for tame Wood Ducks and the occasional Hooded Merganser.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at Downing St and go north. From Downing, access the west side of the park at either Kentucky Ave or Exposition Ave. To reach the north side of the park from Downing: go east on Virginia Ave. To access the east side of the park from Virginia Ave: head east to Franklin St. Go south on Franklin and enter the park at either Exposition Ave, Kentucky Ave, Mississippi Ave, or Arizona Ave.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours





10. Fairmount Cemetery

Description:

This large cemetery is covered in beautifully old and impressive trees, especially conifers. Look especially for finches in the winter. During spring and fall, any number of migrant species could occur, and this seems to be an especially good place to look for Townsend's Warbler during the fall.

Directions:

From I-25: take 6th Ave and go east to CO 2/Colorado Blvd. Head south on Colorado Blvd to Alameda Ave. Go east on Alameda about a mile and a half to the cemetery entrance, on the south.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



11. Aurora-Kelley Reservoir / Westerly Wetlands

Description:

The Aurora-Kelley Reservoir on Westerly Creek is a large flood control area in the Lowry neighborhood of Denver. Behind the dam, you can find an extensive permanent cattail marsh and gravel/dirt walking trails. Look in season for White-faced Ibis and Yellow-headed Blackbird, both hard to find in the area. Continue walking to Great Lawn Park, where two small ponds also attract a diversity of waterfowl and other birds.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 278/Quebec St and go south for about 3 miles to Lowry Blvd. Head east on Lowry Blvd and at the roundabout, go south onto Fairmount Dr, then head northwest onto Sports Blvd and the parking lot will be on the north. Trail access is across the street.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



12. Bluff Lake Nature Center

Description:

Bluff Lake Nature Center makes for an excellent place to spend a morning and check out a number of different habitats. Perhaps the best of these is the excellent marsh, with Virginia Rail and Sora, Marsh Wren, and maybe even American Bittern. The riparian corridor along the greenbelt is well worth checking for migrants, in season, while the lake itself often has a variety of ducks. Note: dogs are not allowed at this property.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 280/Havana St and go south. Continue south on Havana about a half mile until it crosses the river and curves east. The Bluff Lake parking lot is on the north side, just after the curve.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



13. Sand Creek Greenway

Description:

The Sand Creek Greenway, connected to the larger Denver-area bike trail system, has some of the best riparian corridors in the area. The woodland here should be checked for a variety of migrants during spring and fall, and for birds like Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bullock's Oriole, and Lazuli Bunting in the summer. Wintertime tends to be slower, but flocks of sparrows sometimes haunt the thickets, and Great Horned Owl can be found all year.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit at Chambers Rd and go south to Smith Rd. Head east on Smith Rd to Laredo St. Go south on Laredo to the parking lot for the Morrison Nature Center, where you can access the trail.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



14. Utah Park and Jewell Wetlands

Description:

This small park with a tiny pond doesn't typically attract a huge variety of birds, but the Jewell Wetlands adjacent to it, with its well laid-out boardwalk, has some of the best access to marshland in the area. Look for Virginia Rail and Sora, Marsh Wren, and (with a good deal of luck), the occasional American Bittern.

Directions:

From I-225: take exit 5/Iliff Ave and go west for one mile to Peoria St. Head north on Peoria St for a little over a half-mile. To reach the parking lot closest to the lake: continue on Peoria to Mexico Ave. Go east on Mexico Ave to Troy St. Head south on Troy to the parking entrance on the west. To reach Jewell Wetland from Peoria: head east on Jewel and the parking lot will be on the north.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



15. High Line Canal (Denver Section)

Description:

Well-connected to the Denver area bike-trail system, the High Line Canal Trail, in terms of habitat, is probably the best path throughout the city. The mile-and-a-half stretch of the High Line Canal west of Havana and east of Valentia may be the best birding area along the canal in Denver. Almost continuous large cottonwoods line this stretch, supplemented by adjacent tall trees, some with good undergrowth tangles, in many nearby yards.

Directions:

The best parking is at Exposition Park. Take I-70 east to I-225 south. From I-225, exit at Alameda Ave and go west to Havana St. Head south on Havana St to Exposition Ave. Go east on Exposition to the parking lot on the north.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



Did You KNOW?

Colorado's State Amphibian – Western Tiger Salamander



Photo by: Joe Farah (reptilesofcolorado.com)

The Western Tiger Salamander was designated Colorado's official state amphibian in 2012. This large amphibian can grow up to 14 inches long and is easily identified by the yellow tiger-like markings covering its entire body. Primarily nocturnal, they are opportunistic feeders and will eat most anything they catch. As adults, tiger salamanders spend most of their time on land; their juvenile larval stage is entirely aquatic, as they have external gills.

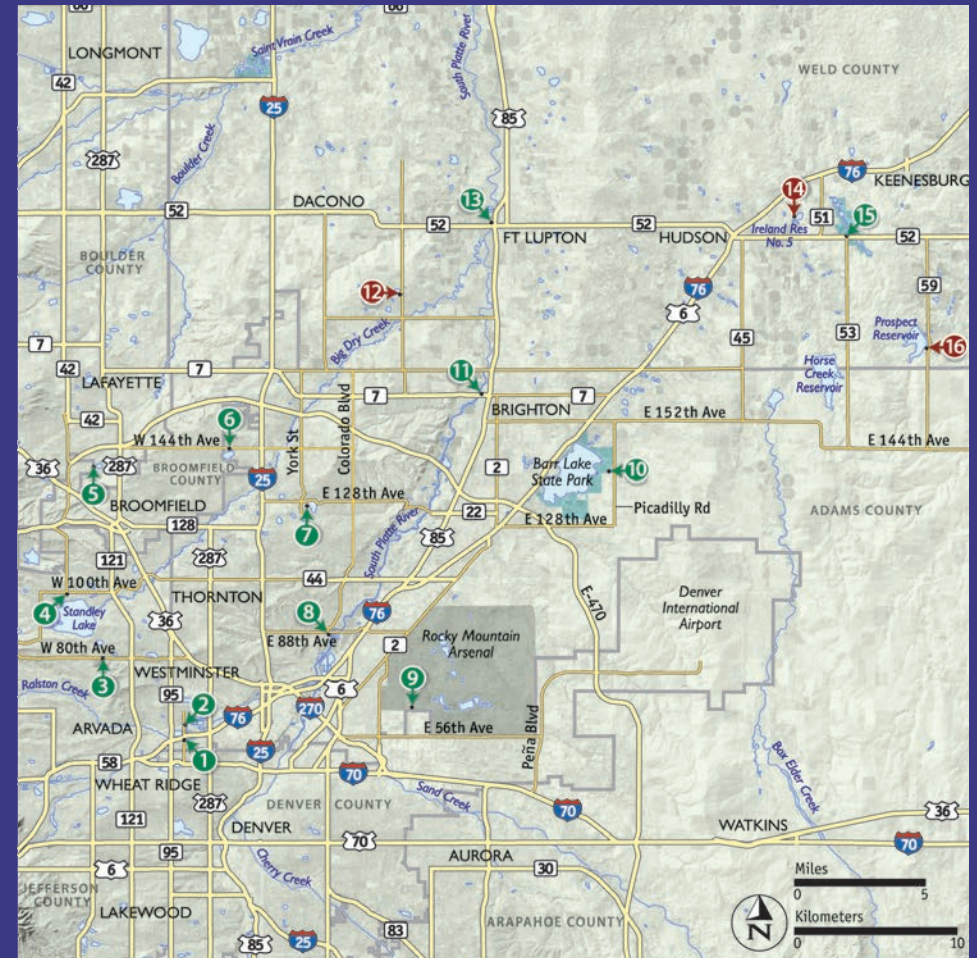
Tiger Salamanders make their homes where the soil is easily burrowed - you may even find them in abandoned mammal and invertebrate burrows. Tiger salamanders are found throughout Colorado, from river valleys to the high mountains. Look for them along the Colorado Birding Trail at the many sites where their ideal habitat exists.

Waterfowl Trail



Cityscape to Solitude

This trail encompasses the parks and waterways of northeast urban Denver, plus a large swath of the adjacent plains. The South Platte River and many urban lakes attract birds in migration and winter, ranging from Bald Eagles to Hooded Mergansers. In summer, Cliff and Bank Swallows skim over prairie pothole ponds, and Grasshopper Sparrows lisp in nearby fields. If you are lucky, you might spot a Burrowing Owl peeking out of a prairie-dog hole. From urban fox squirrels to rural foxes, this trail strings together the finest spots to enjoy nature right in the shadow of the city.



Sites on the Waterfowl Trail:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Lowell Ponds | 9. Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge |
| 2. Jim Baker Reservoir and nearby ponds | 10. Barr Lake State Park |
| 3. Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuge | 11. Brighton |
| 4. Standley Lake Regional Park | 12. North Star Reservoir |
| 5. Stearns Lake | 13. Fort Lupton |
| 6. McKay Lake | 14. Ireland Reservoir #5 |
| 7. Eastlake #3 Park and Nature Preserve | 15. Banner Lakes State Wildlife Area |
| 8. 88th Avenue Open Space | 16. Prospect Reservoir |



1. Lowell Ponds

Description:

Don't let their location right by the interstate fool you: these small ponds can often be full of waterfowl. Migration times tend to be best, but during the summer, several breeding species should be present. The associated riparian habitat may also have migrants in season.

Directions:

From I-70 westbound: at exit 271B, take Lowell Blvd north about one mile to Lowell Ponds and Rosebud Park, which are opposite one another along Lowell just south of the South Platte River and the I-76 interchange. From I-70 eastbound: at exit 272, take Federal Blvd north and take a left on 55th Place. This residential road winds a half-mile west to Lowell, meeting that street just a few feet south of the ponds and the park.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



2. Jim Baker Reservoir and nearby ponds

Description:

This small reservoir has good access provided by a trail around the lake, and can hold various waterfowl species during migration. A small cattail patch should be checked for Virginia Rail and Marsh Wren, and the scrub and riparian habitat for migrants such as Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warblers, and various sparrows, in season.

Directions:

From I-76: exit at Sheridan Ave and go north about one mile to 64th Ave. Go east on 64th and go 1/2 mile to Tennyson. Head south on Tennyson for about 1/2 mile and the parking lot is on the east side, just north of the railroad tracks.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 11:00 PM



3. Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuge

Description:

One of the smallest and most urban refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, Two Ponds is split up into two parts: the Environmental Education Area and the Prairie Management Area. At both parts of the refuge, look for breeders like Warbling Vireo, Western Wood-Pewee, and Cooper's Hawk. In the prairie areas, Swainson's Hawk, Loggerhead Shrike, Savannah Sparrow, and others could be

found. During migration you never know what might show up! Note: dogs are not allowed at the refuge.

Directions:

From US 36 between Denver and Boulder: exit at Sheridan Blvd. Follow Sheridan south about one mile to W. 80th Ave and turn right (west). In a little over a mile and a half, you will see a sign for a left turn into Two Ponds NWR; this is the parking lot for the Environmental Education Area. To get to the Prairie Management Area, continue west to Kipling and park in the lot of the medical center on the SE corner of 80th and Kipling.

Access:

Prairie Management Zone is open year round from dawn to dusk. The Environment Education Zone is open from May to September dawn to dusk, and is closed from October to April



4. Standley Lake Regional Park

Description:

The largest body of water in the northwestern metro area, Standley Lake ranks high among the great Denver area lakes for birding opportunities. The lake tends to be most productive during the fall months, when large numbers of waterfowl, loons, grebes, and gulls pass through, but it remains good as long as there is open water. Note: there is a vehicle fee to enter the park.

Directions:

The main entrance is located on the north side of the lake. From US 36, exit at Wadsworth/CO 121 and go south to 100th Ave. Head west on 100th Ave to Simms. Go south on Simms to the entrance station.

Access:

Open all year, 7:30 AM to Sunset



5. Stearns Lake

Description:

Stearns Lake attracts waterfowl between fall and spring, sometimes including geese by the thousands. Large trees feature Swainson's Hawks in summer and Bald Eagles in winter; the surrounding fields are home to meadowlarks and a few Ring-necked Pheasants. Coyotes are also regularly seen here.

Directions:

From US 36: exit at Wadsworth/CO 121/US 287 and go north towards Broomfield. In approximately 3

miles, head west on Dillon Rd. In 1 mile, go south on 104th St and another mile to the parking lot, on the east.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



6. McKay Lake

Description:

This small lake and associated riparian grove near Broomfield make for a pleasant stop if in the area. Look for a variety of waterfowl (best during the spring and fall; winter if there is still open water), and migrant perching birds during appropriate times of year.

Directions:

From I-25: exit at 144th Ave and go west. The grove is located at the north parking lot, on the south side of 144th at Tejon St.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



7. Eastlake #3 Park and Nature Preserve

Description:

This lake may be small, but the bird numbers here often aren't! The full suite of waterbirds could be found here (at least when the water isn't frozen). Look especially for species like Hooded Merganser and Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teals. The surrounding cattail marshes can have Virginia Rail and Sora on occasion, as well as Marsh Wren, and the riparian habitat may be good for migrants in season.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 223, CO 128/120th Ave and go east for about two miles to Steele St. Head north on Steele for 0.6 miles to 124th Ave and go west. Eastlake Park will be on the north; park on Fillmore St.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



8. 88th Avenue Open Space

Description:

This area is part of a major restoration and enhancement project, so what is already good habitat for birds and other wildlife will only be improved! Even before this project, this area has been considered among the best spots for wintering waterfowl in

the metro area. All the regular wintering dabblers and divers can usually be found with a careful search, and a couple of Barrow's Goldeneyes are usually present - though finding them can sometimes require a long, cold walk!

Directions:

From I-76: take exit 12/US 85 and go north towards Brighton. From US 85, head west at CO 44/104th Ave to McKay Rd. At McKay and 100th Ave, there is a parking lot, restrooms, access to trails, and fishing on the south side of 100th Ave.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



9. Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

Description:

Historically recognized as a Superfund clean-up site, today the Arsenal has been resurrected as a first-class wildlife refuge. Among Denver-area birders, it is known as a good place to look for raptors, and one of the best spots near the city for Ferruginous Hawk. The small lake near the Visitor's Center can have various ducks in season, and the open prairie houses Burrowing Owls. The Refuge is also home to the reintroduced and endangered black-footed ferret, as well as a small herd of American Bison. Public access is limited to certain parts of the refuge, for more information, inquire at the Visitor's Center.

Directions:

From I-70: take exit 277/Quebec St and go north. Travel approximately 2.8 miles to Prairie Pkwy/64th Ave. Head east at Prairie Pkwy and travel 0.6 miles to Gateway Rd. Go north at Gateway and continue on through the Refuge entrance.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours





10. Barr Lake State Park

Description:

One of the premier metro-area lakes, Barr Lake has been a hot spot for birding longer than just about any other place in Colorado. Depending on the season, there are many opportunities to view waterbirds, shorebirds, raptors, and songbirds. An impressive riparian area surrounds the lake on all sides and provides ideal habitat for both resident and migratory birds. The wildlife refuge located at the southern end of the lake provides additional cover and protection, particularly for nesting birds, including a resident pair of Bald Eagles and a rookery with over 200 nests used by herons, egrets, and cormorants. In winter, it is possible to see large numbers of bald eagles at one time, as well as a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds, such as goldeneyes, grebes, gulls, and terns. In the fall, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies operates a banding station to the north of the Nature Center along the perimeter trail. This is an excellent opportunity to view migrating birds both in the hand and in the field. Be sure to stop by Barr Lake's Nature Center to learn more about their annual Birding Festival (in early September) and Bald Eagle Festival (early February), as well as a multitude of other educational opportunities. There are two entrances to the park, the main entrance on the southeast side leads to the Nature Center and other amenities while the northern entrance leads to Bird Conservancy of the Rockies Environmental Learning Center. You can access the perimeter trail from both entrances. A state park pass (annual or day) is required for entrance and parking. Please note: dogs are not allowed in the Wildlife Refuge.

Directions:

From I-76: take exit 23/Bromley Lane and go east. In about a mile, turn south on Picadilly Rd. The park entrance is on the west side of Picadilly Rd., about a mile and a half south of Bromley Lane. From E-470: exit 34/120th Ave. and go east to Tower Rd. Turn left onto Tower Rd. and follow the pavement to Picadilly Rd. Make a left on Picadilly. Park entrance is about a mile ahead on the left.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



11. Brighton

Description:

Brighton provides the closest facilities to famed birding locations such as Barr Lake, in addition to

several nice city parks. The best of these is Veterans Park on the South Platte River, which is contiguous with the Getz and Morgan-Smith Nature Areas.

Extensive riparian habitat offers chances at various migrants in season, while the river can host waterfowl during the winter.

Directions:

Brighton is along US 85, about 20 miles from Denver. To get to Veterans Park from US 85: turn west onto CO 7 and proceed a short distance to the parking lot on the north side, just before the South Platte River. See the website for directions to the other sites.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



12. North Star Reservoir

Description:

This pond can be scanned from a county road and can hold a good diversity of ducks and other waterbirds at almost any season. In warmer months, huge flocks of swallows can swarm over the surface of the water.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 232/Weld CR 8 and go east 10 miles to the reservoir, located on the north side of the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; Viewing only allowed from the road.

13. Fort Lupton

Description:

The highlight of birding in the Fort Lupton area is Pearson Park. A patchwork of dirt trails runs through thickets of cottonwood, Russian-olive, and willow that are home to woodpeckers, nuthatches, and jays. In spring, look for migrant warblers and thrushes.

Directions:

Pearson Park is located on the west side of US 85 in Fort Lupton. Take I-76 east to US 85 and go north. At CO 52/Mineral Rd, head west past the baseball field. Turn north and once past the baseball field, turn east and continue to the parking area.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



14. Ireland Reservoir #5

Description:

This reservoir can be a great place to see ducks and other waterbirds, at least in spring before the weeds grow tall enough to block the view. A scope is helpful and note that in some years, the reservoir runs dry.

Directions:

From I-76: exit 31 at Hudson. Follow CO 52 east two miles to CR 49 and head north. The reservoir is half a mile north on the east side of the road. Viewing only allowed from the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

15. Banner Lakes State Wildlife Area

Description:

This wildlife area is a very worthwhile destination, but closed during waterfowl hunting season. The north half is also closed from April 1 through July 15. This area has several nice marshes and ponds where ducks and several species of raptors nest, as well as thickets where owls sometimes roost. Be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before heading out.

Directions:

From I-76 in Hudson: take exit 31/CO 52 and go four miles east. The north parking lot is on CO 52, just past CR 53. The south parking lot is 1/2 mile farther east.

Access:

Open all year with limitations. North of Hwy 52 is closed April 1 - July 15. Closed from second weekend of October to second weekend of November. Limited access between September 1 to February 28. Refer to Colorado Parks and Wildlife website for more information.



16. Prospect Reservoir

Description:

This large private lake can only be scanned from one pullout near the southeast corner of the reservoir but, with a scope, one can see breeding Western and Eared Grebes and many ducks in winter. The marsh northeast of the reservoir has breeding Yellow-headed Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle, and Marsh Wren. Grasshopper Sparrows nest in some fields east of the reservoir.

Directions:

From I-76 in Hudson: take exit 31/CO 52 and go east for 7 miles to CR 59. Head south on CR 59. Prospect Reservoir is 4 miles south on the west side of the road. Scan the lake from the pullout in front of the gun club access gate, at the south end of the jog in CR 59.

Access:

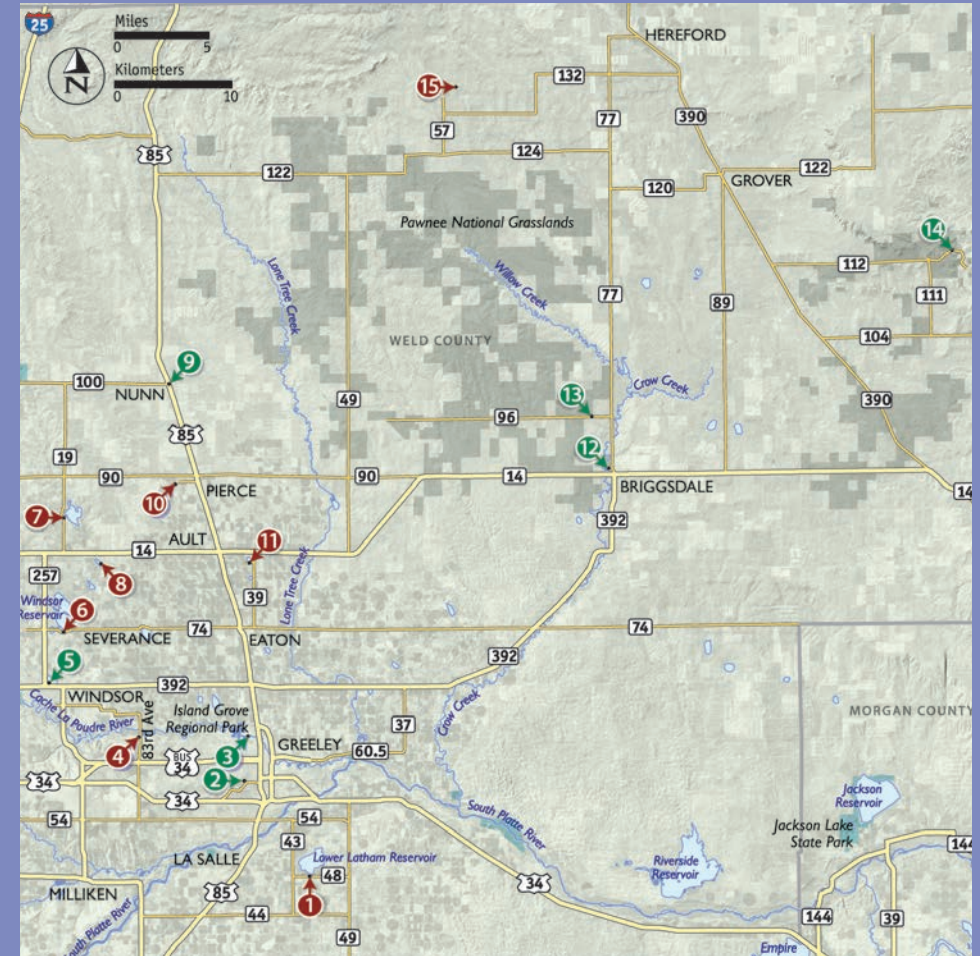
Open all year, daylight hours



Pawnee Trail

The Way Things Used to Be

The legendary Pawnee National Grassland is one of the only places near Denver where you can stand in native prairie, with gayfeather and pasqueflower tickling your feet, watching McCown's Longspurs and Lark Buntings skylark against a backdrop of snow-covered peaks. Here you will find one of the rare areas in the country that has changed very little in the past 200 years. A stronghold of the increasingly threatened grassland ecosystem, this lush prairie is home to Kit Foxes, Long-billed Curlews, Mountain Plovers, and Burrowing Owls. Here, too, are seasonal wetlands, dramatic buttes, and some of the most famous spots in Colorado to find migrant birds in spring and fall, such as Crow Valley Campground. This is rightly one of the most popular wildlife watching destinations in the state, not to be missed by true lovers of nature.



Sites on the Pawnee Trail:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Lower Latham Reservoir | 9. Raptor Alley |
| 2. Greeley | 10. Crom Lake |
| 3. Poudre River Trail and Greeley Gravel Pits | 11. Clark Lake |
| 4. The Poudre Learning Center | 12. Crow Valley Campground |
| 5. Windsor Lake / Boardwalk Community Park | 13. Pawnee National Grasslands (Western Section) |
| 6. Windsor Reservoir | 14. Pawnee National Grasslands (East Section) and Pawnee Buttes |
| 7. Black Hollow Reservoir | 15. West Pawnee Ranch |
| 8. Drake Lake | |



1. Lower Latham Reservoir

Description:

Although the reservoir itself is hard to see from the road, the extensive marshes on the south side are a good place to find Yellow-headed Blackbird, "Western" Marsh Wren, Savannah Sparrow, Great-tailed Grackle, Sora, Virginia Rail, and Black-necked Stilt. American Bitterns nest here but are hard to see; White Pelicans also nest here. Keep an eye out for other marsh-dwelling creatures such as muskrats.

Directions:

From I-76: go north on US Hwy 85 towards Greeley. In the town of LaSalle, go west on 1st Ave to CO 50/Todd Ave. Head east on CO 50/Todd Ave to CR 43. Go south on CR 43 to CR 48. Go east on CR 48, which runs through the marshes at the south end of the reservoir.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; Viewing only allowed from the road.

2. Greeley

Description:

In this small Great Plains city, the best place to bird is Glenmere Park. The pond in the park attracts ducks and geese, and Snowy Egret and Black-crowned Night-Heron have nested on the island in the pond. Mississippi Kite have sometimes been seen in and around the park in late summer and early fall, and migrants can be attracted to the mature trees.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 257, US Hwy 34/Eisenhower Blvd and go east to Greeley. Exit at 23rd Ave and head north to Reservoir Rd. Go east onto Reservoir Rd to 14th Ave. Head north on 14th Ave to Glenmere Blvd, then head west to 17th Ave, and then go south. Parking spaces will be on the east.

Access:

Open all year, 5:00 AM to 11:00 PM



3. Poudre River Trail and Greeley Gravel Pits

Description:

A paved bicycle and walking trail follows the Cache la Poudre River through Greeley and west to Windsor. Some stretches of the river are lined with tall trees; be sure to scan them for nesting Bald Eagles. The Poudre River Trail is a 21-mile paved pathway extending from Island Grove Regional Park in Greeley to Colorado Highway 392 in Windsor, so there are many miles to explore (on foot or bike) for birds and more!

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 257, US Hwy 34/Eisenhower Blvd

and go east to Greeley. Transition onto US Hwy 85/Business Route and head north to 3rd St. Go east on 3rd St to 14th Ave, then head north into Island Grove Park to access the Poudre River Trail.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



4. The Poudre Learning Center

Description:

The Poudre Learning Center (PLC) offers easy hiking trails adjacent to the Poudre River, which provides the perfect habitat to attract a diversity of birds and other wildlife. Look for Bald Eagles in the large trees along the river, as well as the usual suite of breeding species during the summer, and migrant sparrows and warblers during the spring and fall. A small pond can occasionally host small numbers of waterfowl. The PLC also offers a variety of nature-based programs and activities for schools and people of all ages - check their website for more information.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 257, US Hwy 34/Eisenhower Blvd and head east towards Greeley. Use the right 2 lanes to continue on US Hwy 34 toward 10th St/Greeley/Business Route. Continue on US Hwy 34/10th St to 83rd Ave. Go north on 83rd Ave for 1.3 miles to CO 62/F St. Head west on CO 62/F St at the eagle tower. The PLC is located immediately on the north.

Access:

Open all year (closures during certain school holiday periods and special events), Learning Center: 7:30 AM - 4:30 PM, M-F; Grounds: Sunrise to Sunset, 7 days a week



5. Windsor Lake / Boardwalk Community Park

Description:

Often confused with Windsor Reservoir, which is three miles north, Windsor Lake is right in the town of Windsor. At times it attracts huge numbers of ducks, gulls, and grebes. The lake is easy to view from Boardwalk Community Park, and a nice walking trail runs all the way around it.

Directions:

From I-25: exit 262, CO 392/East County Rd 32 and head east 4.5 miles to CO 257/Weld County Rd 17. Go north on CO 257 to Birch St. Go east on Birch St for 2 blocks to Boardwalk Park's parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



6. Windsor Reservoir

Description:

Windsor Reservoir is larger than the nearby Windsor Lake and often attracts more birds. It is a good place to find diving ducks and flocks of gulls, but can be difficult to view; a scope is required. Scan from the end of the dam, near the busy intersection of CR 74 and CR 19. Please be cautious of traffic when parking and walking.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 265, CO 74/Harmony Rd. Head east on CO 74 for 5.5 miles and the reservoir will be on the north. Viewing is from the roadside; best spot is on the north side of the road by CR 19.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

7. Black Hollow Reservoir

Description:

This large reservoir is far from the road, so a scope is required for good viewing. Between late fall and spring, the large flock of gulls here regularly includes Lesser Black-backed and Thayer's. In recent years, a pair of Bald Eagles has nested at the reservoir, providing another good reason to visit.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 269-A, CO 14/Mulberry St and go east for 6 miles. At CR 19, head north and in 2 miles, the reservoir is located east of the road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; Viewing only allowed from the road.

8. Drake Lake

Description:

A small lake with great marsh edges and a few trees, this area can be very attractive to ducks, geese, and especially gulls between fall and spring, as long as it is not frozen. The gulls gather here when they are not feeding in the nearby Weld County Landfill. In April and May, shorebirds can visit in good numbers.

Directions:

From I-25: exit 269-A, CO 14/Mulberry St and go east for 8 miles. At CR 23, head south and in 0.5 miles, the lake is on the west.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; Viewing only allowed from the road.

9. Raptor Alley

Description:

The Raptor Alley tour route originates from the Town of Nunn, perhaps one of the best places to see most common birds of prey and where some 23 species of raptors have been recorded. When driving on county roads, please watch for traffic and only pull over to look for birds in visible, safe locations. Also, be careful pulling onto the shoulder of roads, as many are soft and you could get stuck.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 269-A, CO 14/Mulberry Street and go east to the town of Ault. Head north on Highway 85/CanAm Highway to the town of Nunn. The Raptor Alley Route is a series of loops around Nunn and between Nunn and Pierce. See Colorado Birding Trail website for detailed directions.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

10. Crom Lake

Description:

Crom Lake is a small pond near the town of Pierce and is a reliable place to see ducks, pelicans, and herons; sometimes it hosts impressive numbers of geese or shorebirds in spring migration. The lake tends to freeze in colder months and during summer hosts fewer birds, but prairie species such as Burrowing Owl and McCown's Longspur can sometimes be found in the surrounding area.

Directions:

From I-25: exit 269-A, CO 14/Mulberry St and go east to the town of Ault. Head north on US Hwy 87/CanAm Hwy, for 4 miles to the town of Pierce and then go west on CR 90. In one mile, go south on CR 31. The reservoir is 0.5 mile south along this road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; Viewing only allowed from the road.

11. Clark Lake

Description:

This small lake is just southeast of the town of Ault and can attract good numbers of geese in winter, along with various ducks. In spring and summer, look for Bullock's Oriole in the cottonwoods around the lake, and Yellow-headed Blackbird in the cattails.

**Directions:**

From I-25 at Fort Collins: take exit 269A, CO 14/Mulberry St. Head east on CO 14/Mulberry St for 16 miles, through the town of Ault, to CR 39. Go south on CR 39 and in 0.5 miles, head west on CR 80. The lake is a 0.25 mile west, on the north.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; Viewing only allowed from the road.

12. Crow Valley Campground**Description:**

This Forest Service campground is a prime destination for migrant warblers, vireos, thrushes, and flycatchers, with good chances for vagrants from the east. Eastern Screech-Owls nest here, and in winter, Long-eared Owls sometimes roost in the evergreens. The campground is very popular with visitors on spring and summer weekends, and please note that hunting occurs here in season. The campground is closed from November to April, but you can still park outside the gate and walk in.

Directions:

From I-25: exit 269-A, CO 14/Mulberry St and go east for 38 miles to Briggsdale. Head north on CR 77 and then east into the campground.

Access:

April to mid-September (closed from November to April), walk in access year round, daylight hours

**13. Pawnee National Grasslands (Western Section)****Description:**

The Pawnee National Grassland is one of the premier patches of shortgrass prairie remaining on the Great Plains, a haven for a suite of prairie birds increasingly scarce elsewhere: Ferruginous Hawk, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Burrowing Owl, McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Colorado's state bird, the Lark Bunting. Pronghorn and black-tailed prairie-dog are hard to miss; also watch for coyote and swift fox. The National Grassland is a complex and remote patchwork of federal, private, and leased lands; a good map is essential for navigating the area.

Directions:

To get to one of the best areas, Murphy's Pasture, from I-25: exit 269-A, CO 14/Mulberry St and go east for 35 miles to CO 69. Head north on CR 69 and in 3 miles, go east onto CR 96. Murphy's Pasture is the next 4 miles of road.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

**14. Pawnee National Grasslands (East Section) and Pawnee Buttes****Description:**

One of the most beautiful spots on Colorado's eastern plains, the buttes provide nesting places for Rock Wrens and Prairie Falcons. Pronghorn and Black-tailed Prairie-Dogs are easy to see in this area; lucky observers may spot a jackrabbit, a Swift Fox, a Golden Eagle, or a Mountain Plover. For a longer, scenic adventure, travel the Pawnee Pioneer Trails, a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway.

Directions:

From I-25 at Fort Collins: take exit 269-A, CO 14/Mulberry St and go east for approximately 55 miles through the town of Briggsdale to CR 105. From Briggsdale, travel another 14 miles to CR 105. At CR 105, go north. CR 105 will "T" at CR 390; go northwest for a short distance to reconnect with CR 105 heading north. CR 105 will then end at CR 104; go east on CR 104 for three miles to CR 111. Head north on CR 111 to CR 110. Go east on CR 110; it will curve north and change to CR 113. Continue on and when the road curves east, go north onto Pawnee Butte Trailhead. Continue north to the parking lot on the east.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours

**15. West Pawnee Ranch****Description:**

Located north of the west section of the Pawnee National Grassland, the Ranch features a variety of habitats including grasslands, riparian, juniper-laden rocky ridges and a wetland/pond complex. Wild Turkeys are common. Golden Eagles have nested on the property and the site is an oasis for many a migrant songbird. In the fall and spring, many surprises could abound. Porcupines and swift foxes can also be seen here.

Directions:

From I-25: take exit 269-A, CO 14/Mulberry St and go east to the town of Ault. Head north on US Hwy 85/CanAm Hwy through the town of Nunn. Continue north to CR 122 and go east to CR 55. Head north on CR 55; at CR 124 go east, at CR 57 go north, and at CR 130, head east to the Ranch. To inquire about access to this ranch, please call 970-895-2482 in advance of your potential visit.

Access:

Contact landowner prior to visit. For more information: (970) 895-2482



Did You KNOW?

Don't Baby Wildlife



Spring is not just a season for birding, it's also baby animal season! Spring is also when we see numerous well-intentioned people bring young wildlife into CPW offices or wildlife rehabilitation centers looking to help the "abandoned" animals. Unfortunately, this interference often reduces the young's chance for survival. A baby animal found alone does not mean it's abandoned or an orphan. Since many young are born scentless, the mother is usually out-of-sight, foraging for food and keeping her scent away to deter predators from her offspring's location.

For birds, if the young animal is featherless or covered in fluffy down, it is considered a hatchling or nestling and should be placed back in the nest if possible. And don't worry – no evidence exists that a mother will abandon her young (bird or mammal) after human handling. If you can't locate the nest, you can construct a nest out of a small box and hang from the tree where the parents will find it. If the youngster is covered in feathers, it is considered a fledgling, which are commonly found on the ground when learning to fly and should be left alone, as parents are still helping feed and protect them during this vulnerable time.

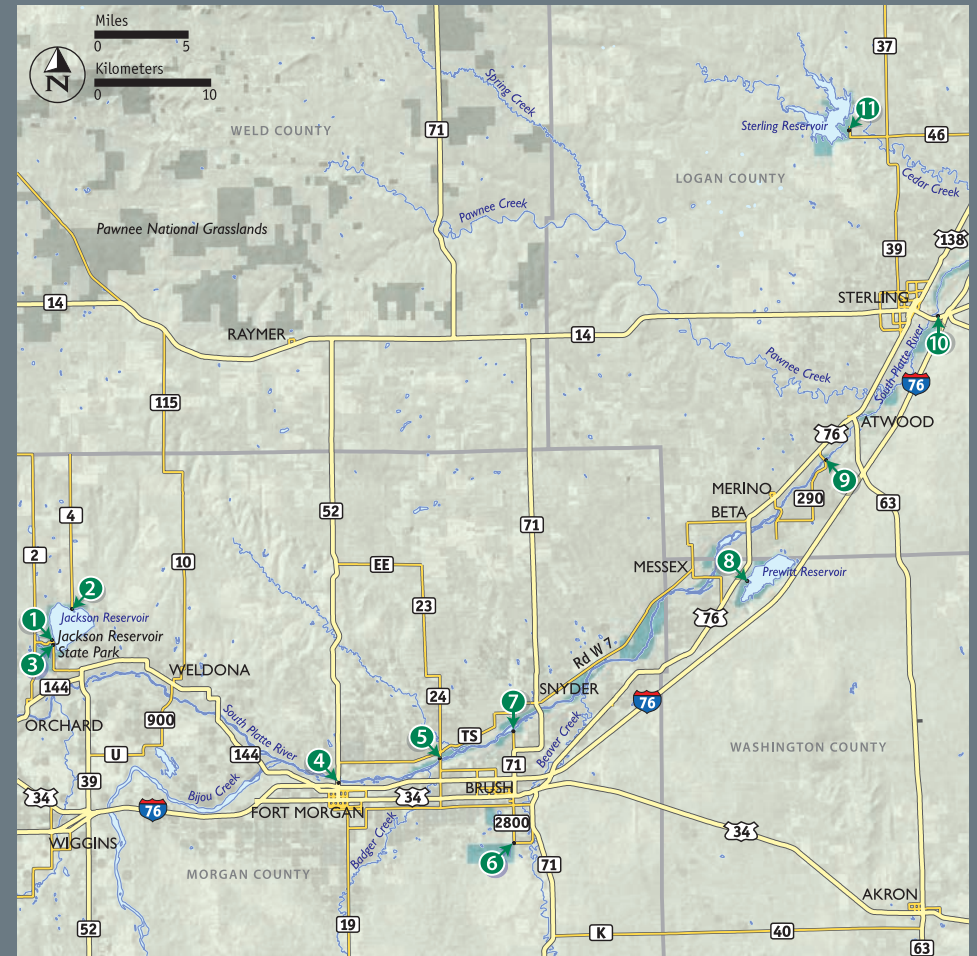
Spend time observing the animal. If it has evidence of injury, illness, has been alone and unattended for 24+ hours, or you confirm the mother is deceased, contact your local CPW office or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Only trained professionals should handle and care for sick, injured, or orphaned wildlife. Please never feed or give water to what you think is an animal (young or adult) in need, as you will most likely cause more harm than good. When in doubt, call a CPW office for advice!



Prairie Oases Trail

Follow The Waterbird Road

Interstate 76 follows the South Platte River from Denver into Nebraska, through miles of high prairie past a chain of large lakes that attract birds by the tens of thousands in migration and winter. Starting in late summer, waves of shorebirds sweep through these reservoirs, strafed by the occasional Peregrine Falcon, watched from the surrounding bushes by mink, raccoon, and migrant warblers and sparrows. In September, Sabine's Gull is a surprisingly good bet. By November, the geese and the gulls have taken over. Thanks to easy access and a huge variety and quantity of wildlife, this has long been one of the most popular birding routes in Colorado.



Sites on the Prairie Oases Trail:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Jackson Lake State Park | 7. Brush State Wildlife Area |
| 2. Jackson Lake State Wildlife Area | 8. Prewitt Reservoir State Wildlife Area |
| 3. Andrick Ponds State Wildlife Area | 9. Atwood State Wildlife Area |
| 4. Fort Morgan | 10. Sterling |
| 5. Jean K. Tool State Wildlife Area | 11. North Sterling State Park |
| 6. Brush Prairie Ponds State Wildlife Area | |



1. Jackson Lake State Park

Description:

Jackson Reservoir is the king of birding spots in the greater Fort Morgan area, offering a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds to some of the best migrant traps around. Time of year plays an important role here, with spring usually having very high water (and thus less shorebird habitat), and fall offering the best overall variety. The cottonwood groves in the State Park are best for songbird species (especially during spring and fall migration). When the water is low, the dry margins of the lake bed are a good bet for Mountain Plover during early fall migration, and various sparrow species lurk in the emergent growth. Many other species can be found here at all times of year. A State Parks pass is required for entry and hunting occurs at this site, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before visiting.

Directions:

From I-76: take exit 66A/CO 39. Head north on CO 39 for just over 7 miles through Goodrich, then go west on CR Y5/10. In just over a mile, the road bends to the north and becomes CR 3; continue on this road past the Jackson Reservoir inlet canal until you reach the entrance station.

Access:

Open all year, 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM



2. Jackson Lake State Wildlife Area

Description:

Located near the State Park and connected to the same body of water, Jackson Lake State Wildlife Area offers great birding opportunities for shorebirds and waterfowl along the north side of the reservoir. Like the State Park, timing of your visit is important, with spring usually having very high water (and thus less shorebird habitat), and fall offering the best overall variety of species. When the water level is low, you can walk through the small grove of trees (from the parking area) and onto the lake bed itself. There are fishing limitations and hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check seasonal restrictions before visiting.

Directions:

From I-76: exit at Highway 39. Go north for 7.4 miles to Highway 144. Go northeast for 1 mile to CR 5. Go 3.8 miles north to CR CC and head west for 1 mile to CR 4. Go south for 1/4 mile to the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



3. Andrick Ponds State Wildlife Area

Description:

Located just to the south and west of the better-known Jackson Lake, Andrick Ponds SWA has abundant marshes, small ponds, and some nice hedgerows, and just about any species could show up here. Migration tends to provide the best opportunities, especially during the fall. Wildlife observations are limited from the Saturday before the Memorial Day Holiday through August 31. Hunting occurs at this property so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before visiting.

Directions:

From I-76: take exit 66A/CO 39. Head north on CO 39 for just over 7 miles through Goodrich, to Highway 144 and Morgan County Road (MCR) Y.5; go 1.5 miles west (left) on MCR Y.5. Turn north (right) on MCR3 for 1.5 miles to MCR AA. Go west (left) on MCR AA just before the entrance to Jackson Lake State Park. The parking lot is about 1/2 mile on the south side of the county road.

Access:

Wildlife viewing only allowed Saturday before Memorial Day to August 31, daylight hours



4. Fort Morgan

Description:

Fort Morgan has the full range of facilities, as well as good access to nearby first-class birding spots, and makes a good base along I-76. For birding in town, check out Riverside Park, which at times can have Snow, Ross's, and Greater White-fronted Geese during migration and winter, as well as the occasional Harris's Sparrow among the sparrow flocks during winter.

Directions:

From Denver: take I-76 east for approximately 85 miles. The town of Fort Morgan is south of I-76 between exits 79 and 81. To get to Riverside Park, take exit 80, CO 52/Main St and head north, then east into the park. Go a little farther north on CO 52 to reach closer parking to the South Platte River at Curry St.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



5. Jean K. Tool State Wildlife Area

Description:

With access to the South Platte River and its associated dense and extensive riparian corridor, this SWA is a good place to look for local and uncommon breeders such as Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Bell's Vireo, as well as migrants in season. Wild Turkey and Northern Bobwhite are possible all year. Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before visiting.

Directions:

From I-76: take exit 86 and go north on CR-24 for just under a mile to a parking area north of the bridge. Head east along the north side of the river or west along the river's south side.

Access:

Open all year, 3:00 AM to 9:00 PM



6. Brush Prairie Ponds State Wildlife Area

Description:

This section of prairie habitat is sometimes flooded, primarily in early summer, and attracts ducks and shorebirds during such times. At other times, check for Lark Bunting, Brewer's Sparrow, Lapland Longspur and Horned Lark (during the winter months), and raptors of various stripes at all times of year. Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before visiting.

Directions:

From I-76: exit at Colorado Ave/90A and go south on CO 71 into Brush. At Edison St/US 34, head west for 1 block to Clayton Street/CR 28. Go south on CR28; in 2.5 miles, there will be a parking lot at the southwest corner of the SWA, at the intersection of CR 28 and CR P.

Access:

March 1 to August 31, open only for wildlife viewing and birding in specific areas as posted. Public access is prohibited from 9:00 PM to 3:00 AM daily, except when authorized by a night hunting permit. Public access is restricted to foot traffic only.



7. Brush State Wildlife Area

Description:

Some of the best riparian habitat in the area is at Brush SWA, where trails bring you through cottonwood gallery forest and past several wetlands. This SWA is among the premier places in the state

to find Northern Bobwhite, and Wild Turkey is regularly encountered. During spring and fall migration, a variety of migrants can be found, and Eastern Screech-Owl is fairly common in the area. Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before visiting.

Directions:

From I-76: exit 90B/CO 71 and go north for 1.5 miles. CO 71 bends sharply to the right at the junction with CR-28; continue north on CR-28 for 1 mile to the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, public access is prohibited daily from 9:00 PM to 3:00 AM except when authorized by a night hunting permit.



8. Prewitt Reservoir State Wildlife Area

Description:

Prewitt Reservoir is a must-hit stop during migration. Abundant riparian habitat below the dam and along the inlet canal can have just about any regular songbird migrant (and some irregular ones!). The lake, depending on water level, can have thousands of shorebird species and good numbers of waterfowl. Summer and winter tend to be much slower, but could still be worth a check if you're in the area. An annual permit is required unless you have already purchased a valid fishing or hunting license.

Directions:

From I-76: exit 102/County Road Q and go one mile north to US 6. Head northeast on US 6 for 3-4 miles to the SWA entrance.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours





9. Atwood State Wildlife Area

Description:

This seldom-visited SWA provides good access to stretches of the South Platte River and associated riparian corridor. The best entry point is from the northern parking lot, especially east along the river. Look for sparrow flocks in winter, northeast specialties in summer, and migrants at other seasons. Scanning the river from the bridges may also be worth your while. Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before heading out.

Directions:

From I-76: take CO 63/exit 115 and go north for a little over 3 miles. At US 6, head southeast for just under 3 miles to CR 29.5, on the left. The SWA is along this road about 1/2 mile from US 6.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



10. Sterling

Description:

As the largest town in northeastern Colorado, Sterling is the logical base for a trip to the area, and several town parks are worth a visit. The Overland Trail Recreation Area gives access to the South Platte and its associated riparian habitat, while Pioneer Park just to the west of town has the best migrant traps. Both locations could have Mississippi Kites, as well as migrants in season, sparrows in the winter, and others.

Directions:

From Denver: take I-76 east for approximately 130 miles to the town of Sterling. Sterling is located west of I-76 at exit 125/US 6. To reach the Overland Trail Recreation Area, take exit 125/US 6 and go west to CR 370/Riverside Rd. Head north and the Recreation Area is immediately on the west side. To reach Pioneer Park, continue into town on Hwy 6; after the curve, Hwy 6 becomes Chestnut St. At 4th St, go south, then in two blocks go west onto CO 14/Main St. Pioneer Park will be two miles west, on the north side.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



11. North Sterling State Park

Description:

North Sterling State Park is a large reservoir in northeastern Colorado that includes a variety of habitat types and provides great opportunities to view many of the birds particular to northeastern Colorado. The reservoir can attract various water birds and in the prairie sections of the park, keep an eye out for Lark Bunting, Western Meadowlark, Brewer’s Sparrow, and raptors that could include Ferruginous Hawk. A State Parks pass is required for entry.

Directions:

From I-76: take the Chestnut St (Highway 6) exit and go west. Chestnut St curves to the left and turns into Platte St. Continue on Platte St to North 7th Ave (CR 39) and head north for about 8 miles to CR 40. Go west on CR 40 for 2 miles to CR 33, then head north for 3 miles to the park entrance, located on the left.

Access:

Open all year, 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM



Wild about Turkeys

Once nearly extinct in Colorado, Wild Turkeys now thrive thanks to conservation efforts supported and funded by sportsmen. Particularly in the 1980s, Colorado Parks and Wildlife biologists focused their work on increasing population numbers. After years of releasing turkeys across the landscape, there are now more turkeys in Colorado than historically occurred here - that makes wild turkeys one of Colorado’s most successful wildlife recovery stories!

Colorado is home to two subspecies of wild turkey, the Merriam and the Rio Grande. The Merriam is native to the Rocky Mountains and prefers open mountain meadows, oak brush, and ponderosa pine forests. The Rio Grande, introduced during recovery efforts, is primarily found east of the mountains on agricultural land and in wetland areas.

Some interesting facts about Wild Turkeys:

- The wild turkey is only one of two domesticated birds native to America.
- The Merriam’s Wild Turkey was named after Clinton Hart Merriam, first chief of the U.S. Biological Survey (later known as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).
- Wild Turkeys can fly at up to 60 miles per hour and run over 12 mph!
- Is it a male or female? Check its poop (scat), as a turkey’s gender can be determined from its droppings! A male scat is shaped like the letter “j” and a female’s is more spiral-shaped. Added bonus – the larger the diameter, the older the bird!
- Turkeys have excellent vision, possibly seeing 3x more clearly than 20/20 and in color. Rotating their head allows for a 360-degree field of vision.
- Benjamin Franklin did not advocate for the turkey as America’s national bird or symbol. However, after seeing a particular National Emblem design, he commented that the eagle looked “more like a Turkey... a much more respectable Bird... a true original Native of America... a Bird of Courage.”

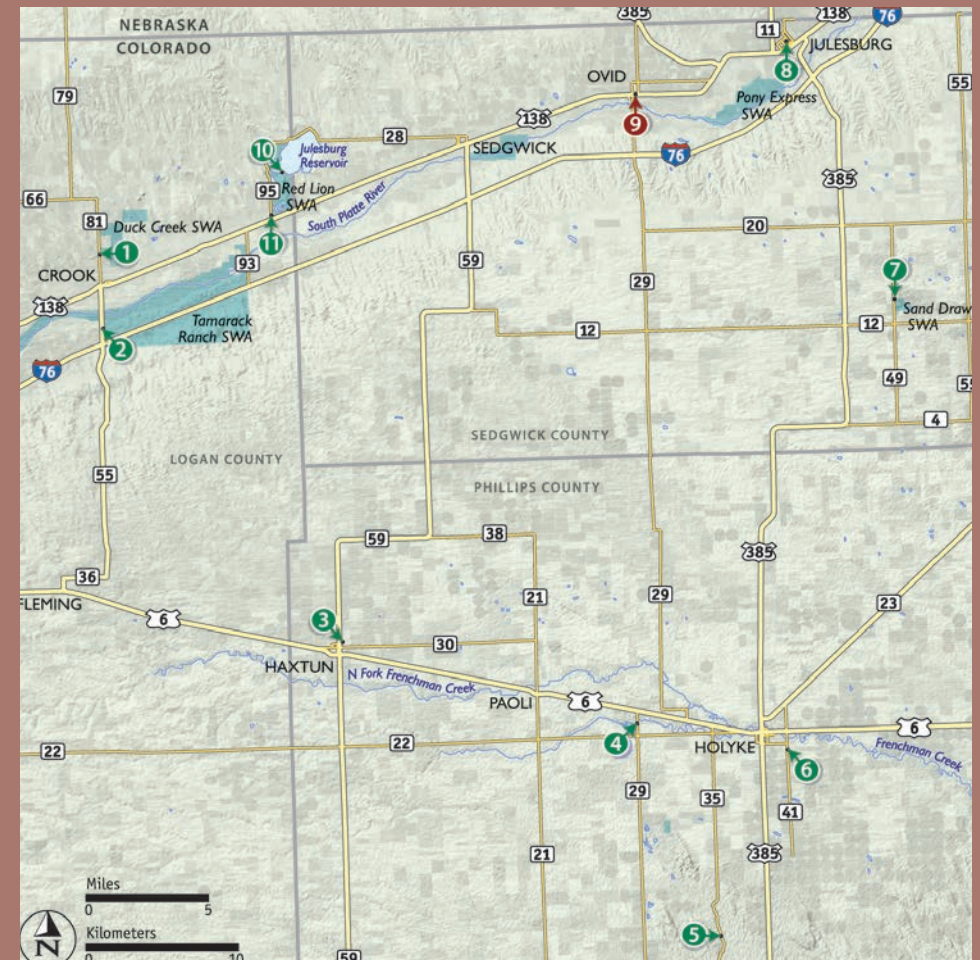




Sandsage Trail

Prairie, Southwestern Style

The northeast corner of Colorado sits atop a special ecosystem, a mix of desert and prairie known as sandsage. In undisturbed corners of the landscape live tallgrass prairie species from farther east, like Greater Prairie-Chickens and Upland Sandpipers, but with a little southwestern spice in the form of short-horned lizards, rattlesnakes, and Cassin's Sparrows. Along the river valleys and in the towns, shade trees attract Baltimore, Bullock's, and Orchard Orioles, and the occasional Northern Cardinal. In summer, Mississippi Kites float over some of the city parks. In the colder months, bodies of open water can be packed with waterfowl, including thousands of Ross's and Snow Geese.



Sites on the Sandsage Trail:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Duck Creek State Wildlife Area | 7. Sand Draw State Wildlife Area |
| 2. Tamarack Ranch State Wildlife Area | 8. Julesburg |
| 3. Haxtun Area | 9. Ovid Woods |
| 4. Frenchman Creek State Wildlife Area | 10. Jumbo Reservoir State Wildlife Area |
| 5. Sand Hills | 11. Red Lion State Wildlife Area |
| 6. Holyoke | |



1. Duck Creek State Wildlife Area

Description:

Duck Creek has one of the best migrant trap habitats in the area, but is often neglected in favor of more popular locations nearby. However, it is well worth a visit, especially during spring and fall migration when you never know what could show up! Several of the northeastern specialty breeding species occur here, including Baltimore Oriole, Eastern Kingbird, and Upland Sandpiper (along the entrance road). Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before heading out.

Directions:

From I-76: take exit 149/Crook and go north on CO 55. At the town of Crook, CO 55 turns into 1st St/CR 81. Continue north for about 2 miles to the parking area.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



2. Tamarack Ranch State Wildlife Area

Description:

As one of the prime places in the state to find local northeastern breeding specialties, Tamarack SWA is best during migration and summer seasons. Look for Bell's Vireo, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Northern Bobwhite, Red-bellied Woodpecker and more in the wooded areas to the east of CO 55, and Field Sparrow and other open country species to the west of the highway. Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before heading out.

Directions:

From I-76: take exit 149/Crook and go north on CO 55. In a little over a mile, head east on CR 385 into the parking lot. The western portion of the State Wildlife Area is accessible via a dirt road just north of the parking lot at CR 385.

Access:

Open all year with the following exceptions: Closed to all but hunting the last weekend of October, opening day, and the first weekend of December



3. Haxtun Area

Description:

The City Park in the northeast corner of town attracts many birds in spring and fall migration. The wastewater ponds are located just over a mile east

of town and are one of the best places in the area to find ducks and geese, mostly in the winter; in spring and fall they can also attract phalaropes and other shorebirds.

Directions:

From Denver: go east on I-76 to exit 125/US 6 at Sterling. Head east on US 6 for 31 miles to the town of Haxtun. To reach City Park, go north on Washington Ave and then east on Grant St for 4 blocks to the park, on the north. To reach the wastewater ponds, continue east through Haxtun on US 6 for 1 mile, then go north on CR 7.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



4. Frenchman Creek State Wildlife Area

Description:

Spring and summer are the best times to visit this mostly dry creek bed, which is lined by sparse cottonwoods, chokecherry, and juniper. East meets west here; both Western and Eastern Kingbirds can be found in summer, and this is a good place to look for Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles and their hybrids. Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before heading out.

Directions:

This SWA is between Holyoke and Haxtun. From Haxtun: go 12.5 miles east on Highway 6 to CR 29, then 0.5 miles south to the parking lot. From Holyoke: go 5 miles west on Highway 6 to CR 29, then go 0.5 miles south to the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



5. Sand Hills

Description:

The southern portion of Phillips County has some sandsage habitat where Cassin's and Lark Sparrows breed, along with Colorado's state bird, the Lark Bunting. Small numbers of Greater Prairie-Chickens are also present, but unlikely to be seen. Look out for pronghorn, as they are easy to find in the area.

Directions:

From Denver: Holyoke is approximately 170 miles northeast of Denver. Take I-76 east to exit 125/US 6 at Sterling. Head east on US 6 to Holyoke. From Holyoke, go south on US 385 four miles and at CR 14, head west. Go two miles and at CR 35, head

south. The Sand Hills start about two miles south of CR 14.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours; Viewing only allowed from the road.

6. Holyoke

Description:

The largest town in Phillips County, Holyoke is a good place to see Mississippi Kites in summer. Look for them in the air, or anywhere above town, as they pursue flying insects on the wing. The town and the cemetery can attract spring migrants, while the Lions Club Fishing Hole can have ducks at any season, migrants in spring, and sometimes Bell's Vireo in summer.

Directions:

From Denver: Holyoke is approximately 170 miles northeast of Denver. Take I-76 east to exit 125/US 6 at Sterling. Go east on US 6 to Holyoke. Holyoke is located at the intersection of US 6 and US 385, 50 miles east of Sterling. The cemetery is south of town on CR 41 and the Fishing Hole is along US 6, east of CR 41.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



7. Sand Draw State Wildlife Area

Description:

This spot is an oasis of tall trees and dense undergrowth that provides a haven for deer, cottontail rabbits, and various bird species. Listen for the scratchy warbles of Bell's Vireo in summer, along with the complex song of the Brown Thrasher. The denser pines may harbor roosting owls, especially in winter. Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before heading out.

Directions:

From I-76: exit 180 at Julesburg and head south on US 385 for eight miles to CR 16. Go east for two miles to CR 49, then south about a mile to the parking lot.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



8. Julesburg

Description:

Lion's Park (the Julesburg State Wayside) features a Watchable Wildlife Trail along the river where you can see Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, buntings, and warblers in migration. DePoorter Lake, just east of town, is a good place to see ducks and swallows in spring and fall.

Directions:

Julesburg is at I-76 exit 180, approximately 184 miles northeast of Denver at the Colorado/Wyoming border. Lions Park is on the west side of US 385 at the South Platte River, between the interstate and town. DePoorter Lake is a quarter mile farther north, on the east side of US 385.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



9. Ovid Woods

Description:

A strip of woodlands along the east edge of the town of Ovid, called the 'Ovid Woods,' is private property and cannot be entered, but it is possible to see many birds from the road that runs along it. Breeding birds here include Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Chimney Swift; Northern Cardinal is sometimes seen. Good numbers of migrant warblers and sparrows can be found during migration.

Directions:

Ovid is at I-76 and exit 172, approximately 175 miles northeast from Denver. From I-76: exit 172/CR 27.8, and go north for about two miles to Ovid. To get to the woods, head east on US 138 to 2nd St. The Woods run north and south along 2nd St.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



10. Jumbo Reservoir State Wildlife Area

Description:

Labeled "Julesburg Reservoir" on some maps, but popularly called "Jumbo," birding can be excellent here at any time of year. Look for shorebirds in late summer and fall, and numerous species of geese in late fall and winter. Breeding birds in nearby fields include Upland Sandpiper, Burrowing Owl, Dickcissel, and Grasshopper Sparrow. An annual permit is required to access the property unless you have already purchased a valid Colorado fishing or hunting license.

Directions:

From Interstate 76: take exit 155, Red Lion Road/CR 93. Go 3 miles north (left) to Highway 138, then 1 mile northeast (right) to County Road 95, then 2 miles north (left) to the reservoir.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



11. Red Lion State Wildlife Area

Description:

These smaller lakes adjacent to Jumbo Reservoir are often good for shorebirds and waterfowl during migration. The surrounding prairie should be checked for Upland Sandpiper during the summer and various raptors at all times of year. There are also some marshes in the area that could host any of the usual marsh birds. Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before heading out.

Directions:

From I-76: take exit 155, Red Lion Road/CR 93 and go north a little over two miles to US 138 and head east. In one mile, go north onto CR 95. Red Lion SWA is 0.25 miles north of US 138 and continues all the way to Jumbo Reservoir SWA.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



Migration Stations Celebrations!

Colorado is part of the Central Flyway, a migration corridor stretching from Central and South America to the polar regions of North America and comprising more than half the landmass of the continental United States. Colorado is a critical migration stop for birds traveling the Flyway during both their spring and fall journeys, as about 400 species rely on the Central Flyway. Colorado offers a number of festivals throughout the year to celebrate our feathered friends; many can be found right here in the northeast region! Be sure to check the CPW website for most current event dates and details, as well as for festivals in other parts of the state: <http://cpw.state.co.us/thingstodo/Pages/ViewingFestivals.aspx>.

Spring – February - May

- Bald Eagle Festival – Barr Lake State Park, Brighton
- Great Backyard Bird Count – Chatfield State Park, Littleton; check Audubon for other locations
- Greater Prairie Chicken Viewing – Wray
- Welcome Back Turkey Vulture Day – Castlewood Canyon State Park, Franktown
- International Migratory Bird Day – Statewide

Fall/Winter – September - January

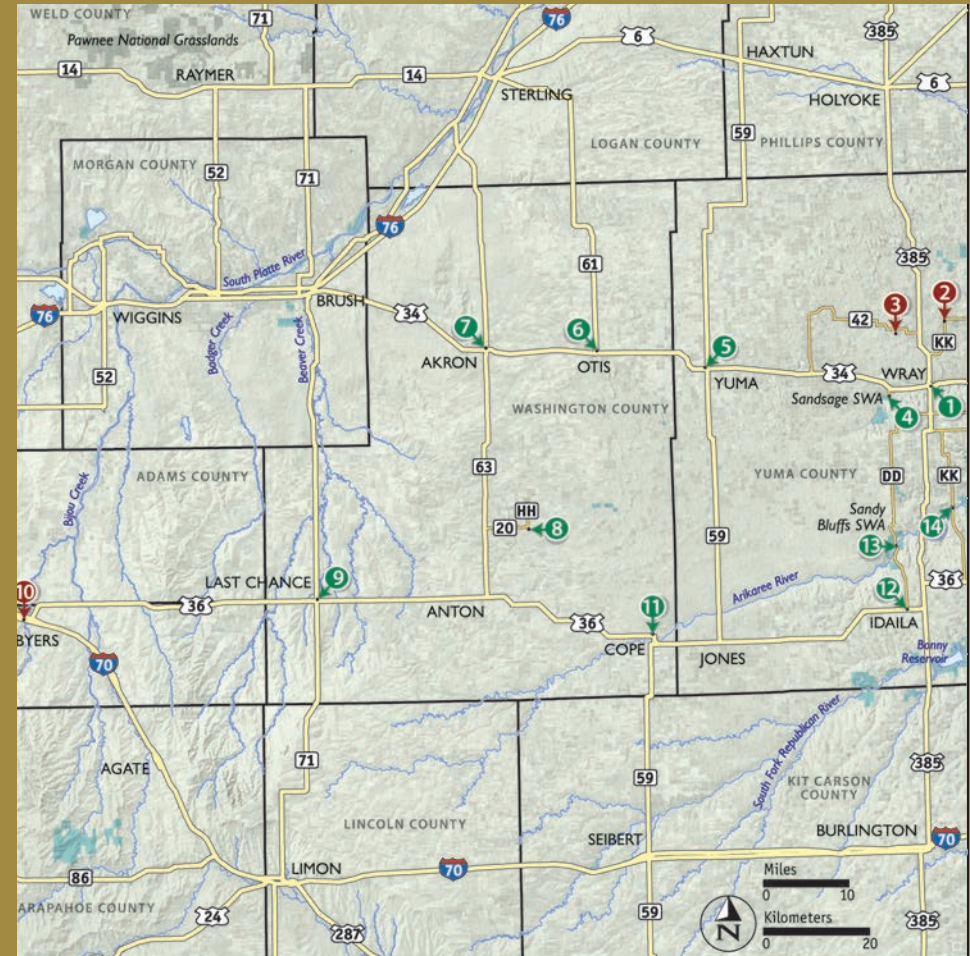
- Fall Birding Festival – Barr Lake State Park, Brighton
- HOOTenanny Owl and Music Festival – Chatfield State Park, Littleton
- Celebrating Bird Migration – Waneka Lake & Greenlee Wildlife Preserve, Lafayette
- Chatfield Big Sit – Chatfield State Park, Littleton
- Christmas Bird Counts – Chatfield State Park, Littleton; check Audubon for other locations



Greater Prairie-Chicken *Trail*

Who Said Chickens Can't Dance?

Whooping and cackling like fiends, leaping into the air and puffing out their inflatable necks like frogs, the male Greater Prairie-Chickens put on a show each spring unrivaled in the animal kingdom. This is their stronghold in Colorado, the sandsage prairies of Yuma County, a landscape they share with meadowlarks, Cassin's Sparrows and coyotes. These prairies are not all flat; in many places river bluffs tower a hundred feet above the river, and rich corridors of cottonwoods and willows line the major river corridors, attracting eastern wildlife like White-tailed Deer, Blue Jay, and occasionally cardinals, while Wild Turkeys stalk the edges of the woods and towns. Here where east blends with west, the landscape is always ready to serve up some kind of surprise.



Sites on the Greater Prairie-Chicken Trail:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Wray Area | 9. Last Chance |
| 2. Greater Prairie-Chicken areas | 10. May Farms |
| 3. Lazy LW Ranch | 11. Cope |
| 4. Sandsage State Wildlife Area | 12. Idalia |
| 5. Yuma | 13. Sandy Bluffs State Wildlife Area & State Trust Land |
| 6. Otis | 14. Beecher Island area |
| 7. Akron | |
| 8. Longspur and Plover areas
in Washington County | |



1. Wray Area

Description:

One of the largest towns on the eastern plains, Wray is a great town from which to base yourself when birding in the area. Wray Prairie-Chicken Viewing Tours take place in March and April each year, a cooperative effort of the Wray Museum, Wray Chamber of Commerce, Kitzmuller Ranch, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife—see the website for details. The best birding in Wray is in Rainbow Park and along the river nearby. Although Wray is very nice, the best birding in the area is northwest of town, at the Wray Fish Hatchery and the adjacent Stalker Lake SWA.

Directions:

Wray is at the junction of US 34 and US 385. Rainbow Park is in the northwest corner of town, on the south side of US 34 just where it enters town. To get to Stalker Lake SWA and the Wray Fish Hatchery, head west from town on US 34 about a mile and a half to CR FF and turn north. The entrance road to Stalker Lake is on the left (west) about a mile north of 34. The entrance road to the State Fishing Unit is just a little farther north, on the other side of the draw.

Access:

Open all year



2. Greater Prairie-Chicken Areas

Description:

The sandsage prairie just north of Wray contains the vast majority of Colorado's Greater Prairie-Chickens. The only reliable lek locations at this time are located on private lands. Several groups and ranches operate tours to see the chickens on their leks in spring, and this is by far your best shot at seeing the birds; see the website for details. If you are really strapped for time, you can look for the birds along the county roads north of Wray and east of US 385 just after dawn in April and May. The chickens are easy to hear from the road but often difficult to see - most of the leks are on the far side of the numerous hills! No matter how close the birds sound, DO NOT LEAVE THE ROADS.

Directions:

To get to the densest concentration of leks, drive north on US 385 from Wray about eleven miles and turn right (east) onto CR 45. This road winds around, eventually looping south to become CR PP, which goes all the way south to US 34 east of Wray. Chickens could be seen all along this route, though

the northern half is better. Other leks might be seen along the adjacent stretch of CR RR and along roads KK and 42, south of CR 45.

Access:

Open all year

3. Lazy LW Ranch

Description:

Nestled in the sandhills northwest of Wray, the Lazy LW offers hiking and birding among the sandsage in Greater Prairie-Chicken country. The Wilsons have a Greater Prairie-Chicken lek on their property and have developed a grazing system to encourage nesting. The shelterbelts around the homestead offer good birding and are a reliable spot for Loggerhead Shrike and Northern Bobwhite. To schedule a lek viewing or go birdwatching/hiking, please call Dee Wilson at (970) 630-7235.

Directions:

To inquire about access to this ranch and to get directions, please call Dee Wilson at (970) 630-7235 a minimum of 48 hours in advance of your potential visit. Please remember that this is a working ranch as well as a private residence, and there may be times when the landowner cannot accommodate visits. While you are on the ranch, remember to stay on roads, leave gates as you find them (whether open or closed), and refrain from taking anything off the ranch or leaving trash behind.

Access:

Open all year, contact owner prior to visit, (970) 630-7235



4. Sandsage State Wildlife Area

Description:

This small SWA just west of Wray provides access to a stretch of the South Republican River and adjacent grassland. Check the sparse riparian for Orchard Oriole, Indigo Bunting, Brown Thrasher, and the more open areas can have Eastern Kingbird, various sparrow species, and Lark Buntings. Hunting occurs on this property, so be sure to check for seasonal restrictions before visiting.

Directions:

From Wray: Go 4.5 miles west on HWY 34 to CR 35. Head 1/4 mile west to CR CC and then 1/2 mile south.

Access:

Open all year, daylight hours



5. Yuma

Description:

Yuma is a fairly large plains town and has lots of mature deciduous trees for birders (and birds) to choose from. City Park in the north part of town might be a good place to start - it has a few large trees that shade a good-sized duck pond. Northeast of town, the Yuma cemetery has medium-sparse vegetation, but its isolation may help it concentrate migrants better than the town. South of the cemetery is one of the nicest sets of sewage ponds on the Eastern Plains - not to be missed by anyone traveling the US 34 corridor.

Directions:

Yuma is along US 34 at its junction with CO 59. To get to the park with the duck pond from US 34, turn north on CO 59 and go about half a mile. The park is one block west of CO 59, just south of the railroad tracks. To get to the cemetery, continue north on CO 59 to CR 39 and turn right (east). The cemetery is about a mile from this intersection on the north side of the road. To get to the sewage ponds, turn south on CR G just east of the cemetery; they are on the east side of the road about three quarters of a mile south, and a quarter mile north of US 34.

Access:

Open all year



6. Otis

Description:

Small and isolated, this prairie town has a few mature deciduous trees. The cemetery south of town contains some good juniper hedgerows worth a quick look in winter or migration. Just east of town is the town's sole sewage pond, which is small but can attract various waterfowl, ibis, and who knows what else!

Directions:

Otis is along US 34 thirteen miles east of Akron and thirteen miles west of Yuma. The sewage pond is just north of US 34 on the west side of CR SS.

Access:

Open all year



7. Akron

Description:

The county seat and largest town in Washington County, Akron has some decent large trees worth checking in migration. It also has more amenities

than most of the other small towns in the area.

Directions:

Akron is along US 34, about 25 miles east of Brush.

Access:

Open all year



8. Longspur and Plover areas in Washington County

Description:

Typically Chestnut-collared Longspur breed on private land in Washington County on Road KK between Road 19 and Road 20. McCown's Longspur and Mountain Plover have also been seen in this vicinity, and pronghorn and jackrabbit are very common; even badgers may be seen. When looking for wildlife, you need to stay on the public road.

Directions:

From Akron, head 21 miles south on CO 63 to CR 20 and turn left (east). Road KK is seven miles east at a T intersection.

Access:

Open all year, dawn to dusk

9. Last Chance

Description:

Last Chance is a tiny town without services. However, it does have a rest stop backed by a small city park, and the grove of trees there is a legendary stopover spot for exhausted migrant birds traversing the dry treeless plains. Don't drive past it without stopping in spring and fall—you never know what you might find.

Directions:

Last Chance is at the intersection of US 36 and CO 71. The rest stop thicket is on the southwest corner of this intersection.

Access:

Open all year



10. May Farms

Description:

May Farms features a 1/2 mile of West Bijou Creek that includes a deciduous riparian forest. Look for Great Horned Owls, Bald Eagles and variety of other raptors and songbirds that nest on the property. A pond also attracts waterfowl all year long. The May family has been pioneering agritourism since the early 2000's; they offer a variety of opportunities to enjoy while visiting this farm less than an hour from Denver.

Directions:

From Denver: head east on I-70 for approximately 42 miles to Byers. Take exit 316/Main Street and go south. At HWY 36, head west for 0.9 miles. The entrance to May Farms is on the north.

Access:

Contact landowner prior to visit. For more information: (303) 822-5800 or visit their website at www.mayfarms.com



11. Cope

Description:

Cope is a small and charming town with a lot of big trees but few amenities. Eurasian Collared-Dove is abundant here, and rare doves sometimes occur. Look out for migrant landbirds in spring and fall, and sapsuckers sometimes spend the winter.

Directions:

Cope is along US 36 at its junction with CO 59, between Last Chance and Idalia.

Access:

Open all year



12. Idalia

Description:

This small town has some nice big trees, both deciduous and coniferous, and so may function as something of a migrant trap, possibly worth a stroll in fall or spring. Collared-Doves are numerous, and Great-tailed Grackles may breed.

Directions:

Idalia is along US 36 two miles west of US 385.

Access:

Open all year



13. Sandy Bluffs State Wildlife Area & State Trust Land

Description:

A large and beautiful piece of state land north of Idalia, Sandy Bluffs overflows with sandsage, yucca slopes, and eroded outcrops. Watch for Rock Wren, raptors, and sparrows (Cassin's, Lark and Vesper in the warmer months, White-crowned and possibly White-throated and Harris' in the colder months). Coyotes, pronghorn, jackrabbits and even bobcats and porcupines may be found on the property. The land is bisected by the Arikaree River, and a good deal of the mature cottonwood forest along the river bottom is accessible on foot.

Directions:

Drive north from the town of Idalia on CR DD about eight miles to the property, which is on both sides of the Arikaree River. Obey posted limits on access.

Access:

September 1 - June 14



14. Beecher Island area

Description:

The Beecher Island Battleground, a National Historic Site, is on private land that permits public access. The site contains a memorial, an informational display, a beautiful picnic area in the middle of mature riverbottom cottonwoods, and a one-mile nature trail through native sandsage prairie, river bluffs, and trees. The Arikaree River bottom mostly lacks underbrush, but some junipers around the buildings provide cover, and the tall trees are likely to host woodpeckers, nuthatches, owls and migrant passerines in season.

Directions:

From US 36 a few miles west of the Kansas line, drive north on CR LL about 10 miles to Beecher Island Battleground, on the west side of the road and the north side of the Arikaree River.

Access:

Open all year



Winter is for the Birds!

When you picture winter activities in Colorado, you might imagine skiers and snowboarders hitting the slopes, snowshoeing in a quiet mountain forest, or on one of the many sunny days, walking or biking a snow-free trail. What you might not consider – winter in Colorado is also a great time for birding!

Many birds that nest further north call Colorado home during the winter, and many of our resident birds that enjoy life in the summer mountains, migrate to lower elevations as the weather cools. Some conditions, such as a dramatic increase in population, lack of food, or severe weather events, could cause birds to show up in Colorado that you would only see on a trip outside the state. The Snowy Owl is such a bird, and has been a surprising find in the Denver Metro Area at times over the last few years. Other special guests could include Common Redpoll, the rarer Hoary Redpoll, and Bohemian Waxwing.

Flying in from the North, look for migrant visitors such as Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Snow Bunting, Lapland Longspur, Evening Grosbeak, White-throated Sparrow, and the impressive Rough-legged Hawk. While we have a number of nesting Bald Eagles throughout Colorado, in winter, migrants join the ranks to make eagle viewing an even more rewarding treat. For birds that call Colorado home year-round, some are easier to spot in winter than other seasons, including: Cedar Waxwing; Dark-eyed Junco; Brown-capped, Grey-crowned, and Black Rosy-Finch; Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, White-crowned Sparrow, and Northern Goshawk.

The light dusting of snow provides the perfect background to help make spotting our winter visitors much easier. And the trails are less crowded, too! For prime viewing, look for moving water or water that is not frozen over. Before you head out, be sure to check the weather forecast and dress and plan accordingly. So grab your gloves, hot chocolate, and binoculars, as there is no off-season for birding!



A Guide to Ultimate Wildlife Watching!

Here are some simple ways you can help blend into an animal's surroundings. In return, you'll be treated to a wildlife show that makes your heart pound and your senses hum.

Fade Into the Woodwork

- ▶ Wear natural colors and unscented lotions. Remove glasses that glint.
- ▶ Walk softly so as not to snap twigs or trample wildflowers.
- ▶ Crouch behind boulders or vegetation to blend your figure or break up your outline.

Camera Tips

- ▶ Use at least a 400 mm lens.
- ▶ Have the sun at your back – afternoon light is best.
- ▶ Aim for featuring wildlife within its natural surroundings, not a full frame profile.

Let Animals Be Themselves

- ▶ Resist the temptation to “save” baby animals. Mom is usually watching from a safe distance. Do not handle wildlife.
- ▶ Give nests a wide berth. Your visit may lead predators to the nest or cause the parents to leave, exposing eggs or young to the elements.
- ▶ Let animals eat their natural foods. Sharing your sandwich may harm wild digestive systems and get animals hooked on handouts.

Come to Your Senses

- ▶ A wildlife encounter is a spectrum of sensations. Deepen awareness by tapping your sense of smell, taste, touch, hearing, and sight.
- ▶ Use your peripheral vision rather than turning your head.
- ▶ Look above and below you. Animals occupy niches in all the vertical and horizontal layers of a habitat.
- ▶ Cup your hands around the back of your ears to amplify natural sounds.
- ▶ Silence can speak volumes. Animals may fall silent when a predator is passing through an area.
- ▶ Peer through a hand lens to enter the world of insects.

How to Use Binoculars

- ▶ Find the subject with your unaided eyes.
- ▶ Bring the eyepieces just under your eyes.
- ▶ Sight the subject over the tops of the eyepieces.
- ▶ Slowly bring the binoculars to your eyes.



Understanding the signs and routes along the Colorado Birding Trail

As you travel the backroads and byways of the Colorado Birding Trail, watch for the brown on white Birding Trail Logo on the site ID signs. These signs will help you locate the public birding trail sites all along the trail. Some private sites may have ID signs to assist you in locating them, but some will require you to call prior to visiting to get directions from the landowner.

Additionally, Colorado Birding Trail Interpretive Kiosks and signs will be located along some of the trails as you travel through the state. These large, full color signs will provide roadside information to assist you in selecting trails and sites to visit along your route. Look for them at Colorado Welcome Centers, National Parks sites and other locations along the Colorado Birding Trail.

Look for the brown binocular signs that designate other great wildlife viewing areas along our roadsides.

If you are traveling on one of Colorado's 24 Scenic and Historic Byways, you will be following the blue "Columbine" signs that designate our state Byways. These Byways promise interesting heritage, culture, and historic sites throughout the state, as well as some of our most scenic driving routes. Visit www.codot.gov/travel/scenic-byways for more information.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Regional Offices cpw.state.co.us

Northeast Region
303-291-7227
6060 Broadway
Denver, 80216

Northwest Region
970-255-6100
711 Independent Ave
Grand Junction, 81505

Southeast Region
719-227-5200
4255 Sinton Rd.
Colorado Springs, 80907

Southwest Region
970-247-0855
415 Turner Drive
Durango, 81301

Brush: 970-842-6300

Fort Collins: 970-472-4300

Glenwood Springs: 970-947-2920

Gunnison: 970-641-7060

Hot Sulphur Springs: 970-725-6200

Lamar: 719-336-6600

Meeker: 970-878-6090

Monte Vista: 719-587-6900

Montrose: 970-252-6000

Pueblo: 719-561-5300

Salida: 719-530-5520

Steamboat Springs: 970-870-2197

www.coloradobirdingtrail.com

For more information on birding and helpful apps, also visit:

www.coloradobirdingtrail.com/resources



cpw.state.co.us

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is the state agency responsible for managing wildlife and its habitat, and providing outdoor recreation at state parks across Colorado. Wildlife management in Colorado is funded through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, federal grants and Colorado Lottery proceeds through Great Outdoors Colorado.