

THE BLACK HILLS, BADLANDS AND LAKES  
BIRDING TRAIL GUIDE IS A COOPERATIVE  
SERVICE OF THE FOLLOWING:



# South Dakota

## BLACK HILLS, BADLANDS AND LAKES

### Birding Trail



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# South Dakota

## BLACK HILLS, BADLANDS

## AND LAKES *Birding Trail*

### BLACK HILLS

1. Spearfish Canyon
2. Spearfish Park and D. C. Booth Fish Hatchery
3. Mirror Lakes
4. McNenny Loop
5. George S. Mickelson Trail
6. Hanna Area
7. Galena Road
8. Pactola Reservoir
9. Rapid City Parks
10. Tepee Gulch
11. Deerfield Lake
12. Ditch Creek Campground
13. Roby Canyon
14. Hell Canyon
15. Elk Mountain Lookout
16. Custer State Park
17. Wind Cave National Park

### BUTTES AND PRAIRIES

18. Fort Meade Recreation Area
19. Bear Butte State Park
20. Belle Fourche Reservoir
21. North Cave Hills: Picnic Springs Campground
22. Slim Buttes: Reva Gap, Deer Draw, Sorum Dam GPA
23. Grand River National Grassland
24. Shadehill and Llewellyn Johns Memorial Recreation Areas
25. Durkee Lake
26. Four Corners Loop
27. Bad River Water Access Area
28. Curlew Lake GPA

### BADLANDS, LAKES AND CANYONS

29. Coffee Flats Road and Fiddle Creek Dam
30. Red Canyon
31. Hot Brook Canyon and Chautauqua Park
32. Cascade Falls Area
33. Angostura Reservoir
34. Limestone Butte Lake
35. Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge
36. Little White River and Todd GPA
37. Badlands National Park
38. Cheyenne River Grassland Loop

### MAP LEGEND

▲ Points of Interest

Ⓟ Parking

#### BIRDING SITES

● Black Hills

● Buttes & Prairies

● Badlands, Lakes & Canyons

#### BIRDING ROUTES

— Black Hills

— Buttes & Prairies

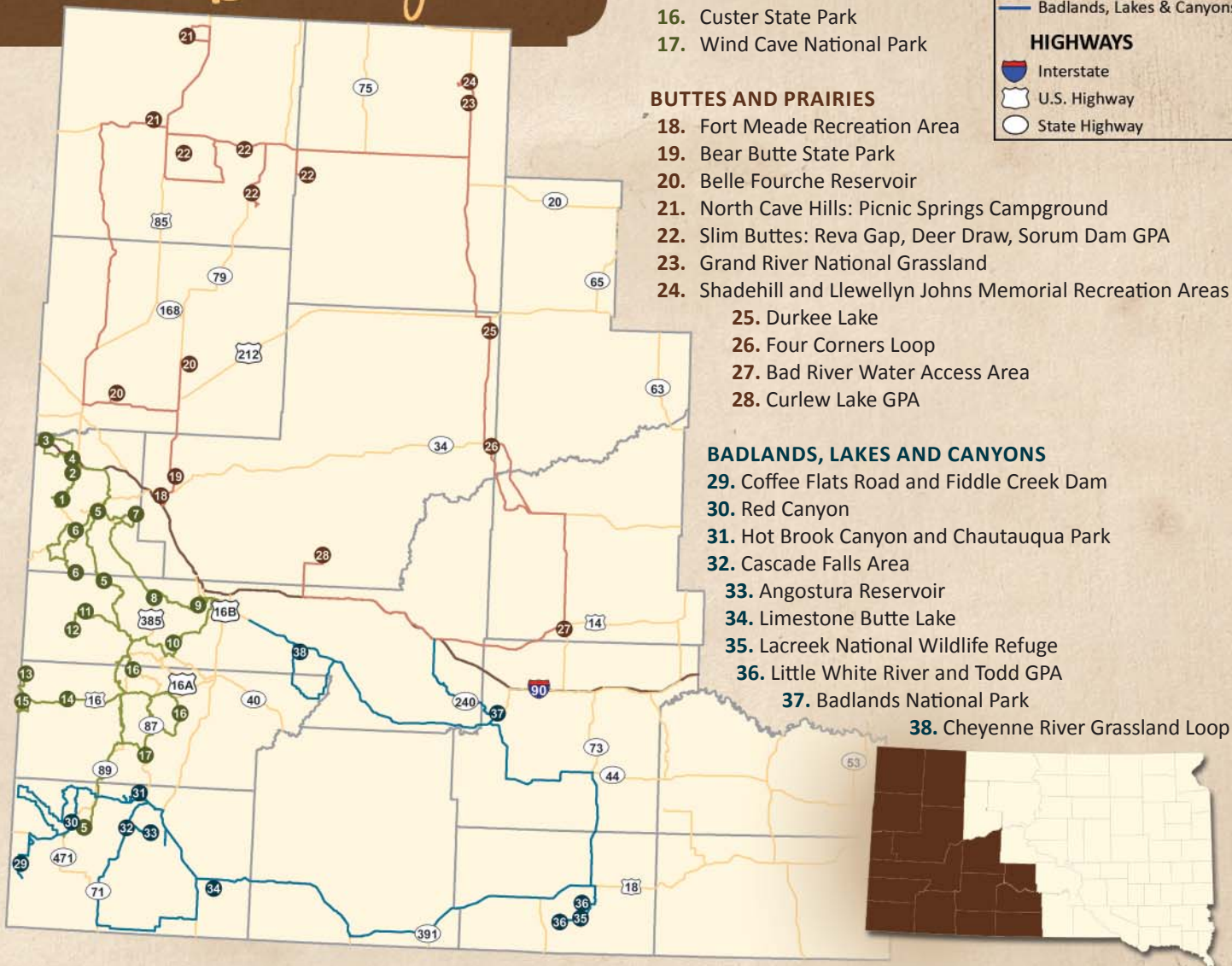
— Badlands, Lakes & Canyons

#### HIGHWAYS

— Interstate

— U.S. Highway

— State Highway



# Welcome

## BLACK HILLS, BADLANDS AND LAKES *Birding Trail*

### THIS GUIDE PROVIDES INFORMATION ABOUT EACH SITE ON THE TRAIL, HOW TO GET THERE, WHAT BIRDS TO LOOK FOR, WHAT MONTHS TO VISIT AND GREAT BIRDING TIPS.

More than 350 species of birds, including nearly 200 breeding species, can be found among the 38 sites comprising the Black Hills, Badlands and Lakes Birding Trail, which encompasses essentially the western third of South Dakota. The region is dominated by vast open undulating grasslands, underlain by sedimentary rocks, covered by mixed-grass and short-grass prairie grasses, and averaging around 3,500 feet in elevation. This prairie grassland is broken by a number of different landforms supporting uniquely different and surprisingly varied bird habitats.

In the northwestern part of the region isolated buttes rise above the prairie and support small areas of deciduous and pine forest. Mountain Bluebird, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Common Poorwill and Spotted Towhee are common here. The prairie regions are also cut by several sizeable rivers draining eastwardly to the Missouri River, and several large reservoirs occur along those rivers. Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles and Ferruginous Hawks soar overhead, while Green-winged Teal and Northern Pintail nest in wetland areas. Long-billed Curlew, Greater Sage-Grouse, Baird's Sparrow and Sprague's Pipit can be heard calling and singing at their nesting grounds on the prairie. In the southern part of the area covered by this birding trail, the unique, picturesque and highly eroded South Dakota

### MAP LEGEND

Points of Interest	Lakes
Parking	Rivers and Streams
<b>BIRDING SITES</b>	City Limit Boundary
Black Hills	<b>STATE LANDS</b>
Buttes & Prairies	Game Production Area
Badlands, Lakes & Canyons	Park and Recreation Area
<b>BIRDING ROUTES</b>	<b>FEDERAL LANDS</b>
Black Hills	National Forest
Buttes & Prairies	National Grasslands
Badlands, Lakes & Canyons	Bureau of Land Management
<b>HIGHWAYS</b>	Waterfowl Production Area
Interstate	Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Highway	National Parks (No Hunting)
State Highway	

Badlands provide a special aspect and bird habitat. Burrowing Owl on prairie dog towns, Black-billed Magpie in wooded draws and White-throated Swift soaring around the wind-eroded pinnacles are found in the Badlands. And of course the western area of the region is dominated by the 4,500 square miles of the Black Hills, rising to over 7,000 feet in altitude and supporting vegetation varying from grassland savannahs in the lower altitudes to Ponderosa pine forests to pine-spruce forests at the highest elevations.

Pine forest birds such as Black-backed Woodpecker, Western Tanager, Northern Goshawk and Red Crossbill inhabit this habitat type. Drumming Ruffed Grouse and drilling sapsuckers are unique birds that depend upon aspen and hardwoods. The Hills are also dissected by streams, lakes and ponds that provide riparian and wetland habitats. Keep eyes to the sky for osprey! South Dakota's only population of American Dipper thrives along Spearfish Creek. Look for Golden-crowned Kinglet, Townsend's Solitaire and MacGillivray's Warbler in the Black Hills' riparian zones.

This Black Hills, Badlands and Lakes Birding Trail is comprised of 3 driving loops. The Buttes and Prairies loop stretches from the northern edge of the Black Hills nearly to North Dakota and includes 11 birding sites. The Badlands, Lakes and Canyons loop extends from just south of the Black Hills east to LaCreek National Wildlife Refuge and south nearly to Nebraska. Its 10 sites include prairie areas, some unique wetland birding opportunities and stops within Badlands National Park. The Black Hills loop, with 17 sites, is contained within the Black Hills and immediate surrounding areas.

# GENERAL TIPS

## FINDING BIRDS

Timing is important in birding. Check your birding field guide and other references before embarking on a search for a specific species listed in this trail guide. We have not attempted to duplicate reference information regarding the best time of year, time of day or habitat in which individual species may be found.

## BE PREPARED - REMOTE REGIONS, GRAVEL ROADS

Some areas of this trail are quite remote. When planning to visit these areas, have a full tank of gas, a reliable vehicle, water, food for the day and a cell phone. Some parts of this trail cross open rangeland where cattle at large may be encountered standing on the road. Slow down when driving on gravel roads. Some gravel roads may be impassable when muddy or snow-covered. Check with local contacts if in doubt. Less-traveled gravel roads provide great birding. Watch for safe places to pull over and bird between trail hot spots.

## VEHICLE TRAILS

Many of the birding trail's state game production areas (GPAs) and federal lands have rough roads. It is recommended you walk rather than attempt to drive on these dirt roads. Please respect "No Vehicles Beyond This Point" signs. Most GPAs have access but not a formal parking lot. On GPAs, a sign will be posted to "Park Cars Here" at the end of a trail or will tell you if vehicle travel is restricted. There are no fees required to visit GPAs. Check with local US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management offices for rules, fees and maps for motorized vehicle access and day use areas on federal public land.

## MULTIPLE USE AND PRIVATE LAND

Although this region of South Dakota has an abundance of public land, be aware of and considerate of others. Site contacts can provide specific information about hunting or other activities at locations you plan to visit. Many driving routes in this guide pass long stretches of private land. Do not leave the roadway to step onto private land.

## PARKS

All state parks and recreation areas require a park entrance license. All state parks offer parking and toilets. Most offer camping as well.

## WEATHER

Air temperature and precipitation can change quickly in South Dakota. Be prepared with outerwear suitable to the season. Plan to include insect repellent for summer birding.

## BIRDING ETHICS

The best birding is the least intrusive to birds and their habitats. Disturbing a bird - making it flush from cover, call in alarm or focus on your presence - stresses it and may expose it to predators. Use binoculars, stay back, avoid damaging habitat and enjoy. This birding trail includes opportunities to view species with special protection from disturbance, such as the Least Tern, Piping Plover and Bald Eagle. Adhere to any signs indicating the presence of nesting terns and plovers or wintering Bald Eagles. Violating federal or state laws protecting these species can result in serious penalties in addition to the potential harm done to the nesting, migrating or wintering birds. (See American Birding Association's Code of Birding Ethics <http://www.aba.org/about/ethics.html>)

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Websites for individual sites may be found easily on the internet. Here are a few additional resource websites:

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Website for state parks and recreation area information.

<http://gfp.sd.gov/state-parks/>

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Website for links to other regional birding trails in South Dakota.

<http://gfp.sd.gov/wildlife/critters/birds>

South Dakota Office of Tourism Website for links to lodging, food and travel information.

[www.travelSD.com](http://www.travelSD.com)

South Dakota Ornithologists' Union Web site for current sightings and birding information.

[www.sdou.org/](http://www.sdou.org/)

U.S. Government recreation website.

[www.recreation.gov/](http://www.recreation.gov/)

Sites included in this guide may not always be accessible due to changes in local flooding and road conditions.



*American  
Three-toed Woodpecker*  
© Doug Backlund



## BLACK HILLS *Birding Trail*

### ① SPEARFISH CANYON - ROUGHLOCK FALLS

**HABITAT:**

A well-maintained trail of approximately 1 mile runs between the back end of Spearfish Canyon Lodge at Savoy and Roughlock Falls, through a wonderful mix of pine, spruce, birch, aspen, willow and other deciduous riparian habitat, bordering Little Spearfish Creek with water flows from moderate to rapid, including several areas of shallow pools, with great views of canyon wall cliffs.

**BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:**

American Dipper, White-throated Swift, Violet-green Swallow, Canyon Wren, Swainson's Thrush, Veery, Black-headed Grosbeak, Ovenbird, American Redstart, Red-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Belted Kingfisher, MacGillivray's Warbler, Red-naped Sapsucker, Common Yellowthroat, Spotted Towhee, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Song Sparrow, Townsend's Solitaire, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Spotted Sandpiper, Turkey Vulture, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned kinglets, Tree Swallow. Rarity: Ruffed Grouse.

**BEST BIRDING MONTHS:**

April through September.

**TIPS:**

Early morning walks avoid the greatest tourist pedestrian traffic. This trail or its destination of the falls is one of the most reliable spots in the Black Hills for great views of the American Dipper. In addition to birds, this trail offers a wide spectrum of wildflowers. Also at Savoy, a trail to the base of Spearfish Falls starts behind the Latchstring Inn at the east end of the restaurant's parking lot, crosses Spearfish Creek over a bridge and runs down to the base of Spearfish Falls. American Dippers and several woodland songbirds can often be found here.

### ① SPEARFISH CANYON - IRON CREEK TRAIL

**HABITAT:**

A well-worn dirt trail climbs gently along Iron Creek up a narrow gulch with high sandstone cliffs on each side for about 1½ miles before the creek disappears underground. Spruce, aspen, birch and poplar are predominant along the creek, with pine forest above. The habitat gradually changes to pine-dominant forest interspersed with small high-country meadows.

**BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:**

American Dipper, Canyon Wren, Veery, Townsend's Solitaire, Chipping Sparrow, Western Tanager, Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Swainson's Thrush, Townsend's Solitaire, Violet-green Swallow, White-throated Swift, Golden Eagle, Turkey Vulture. More open areas of the trail have potential for species such as Western Tanager, Western Wood-Pewee, Chipping Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Dusky Flycatcher, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Mountain Bluebird.

**BEST BIRDING MONTHS:**

April through September.

**TIPS:**

Iron Creek Trail begins approximately 1½ miles north of Savoy on Highway 14A, at the end of a parking area on the west side of the road, next to Iron Creek. It travels easily upstream along the creek, moving into some nice open meadow and conifer (both pine and spruce) habitat. Always leave any pasture gates the way you find them. Close them behind you if you have opened them. Pack water and rain gear, as summer thunderstorms materialize quickly. At the start of the trail, look for American Dippers along the creek. As the trail climbs away from the canyon floor and meanders westward, it merges with a logging road two-track and continues another mile or more all the way to Forest Service (FS) 134. As with all hikes in the national forest, it is highly recommended that you acquire a map of the trail from a Black Hills National Forest office.



Iron Creek  
© Doug Backlund

## 1 SPEARFISH CANYON DRIVE

### HABITAT:

Steep limestone cliffs define the canyon. Ponderosa pine and white spruce line the draws, and riparian shrubs and deciduous trees edge Spearfish Creek. Aspen groves dot the canyon.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Broad-winged Hawk, Townsend's Solitaire, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Dipper, Indigo Bunting, Downy Woodpecker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) and MacGillivray's warblers, White-throated Swift, Canyon Wren, Plumbeous Vireo, Red-tailed Hawk.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

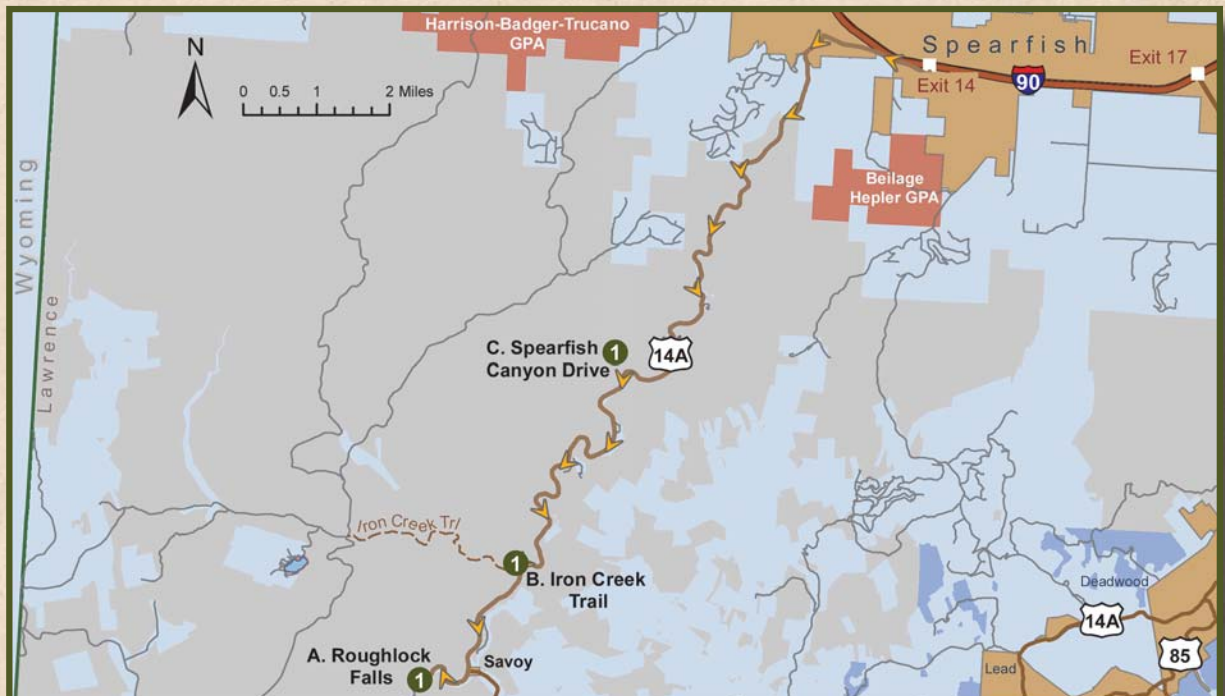
April through September.

### TIPS:

Highway 14A through Spearfish Canyon is a National Forest Scenic Byway, with spectacular views of this canyon. Park at pullouts along the road, walk and listen for birds. American Dippers have nested behind Bridal Veil Falls.

### CONTACT:

Northern Hills Ranger District - Black Hills National Forest  
2014 North Main Street, Spearfish, SD 57783, (605) 642-4622



# BLACK HILLS *Birding Trail*

## 2 SPEARFISH PARK AND D.C. BOOTH FISH HATCHERY

### HABITAT:

The park and fish hatchery have excellent pine, spruce and deciduous habitat along the southern and eastern sides with deciduous riparian habitat along Spearfish Creek, which runs through the park.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Warblers in spring migration, Indigo and Lazuli buntings, Spotted Towhee, Black-headed Grosbeak, Ovenbird, American Redstart, Belted Kingfisher, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, Cooper's Hawk, Bullock's Oriole, Cedar Waxwing (Bohemian rare in winter), Townsend's Solitaire, Warbling Vireo, waterfowl.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through October.

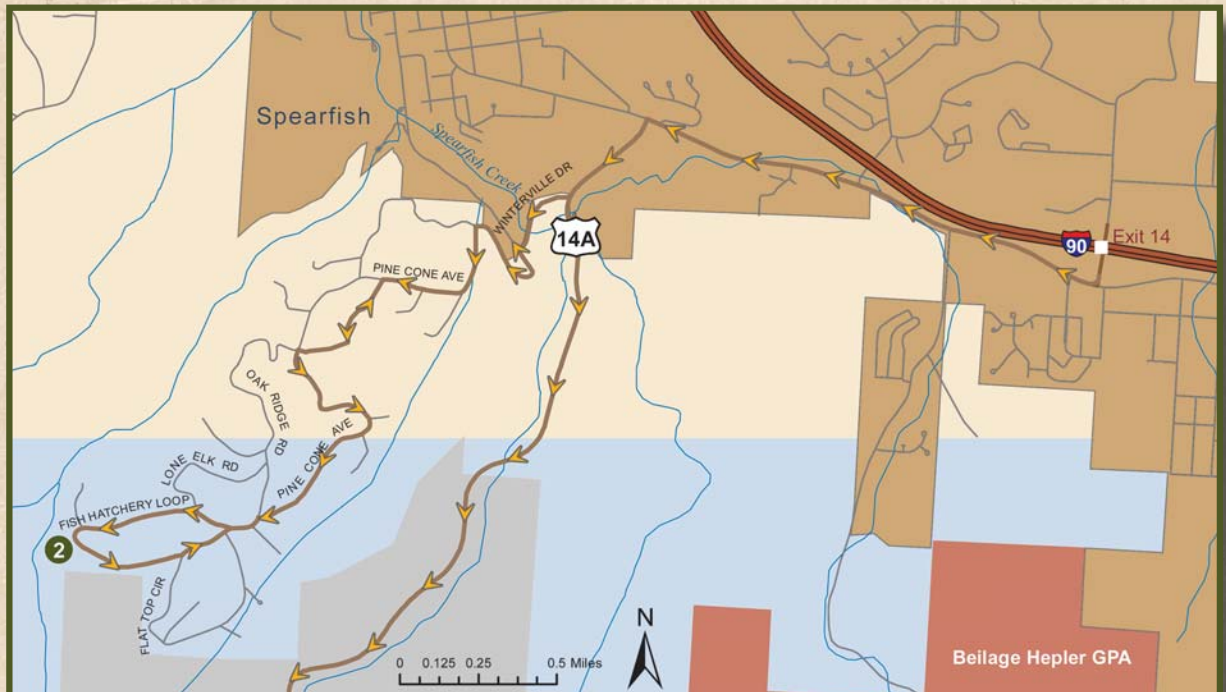
### TIPS:

Follow trails into good habitat. The city bike/walking path moves through the park, following Spearfish Creek. At the southern edge of the park and also taking off from the D. C. Booth Fish Hatchery, there are a number of well-worn dirt paths through oak and pine forest.

### CONTACTS:

Spearfish Parks and Recreation  
625 Fifth Street, 2nd Floor  
Spearfish, SD 57783  
(605) 642-1333

D. C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery and Archives  
423 Hatchery Circle  
Spearfish, SD 57783  
(605) 642-7730  
Email: DCBooth@fws.gov





© Chad Coppess, SD Dept. of Tourism



*Bohemian Waxwing*  
© Doug Backlund

### 3 MIRROR LAKES

#### HABITAT:

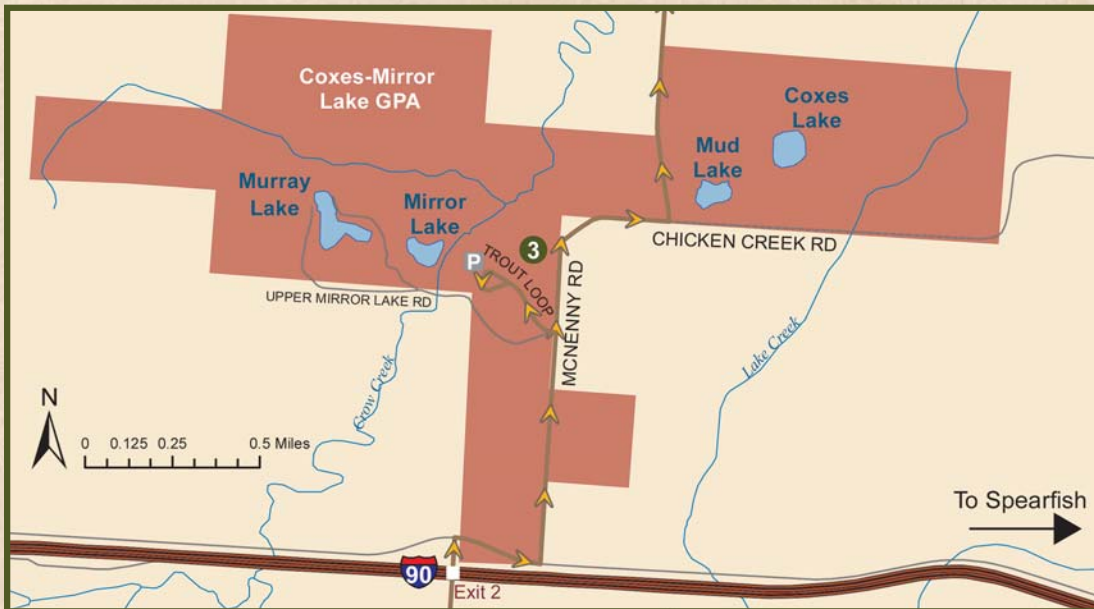
Very diverse and mixed habitat including dense stands of honeysuckle, wild plum, dogwood, ash, hawthorn, buffaloberry and bur oak-lined draws. Also open water year-round with small stands of cattails. Large cottonwoods, stands of ash, elm, oak and Russian olive. The gravel road to the entrance of the fish hatchery has extensive stands of juniper interspersed with grassland.

#### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Warblers in migration, Northern Shrike, Short-eared Owl, Cedar Waxwing (Bohemian rare in winter), Wilson's Snipe, Marsh Wren, Song Sparrow and Virginia Rail can be found here. In summer Cedar Waxwing, American Robin, Bullock's and Baltimore orioles. Long-eared Owls have been found in the junipers.

#### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

March through October.



#### TIPS:

Upper and Lower Mirror lakes are just to the west of McNenny State Fish Hatchery, via a loop of roads. The lakes themselves are small, and heavy fishing activity usually makes for poor birding on the water. However, the surrounding areas of shrub, grassland and cattails make the drive worthwhile.



## Ruffed Grouse

© Doug Backlund



Cinnamon Teal

© Doug Backlund

# BLACK HILLS *Birding Trail*

## 4 McNENNY LOOP

(Spearfish to McNenny Fish Hatchery; Mirror, Coxes and Mud lakes and Redwater River Driving Loop)

### HABITAT:

This 25-mile route passes through a great variety of habitat, providing great species diversity. Open pine and grassland, with many deep ravines and wooded draws, mature cottonwoods, marshland with Russian olive, juniper habitat, cattail marsh, mixed deciduous trees and shrubs. Start at the Spearfish McDonalds Restaurant (refer to map). After turning south on Old Belle Road, the birder has completed the loop back to Spearfish.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Black-billed Magpie, Spotted Towhee, Yellow Warbler, Blue Jay, American Crow, Lark Sparrow, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Gray Catbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Mountain Bluebird, Lewis's Woodpecker, Brewer's Blackbird (along Upper Redwater Road), Osprey, Short-eared Owl. Rarity: Pinyon Jay.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

March through October.

### TIPS:

Just before the Wyoming state line, along Homestake Road, an active Osprey nest may still be present. Just north of the intersection of McNenny Road and Chicken Creek Road, Mud Lake is viewable and may be a good waterfowl and shorebird spot.



## 5 GEORGE S. MICKELSON TRAIL

### HABITAT:

This 109-mile rails-to-trails hike and bike trail travels north-south through multiple habitats of the entire Black Hills.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Approximately 175 or more species of birds may be seen along the length of the trail. A sampling of species found in appropriate habitat and season along the trail include Bald Eagle, Burrowing Owl, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Black-backed Woodpecker, Pinyon Jay, Canyon Wren, Mountain Bluebird, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Ruffed Grouse, Loggerhead Shrike, Plumbeous Vireo, Clark's Nutcracker, Lewis's Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, many warblers, sparrows, swallows, nuthatches and waterfowl. Rarity: Evening Grosbeak.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through October.

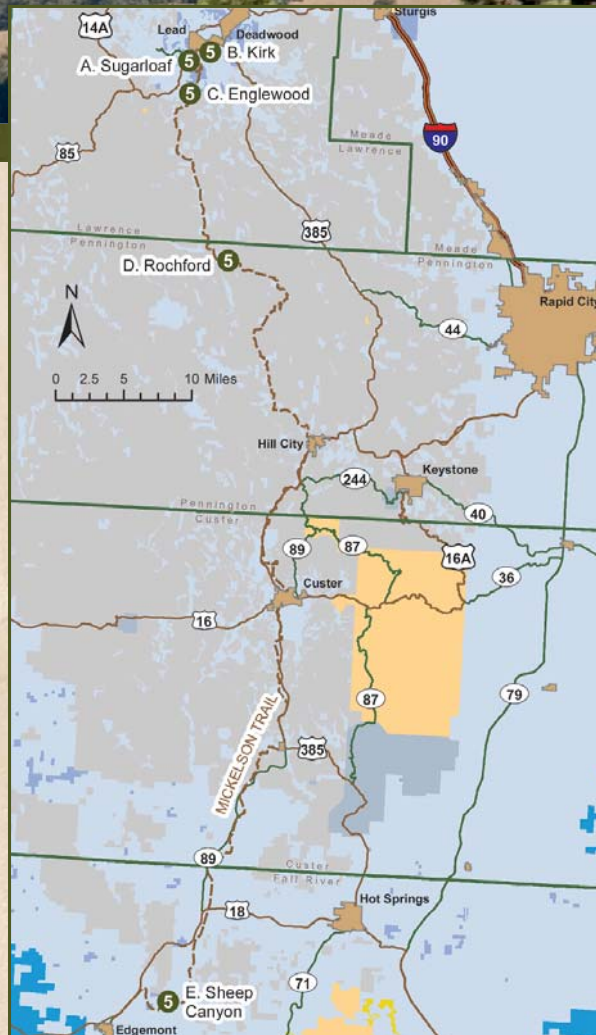
### TIPS:

The best way to bird along the Mickelson Trail is to acquire a copy of the booklet, *A Birder's Guide to the George S. Mickelson Trail*, which may be downloaded from the SD Game, Fish and Parks website under the "Things to Do"/"Birdwatching" tab or ordered by phone.

This guide discusses the habitat and birds to look for at each trailhead or in each region through which the trail passes. There are 14 trailheads, with parking and easy access to the trail.

A few trailhead areas recommended by birders:

- A. Sugarloaf Trailhead – from here an 8-mile loop hike is possible from Sugarloaf to Kirk and back to Sugarloaf, through spruce and aspen with meadows and riparian areas along Whitewood and Yellow creeks.
- B. Kirk Trailhead, up Yellow Creek Draw. A good trail runs through pine and aspen along Yellow Creek.
- C. Englewood Trailhead, along Whitewood Creek. Walk the creek both upstream and downstream from the trailhead.
- D. Rochford Trailhead. Walk the bike trail downstream from the Rochford Trailhead or upstream from the Mystic Trailhead through pine forest and open riparian shrubland along Rapid Creek. Total hike possible from one to the other trailhead is about 8 miles, or hike a bit and move your car.



E. Sheep Canyon Trail Stop, along the upper slope looking down on this steep canyon. Access is from Fall River County Rd 185 immediately south of the bridge over the trail. Park at the side of the road, walk down a grassy path to the trail and continue along the bike path southwest toward Edgemont to the Trail Stop, approximately ¼ mile from the bridge.

While much sought after by many birders, the Black-backed Woodpecker is not easy to find. Areas of bug-killed pine trees anywhere in the Black Hills are good locations to look.

### CONTACT:

Black Hills Trails Office  
11361 Nevada Gulch Road, Lead, SD 57754-9801,  
(605) 584-3896, Email: MickelsonTrail@state.sd.us



*Pacific Wren*  
© Doug Backlund

*Golden-crowned Kinglet*

© Doug Backlund



# BLACK HILLS *Birding Trail*

## 6 HANNA AREA

### HABITAT:

Elevation of 5,600 to 5,900 feet, spruce, pine and aspen forest, with meadows. East Spearfish Creek, with riparian deciduous brushy habitat, flows through area.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

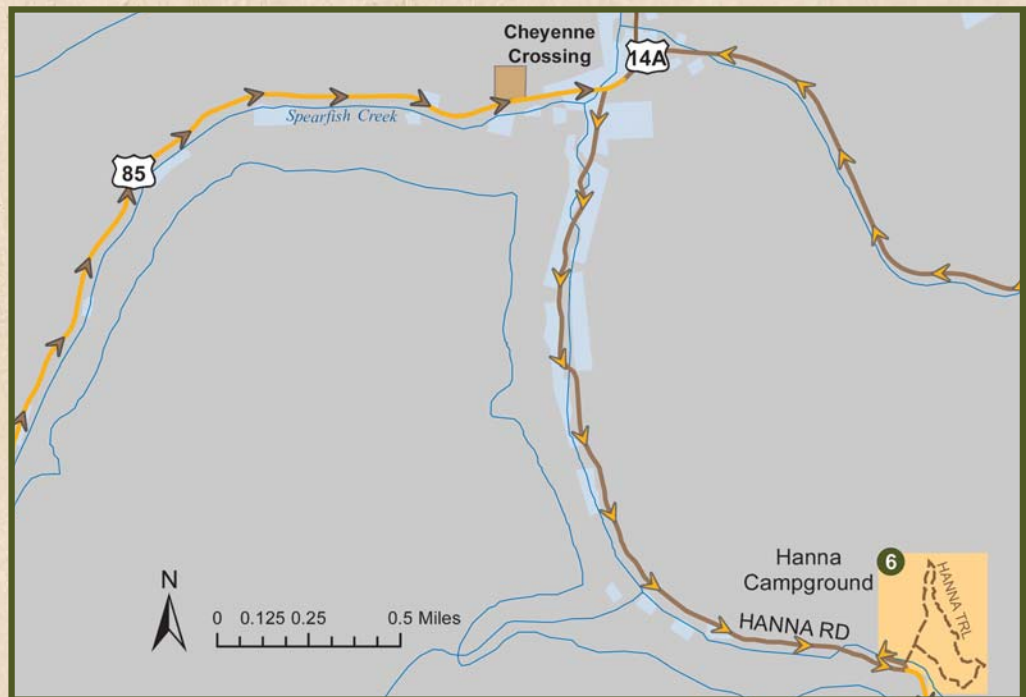
American Dipper, Red Crossbill, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Ruffed Grouse, Winter Wren, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Gray Jay, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Broad-winged Hawk. Rarities: White-winged Crossbill. Pacific Wren possible.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through September.

### TIPS:

From Cheyenne Crossing, drive south to Hanna Campground, park, walk the area. A 1-mile nature loop is available. Proceed to Long Draw Road (FS 209). At the start of Ward Draw, park and check out the pond, walk the draw a bit, then proceed up Long Draw, pulling over in wide spots to walk and listen for birds. Either return along Long Draw or make a loop drive across FS 206 to FS 17, north to Highway 85 and west to Cheyenne Crossing, stopping to listen for birds at pullouts



along the roads. Long Draw Road, proceeding to remote Black Fox Campground higher in the spruce forest, with south fork of Rapid Creek running through it, may yield additional songbirds in spring and summer, plus raptors along the high cliffs.

### CONTACT:

Northern Hills Ranger District - Black Hills National Forest  
2014 North Main Street, Spearfish, SD 57783, (605) 642-4622

## Red-naped Sapsucker

© Doug Backlund



White-winged Junco

© Doug Backlund

## 7 GALENA ROAD

### HABITAT:

Deciduous riparian forest habitat of aspen and birch, oak, boxelder, elm and Ponderosa pine.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Cooper's and Broad-winged hawks, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, Dusky Flycatcher, Red-eyed and Warbling vireos, Swainson's Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Ovenbird, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Western Tanager, Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco, Song Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, MacGillivray's Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Cordilleran Flycatcher.

Rarities: Golden-winged and Chestnut-sided warblers, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Veery.

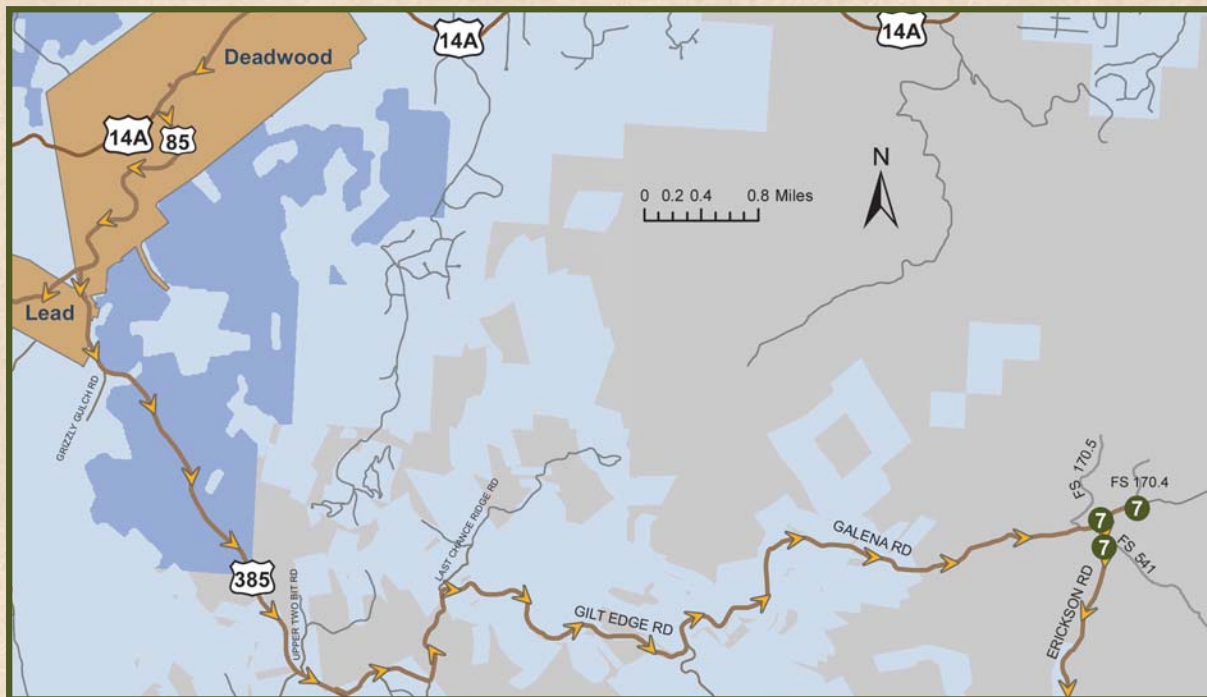
### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through September.

### TIPS:

Three excellent birding stops within ½ mile of each other and just 6½ miles into the hills from Sturgis are:

1. Galena Road (FS 170) at Park Creek, walking along the road just west of the intersection with Erickson Road (FS 180).
2. One-fourth mile farther along Galena Road beyond the Erickson Road intersection to FS 5H, walking up or down the draw.
3. One-fourth mile along Erickson Road from the Galena Road intersection to FS 541. Chestnut-sided Warblers have nested in the past along the stream. Watch for other nesting birds at the beaver dams along this creek.



# BLACK HILLS *Birding Trail*

## 8 PACTOLA RESERVOIR

### HABITAT:

800-acre reservoir. Pine forest, open grassy areas, riparian vegetation around lake, marshes, aspen groves.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Many waterfowl in migration spring and fall, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, Common Loon. Bald Eagles winter at the lake on the west side by the big island. Look for Osprey during spring and summer, Northern Goshawk year-round. Summer residents: Western Wood-Pewee, Gray Jay, Red-breasted

Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-naped Sapsucker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Rarity: Long-tailed Duck.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

March through October.

### TIPS:

From near the Pactola Campground, the Osprey Trail runs along the south side of the lake, giving lake access and great views. It includes 2 loop trails and a spur trail to an overlook.





*Ruby-crowned Kinglet*

© Doug Backlund



*Gray Jay*  
© Doug Backlund

## 8 PACTOLA BASIN

### HABITAT:

Rapid Creek flows out of the reservoir below the dam. Marsh reeds, pond, riparian willows and dogwood with grassy meadows along the creek, surrounded by Ponderosa pine forest.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

The pond offers spring and fall waterfowl migrants. Other migrants include Baltimore Oriole, Wilson's Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrow.

Summer residents include Pine Siskin, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Tanager, Common Yellowthroat, Song Sparrow, Townsend's Solitaire, Ovenbird, Red-naped Sapsucker, Violet-green Swallow, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Spotted Sandpiper, Common Merganser, Yellow Warbler, Rock Wren. An Osprey nest sits atop a nesting pole.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through October.

### TIPS:

The Rapid Creek Trailhead for the Centennial Trail is located off US Highway 385, downstream from Pactola Dam. Park and walk east along the trail following the creek, then walk the road back, making a loop through all the habitats. Angler trails abound along the creek. Or drive the road to the back of the basin and explore from there. Sheridan Lake and the U.S. Forest Service Spring Creek Picnic Area on Sheridan Lake Road have good riparian habitat. From the Centennial Trail's Spring Creek Trailhead, the Spring Creek Trail follows the creek upstream to the dam of Sheridan Lake. Birders will find great birding and diverse habitat along that trail. At the upper end of Pactola Reservoir, the Silver City Trailhead of the Deerfield Trail offers access to an easy walk upstream along Rapid Creek, with many songbirds and forest birds.

### CONTACTS:

Pactola Visitor Center  
Located at Pactola Reservoir Dam  
Highway 385, (605) 343-8755

Mystic Ranger District  
Black Hills National Forest  
8221 South Highway 16  
Rapid City, SD 57702  
(605) 343-1567



*Osprey*  
© Doug Backlund



*Broad-winged Hawk*  
© Doug Backlund

*Black-headed Grosbeak*  
© Doug Backlund



## BLACK HILLS *Birding Trail*

### 9 RAPID CITY PARKS - CANYON LAKE PARK

**HABITAT:**

Open water lake year-round, marshes, city park, deciduous and coniferous trees, deciduous riparian area near Rapid Creek.

**BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:**

Belted Kingfisher, Rough-winged Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Belted Kingfisher, Bufflehead, Canvasback, Green-winged Teal, Common Merganser, many more waterfowl, warblers in migration, songbirds. Rarity: Greater Scaup, Merlin, Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Cackling Goose. Bald Eagles in winter.

**BEST BIRDING MONTHS:**

Year-round.

**TIPS:**

Walk the paths and scan lake. Cleghorn Springs State Fish Hatchery is adjacent. Winter Wren or Pacific Wren may be a possibility there.

**CONTACT:**

Rapid City Department of Parks and Recreation  
125 Waterloo Street, Rapid City, SD 57701, (605) 394-5225

### 9 RAPID CITY PARKS - THE OUTDOOR CAMPUS WEST

**HABITAT:**

Small ponds, deciduous trees, shrubs, grassland, mixed-grass meadows, wet meadows, cattail sloughs, open spring-fed ponds, thickets, hardwood trees. Adjacent is Wilderness Park, a city-owned "low maintenance" park with typical Black Hills pine slopes.

**BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:**

Great variety of songbirds, marsh birds, waders, warblers in migration, thrushes.

**BEST BIRDING MONTHS:**

March through November.

**TIPS:**

This outdoor learning and exploring center in the city offers varied habitats and easy trails and access to the wilderness park next to it.

**CONTACT:**

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks  
The Outdoor Campus-West  
4130 Adventure Trail, Rapid City, SD 57702, (605) 394-2310



## 9 RAPID CITY PARKS - LEONARD SWANSON MEMORIAL BIKE PATH

**FOUNDER'S PARK, SIOUX PARK-STORYBOOK ISLAND AND MARY HALL PARK.**

### HABITAT:

The bike path winds primarily along Rapid Creek, linking a number of parks together. Starting at any of the parks above, one may bird through the park and then hike a bit along the bike trail through a variety of habitats, including deciduous and coniferous tree groves, wetlands, creeks and open grassy areas.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Downy and Hairy woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Warbling Vireo, Blue Jay, Tree and Violet-green swallows, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted and Red-breasted nuthatches, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Black-and-white Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, American Goldfinch, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, Great Blue Heron, Osprey,

Broad-winged Hawk, American Kestrel, Spotted Sandpiper, Chimney Swift, Belted Kingfisher, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Red-eyed Vireo, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Spotted Towhee, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Western Tanager, Orchard and Baltimore orioles.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through October.

### TIPS:

Check online or with the Rapid City Park Department for a map of the bike trail. Check out each habitat type found in each park. Look for a marshy area between Storybook Island and Sioux Park.

### CONTACT:

Rapid City Department of Parks and Recreation  
125 Waterloo Street, Rapid City, SD 57701, (605) 394-5225



**McGillivray's Warbler**  
© Doug Backlund



**Dusky Flycatcher**  
© Doug Backlund

## BLACK HILLS *Birding Trail*

### 10 TEPEE GULCH

#### HABITAT:

Tepee Gulch is a canyon with oaks, aspen and birch. Ponderosa pines on the slopes, sheer rock canyon walls.

#### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Cordilleran Flycatcher, Red-naped Sapsucker, Dusky Flycatcher, MacGillivray's Warbler, Ovenbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, Canyon Wren, Plumbeous Vireo, Western Tanager, migrating warblers, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Townsend's Solitaire, Swainson's Thrush, American Redstart.

#### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through September.

#### TIPS:

Tepee Gulch may be entered from either the south end or the north end, but it is not possible to drive completely through. The roads are very rough and impassable in wet weather. Be cautious after strong thunderstorms in area. Drive only as far up the road as comfortable for your car, then park and walk.

Not far away is the Rockerville Burn area. It is entered easily from Rockerville Road to Forest Service Road 719. Birds that can be found in the burn area: Lewis's Woodpecker, Golden Eagle (especially winter), Common Nighthawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Gray Jay, Townsend's Solitaire, Eastern and Mountain bluebirds, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Western Tanager, Spotted Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco, Pine Siskin. Areas of bug-killed pine anywhere in the Black Hills are good locations to look for Black-backed Woodpecker.

#### CONTACT:

Mystic Ranger District - Black Hills National Forest, 8221 South Highway 16, Rapid City, SD 57702, (605) 343-1567





## 11 DEERFIELD LAKE

### HABITAT:

A 400-surface acre-lake with conifer (mostly pine with some spruce and aspen) forest and prairie (on the north).

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Bald Eagle (nesting), Osprey, Common Loon, Common Merganser, Spotted Sandpiper, Rock Wren, warblers in migration. In the conifers, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Red Crossbill, Western Tanager, Pine Siskin, Dark-eyed Junco, Western Wood-pewee, Ovenbird, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Spotted Towhee and Plumbeous Vireo. In the prairie scrub, Say's Phoebe, Western Kingbird, Western Meadowlark, American Goldfinch, Mountain and Eastern bluebirds, Lark Sparrow, Merlin, American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk and other species typical of grasslands. Shade-loving species may be found on the east side in spruce and aspen groves; Swainson's Thrush, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-naped Sapsucker. Winter rarity: Rough-legged Hawk.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through October.

### TIPS:

It is possible to hike around the lake. This is a great, generally easy, but long (10 mile) hiking loop, circling Deerfield Lake. It is also possible to hike just small segments of the trail. A large stone dam on Castle Creek, which forms the reservoir, is attractive to Rock Wrens. The length of this hike necessitates being prepared with water and rain gear. Or drive the Whitetail Loop, with Lakeshore Picnic Ground and the Whitetail Campground. Also drive nearby U.S. Forest Service roads. A walk-in trout fishery below the dam offers easy walking beside Castle Creek for about 1½ miles with many songbird species and raptors. Clark's Nutcrackers have been seen here.

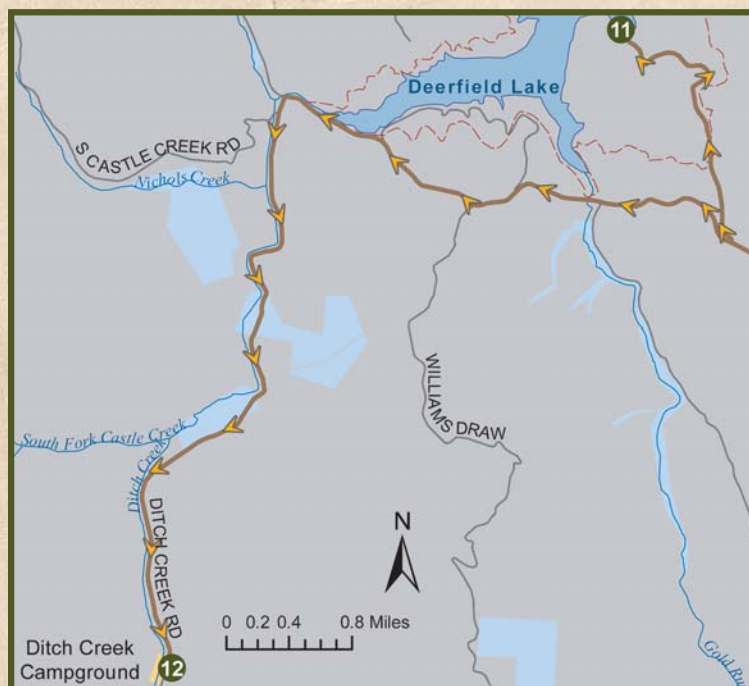
### CONTACT:

Mystic Ranger District - Black Hills National Forest  
8221 South Highway 16, Rapid City, SD 57702, (605) 343-1567





## BLACK HILLS *Birding Trail*



### 12 DITCH CREEK CAMPGROUND

**HABITAT:**

Spruce and aspen along Ditch Creek.

**BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:**

Red Crossbill, Clark's Nutcracker, Bald and Golden eagles, Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned kinglets, Red-naped Sapsucker, Brewer's Blackbird, Gray Jay, Vesper Sparrow. Migrants: Wilson's Warbler, White-crowned Sparrow.

**BEST BIRDING MONTHS:**

April through September.

**TIPS:**

Park and walk through campground and along creek.

**CONTACT:**

Mystic Ranger District - Black Hills National Forest  
8221 South Highway 16, Rapid City, SD 57702  
(605) 343-1567



*Virginia's Warbler*  
© Doug Backlund



*Townsend's Solitaire*  
© Doug Backlund

## 13 ROBY CANYON

### HABITAT:

Pine-juniper, shrub habitat with the higher elevations becoming pine forest. A few springs provide runoff in the canyon bottom offering shrubby, deciduous, riparian vegetation and habitat.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

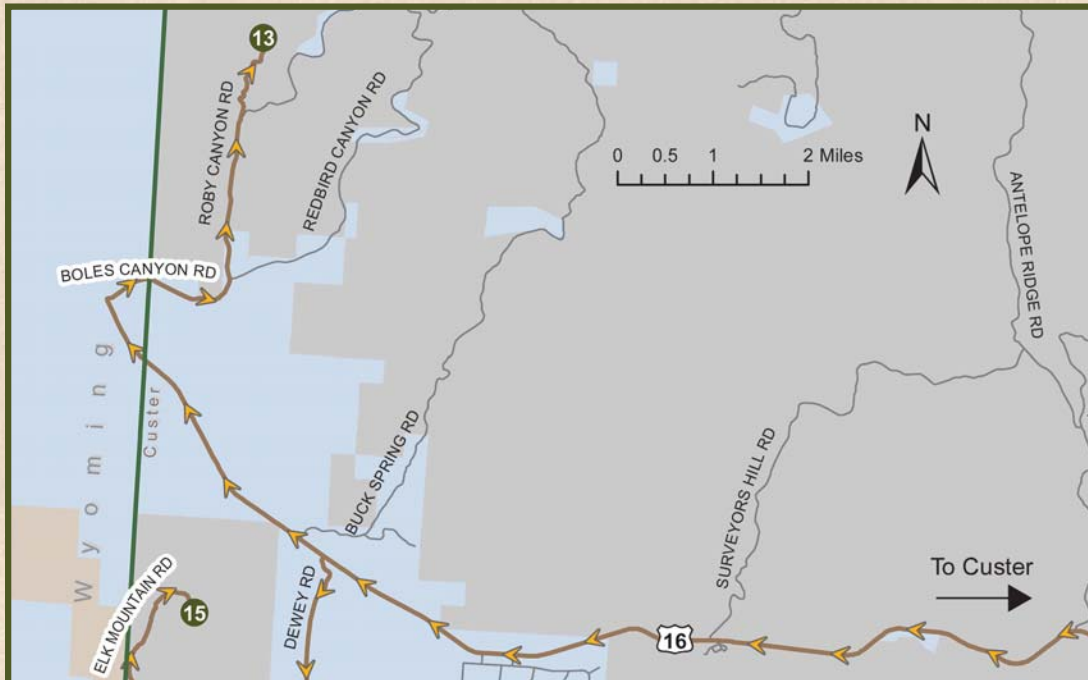
Virginia's Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, Violet-green Swallow, Plumbeous Vireo, Western Tanager, Common Poorwill, White-throated Swift, Say's Phoebe, Black-billed Magpie, Rock Wren, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Brewer's Blackbird, Cooper's Hawk, Wild Turkey, Yellow-breasted Chat. Rarity: Pinyon Jay.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through September.

### TIPS:

From Highway 16, just into Wyoming, turn north onto Boles Canyon Road (FS 117). Follow this road approximately 1½ miles beyond the intersection with Redbird Canyon. Just after crossing over a small bridge over a normally dry creek bed, turn north onto an old logging road (FS 264, probably not marked). Drive approximately 1,000 feet to gate. Park and walk up the canyon. The Roby Canyon road is periodically closed in winter. Boles Canyon and Redbird Canyon also provide good birding in similar habitat. Some species found in these canyons include Black-headed Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Brown Thrasher, Common Nighthawk, Northern Goshawk, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Plumbeous Vireo, Pygmy Nuthatch, Yellow-breasted Chat, MacGillivray's Warbler. Rarity: Cassin's Kingbird (has been seen in Boles Canyon). Follow trails across canyon bottoms.



### CONTACT:

Black Hills National Forest  
Hell Canyon Ranger District  
330 Mt. Rushmore Road  
Custer, SD 57730  
(605) 673-4853



*Broad-tailed  
Hummingbird*  
© Doug Backlund



*Black-backed  
Woodpecker*  
© Doug Backlund



## BLACK HILLS *Birding Trail*

### 14 HELL CANYON

#### HABITAT:

The canyon includes a creek bed, often dry in summer, with chokecherry and other riparian vegetation along the trail. Outside the riparian zone are a mixed pine forest and high exposed rocky canyon walls. The Jasper Fire of 2000 scorched the surrounding forest and part of the Hell Canyon Trail, attracting woodpeckers.

#### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Canyon Wren, White-throated Swift, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, Red-naped Sapsucker, Western Wood-Pewee,

Red-breasted Nuthatch, Violet-green Swallow, Ovenbird, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) and MacGillivray's warblers, Western Tanager, White-winged Junco, Red Crossbill, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, Clark's Nutcracker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Dusky Flycatcher, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Rock Wren. Rarities: Blue-winged Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Carolina Wren, Calliope Hummingbird.

#### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

May through September.



#### TIPS:

Park at the Hell Canyon Trailhead on the north side of Highway 16 just west of Jewel Cave. Walk the trail along the canyon bottom. Look for Broad-tailed Hummingbirds in the meadows and both spring and late summer migrants in the chokecherries. About ½ mile in from the trailhead, follow a small trail up a side canyon to the right to a grove of aspen and shrubs. Look here for resident breeding birds. Townsend's Warbler has occurred in this grove.

#### CONTACT:

Black Hills National Forest  
Hell Canyon Ranger District  
330 Mt. Rushmore Road, Custer, SD 57730  
(605) 673-4853



© Chad Coppess, SD Dept. of Tourism



Mountain Bluebird  
© Doug Backlund

## 15 ELK MOUNTAIN LOOKOUT

### HABITAT:

Windswept knoll with grassland, woody draws and scattered deciduous trees.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

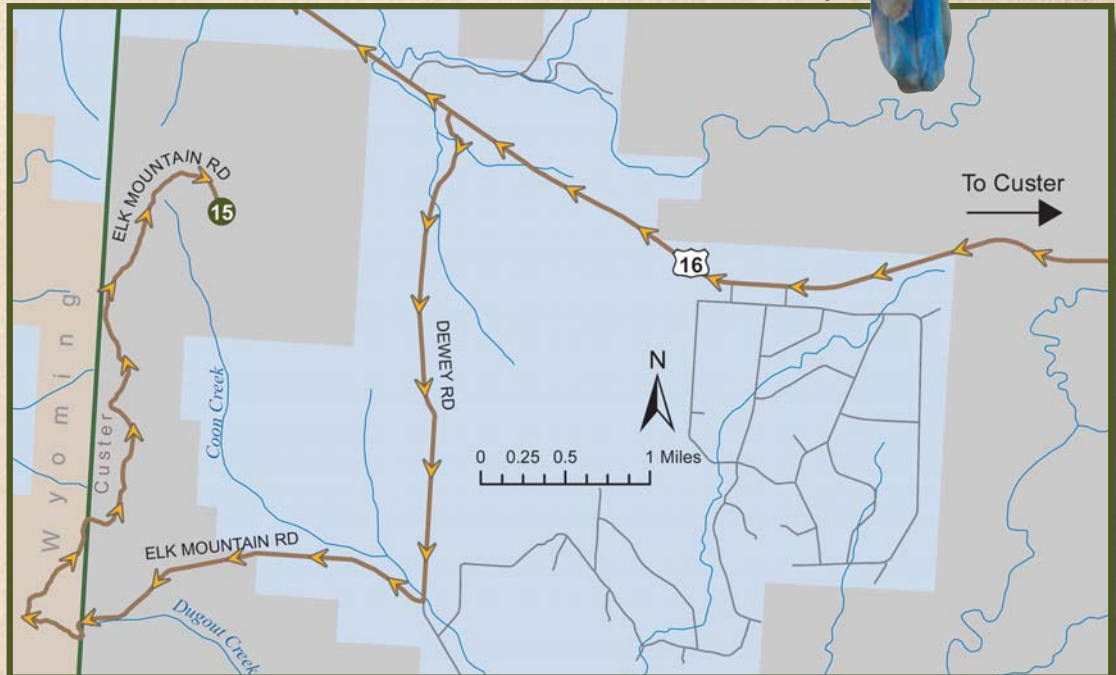
At the lookout: Lewis's Woodpecker, Clark's Nutcracker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Ferruginous Hawk, Mountain Bluebird. Along Dewey Road: Cassin's Kingbird is possible, though rare, in addition to sparrows and other grassland species.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through September.

### TIPS:

May need to walk across hilltop if in low-profile vehicle. The road to Elk Mountain, Dewey Road (County Road 769), is good for birding from Edgemont to Elk Mountain and north to its intersection with Highway 16. Elk Mountain Road (FS 123) turns west off Dewey Road, crosses into Wyoming and returns to South Dakota before climbing the mountain.



### CONTACT:

Black Hills National Forest - Hell Canyon Ranger District  
330 Mt. Rushmore Road, Custer, SD 57730, (605) 673-4853

# BLACK HILLS *Birding Trail*

## 16 CUSTER STATE PARK

### HABITAT:

Custer State Park is a 71,000-acre park with many habitat types including grassland, riparian habitat, Ponderosa pine and spruce forests with aspen and deciduous groves; many roads and trails suitable for birding. The best way to enjoy birding in Custer State Park is to contact the park headquarters to get maps, bird checklist and information on recent and seasonal sightings.

*Two popular birding areas:*

### FRENCH CREEK NATURE AREA AND WILDLIFE LOOP

#### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Canyon Wren, Northern Goshawk, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Dusky Flycatcher, Cordilleran Flycatcher, riparian species, White-throated Swift, Mountain Bluebird, Baltimore Oriole, Spotted Towhee, warblers in migration. Sharp-tailed Grouse, Upland Sandpiper, sparrows, hawks along Wildlife Loop. Rarity: Pinyon Jay.

#### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

Mid-May through October.

#### TIPS:

French Creek Trailhead is on the east side of the Wildlife Loop. Watch out for rattlesnakes in spring and summer. Four Mile Draw Road takes off from the lower west side of the Wildlife Loop. Look for Black-backed, Red-headed and Lewis's woodpeckers in the burned area. Areas of bug-killed pines anywhere in the Black Hills are good locations to look for Black-backed Woodpecker.

### SYLVAN LAKE, HARNEY PEAK AND LITTLE DEVIL'S TOWER TRAILS

#### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Ruffed Grouse drumming in April-May around Harney Peak, Clark's Nutcracker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red Crossbill, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned kinglets, Gray Jay, Western Wood-Pewee, Osprey, Hairy Woodpecker, Pine Siskin, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Golden Eagle. Rarities: Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, White-winged Crossbill.

#### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through September.

#### TIPS:

Follow hiking trails. Be prepared for sudden changes in weather.

#### CONTACT:

Custer State Park  
13329 US Highway 16A, Custer, SD 57730, (605) 255-4515



### Canyon Wren

© Doug Backlund



## 17 WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK

### HABITAT:

This is a 28,000-acre park. Mixed-grass prairie, with scattered pine groves, pine forest, deciduous shrubbery and thickets, limestone cliffs.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Great Horned Owl, Prairie Falcon, White-throated Swift, Canyon Wren, Cliff Swallow, Say's Phoebe, Lewis's Woodpecker, Western Wood-pewee, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Violet-green Swallow, Mountain Bluebird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Tanager, Spotted Towhee, Lazuli Bunting, Pine Siskin, Red Crossbill, warblers, sparrows, hawks and Sharp-tailed Grouse. Rarity: Pygmy Nuthatch in campground area.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

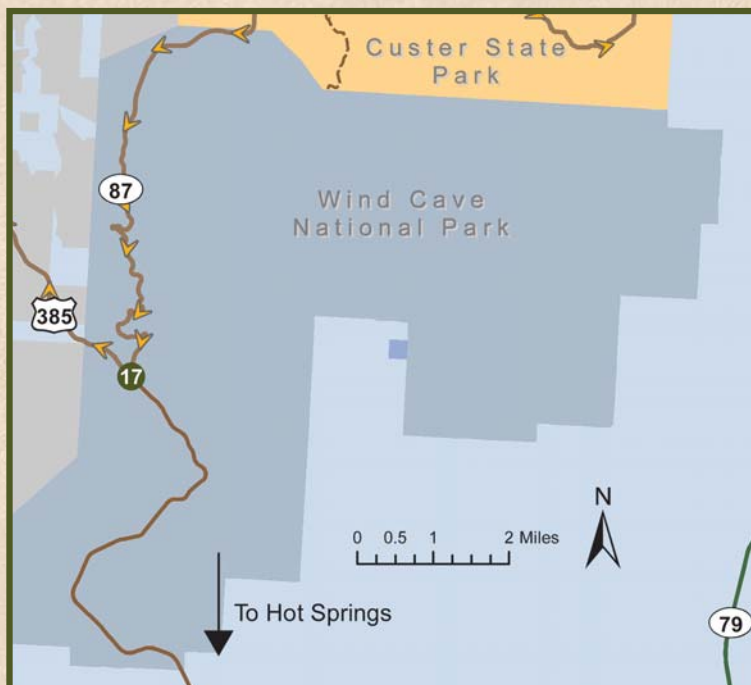
April through October.

### TIPS:

Follow roads and trails throughout the park. Trails through Wind Cave Canyon, Beaver Creek Canyon, the Sanctuary Trail and the Elk Mountain Campground Trail are excellent. Check prairie dog towns for Burrowing Owls as you drive through the park.

### CONTACT:

Wind Cave National Park  
26611 US Highway 385, Hot Springs, SD 57747-6027  
(605) 745-4600





# BUTTES AND PRAIRIES *Birding Trail*

## 18 FORT MEADE RECREATION AREA

### HABITAT:

Grassland, pastureland, deciduous, coniferous, riparian habitat along Alkali Creek.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

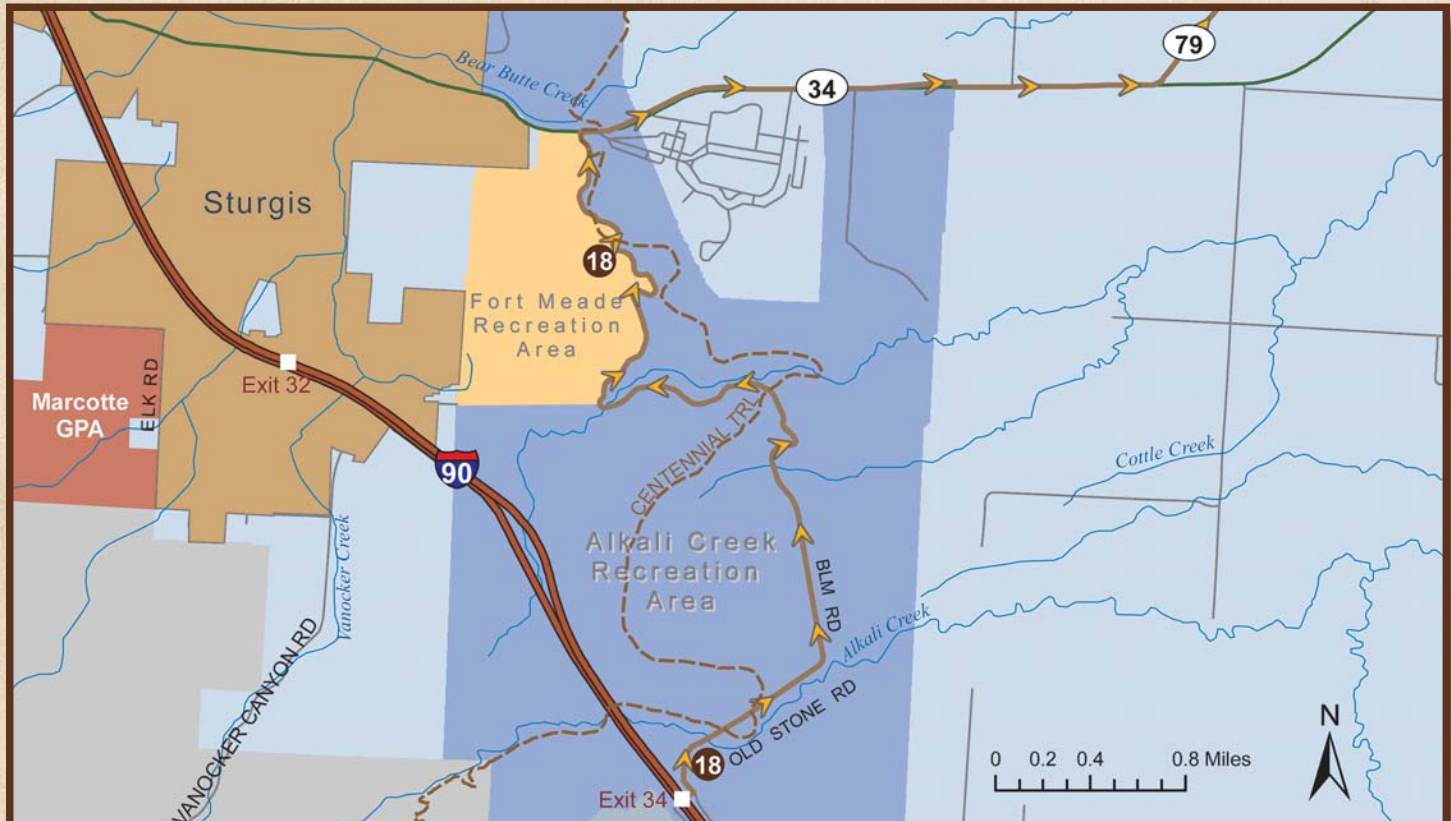
Warblers, Bobolinks, Field Sparrows, Lazuli/Indigo/hybrid buntings, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, warbler migration hotspot! Western Tanager, Western Wood-Pewee, Dusky Flycatcher, Ovenbird.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

May through October.

### TIPS:

Just south of the VA Hospital, gravel roads, numerous trails, including a segment of the Centennial Trail. Managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), it includes a cemetery, closed gravel roads, a picnic area, campgrounds and horse camp area. It is an historic area, since the 7th Cavalry was stationed there in the late 1880s.





*Swainson's Thrush*  
© Doug Backlund

*Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler*

© Doug Backlund



## 18 FORT MEADE RECREATION AREA DRIVING LOOP - ALKALI RECREATION AREA

### HABITAT:

Creek lined with oak, ash, cottonwood and other deciduous dense forest with hiking trail access into pine forest to the east and west, riparian shrubs and both deciduous and coniferous tree stands, mixed-grass prairie.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Warbler species are always possible, sometimes in great abundance, during migration. This is a good place to look for Indigo and Lazuli buntings, Great Crested Flycatcher, vireos, House Wren, Ovenbird, Field Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, Swainson's Thrush, Gray Catbird, Spotted Towhee and other songbirds. Look for Eastern Bluebird, Western Meadowlark, Bobolink, Western Kingbird, Dickcissel and Lark Sparrow before entering open pine woodland, which may have Western Tanager, Chipping Sparrow, Plumbeous Vireo and Red Crossbill.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

Mid-May through September.

### TIPS:

Check with the BLM for dates when the area is closed to visitors.

A diversity of habitat affords many opportunities to stop and walk about along this driving loop. From the east entrance (I-90), this well-maintained gravel road offers instant access to Alkali Creek Recreation Area. Three parking areas allow easy access to the creek. Park at the horse camp and walk that area. Upon leaving Alkali Creek, the road passes through a 2-mile stretch of mixed prairie habitat. Shortly after entering the pine forest, the road is intersected by the Centennial Trail. Immediately after this junction is a small turn-out area. At this point there is a nice little trail to a stream, pond and mixed deciduous area. This trail also continues up, into pine dominant habitat. The remainder of the tour route to Fort Meade is a winding road through heavy pine forest, but lined on both sides with mixed deciduous forest.

### CONTACT:

Bureau of Land Management - South Dakota Field Office  
310 Roundup Street, Belle Fourche, SD 57717, (605) 892-7000

**Spotted Towhee**  
© Doug Backlund



**California Gull**  
© Doug Backlund



## BUTTES AND PRAIRIES *Birding Trail*

### 19 BEAR BUTTE STATE PARK

#### HABITAT:

Bear Butte, elevation 4,400 feet, rises steeply above prairie. Grassland, small lake, marsh, deciduous trees, pines, shrubby draws, steep butte with tree-lined draws, rocky cliffs.

#### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Migration hotspot for waterfowl and shorebirds. American Avocet, Blue-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Bufflehead, American White Pelican, Cinnamon Teal, Eared Grebe, Belted Kingfisher (Bear Butte Lake), flock of Gray Partridge and Sharp-tailed Grouse near the campground, nesting Mountain Bluebirds,

Tree Swallows. Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch sporadic during winter at top of butte and near Visitor Center. Spotted Towhee, Field Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Long-eared Owl in wooded draws on way to Visitor Center. Rusty Blackbird in the fall. Rails, Peregrine Falcon, Rock Wren, Black-bellied and Semipalmated plovers, Mountain Bluebird. Rarities: Clark's Grebe, Horned Grebe, Long-tailed Duck, scoters.

#### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

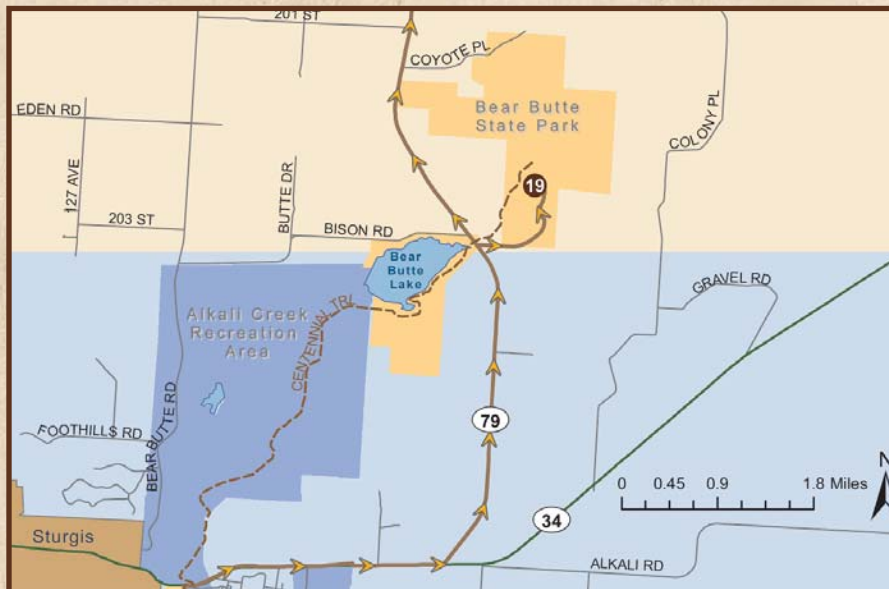
March through October.

#### TIPS:

Follow trails around the lake. From the Visitor Center, hike toward the summit. The lake is frozen in winter. Walk the campground for songbirds. Less than 1½ miles southwest is Fort Meade Reservoir, a very small wetland, cattail marsh, riparian habitat, grassland and pasture. Look for American Bittern, rails, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Lark Sparrow, prairie songbirds here.

#### CONTACT:

Bear Butte State Park  
20485 SD Highway 79, PO Box 688  
Sturgis, SD 57785  
(605) 347-5240



## 20 BELLE FOURCHE RESERVOIR (ORMAN DAM)

### HABITAT:

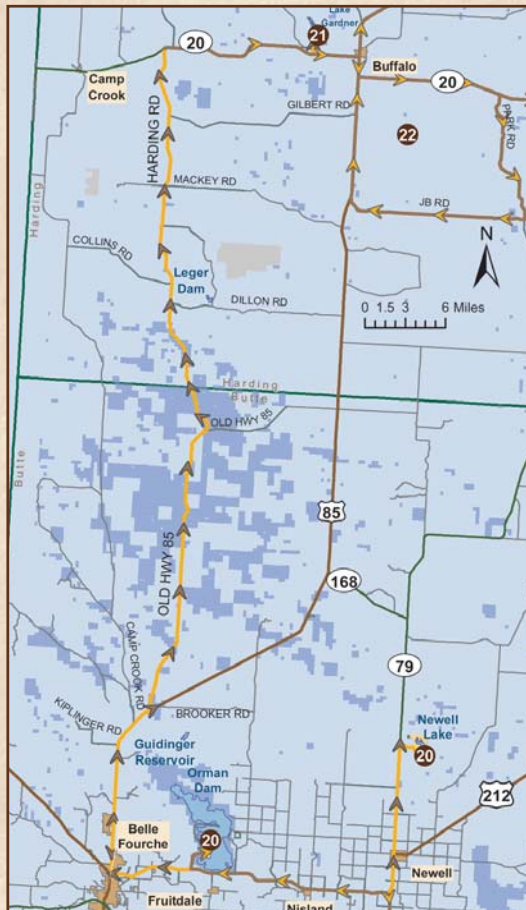
The reservoir area includes 8,000 water surface acres, 6,700 land acres and 58 miles of shoreline with grassland, riparian shrub areas, deciduous trees below Orman Dam and Rocky Point Recreation Area.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Spotted Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper, Great Blue Heron, Western Kingbird, Red-tailed Hawk, Short-eared and Great Horned owls, Clark's Grebe, Western Grebe, Eared Grebe, American White Pelican, Gray Partridge, Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, nesting Ring-billed Gull, California Gull and Common Tern. Rarity in migration: Piping Plover.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

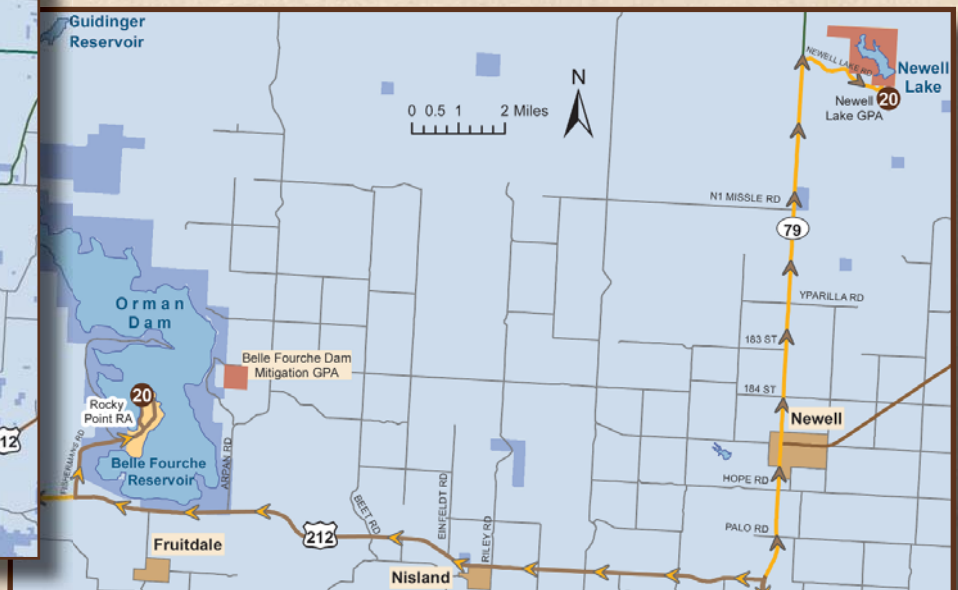
April through October.



### TIPS:

Gull and tern nesting island best viewed from the Group Camping parking lot just north of the entrance station, east side of road. Park and walk at Rocky Point Recreation Area and below Orman Dam. A drive about 12 miles east on Highway 212 toward Newell then 8 miles north on Highway 79 to Newell Lake GPA may yield different water birds, such as Horned Grebe, and grassland birds along the way. Nisland Slough is a good stop for shorebirds and waterfowl, such as Wilson's Phalarope, Willet, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck.

A second drive north of Belle Fourche offers different habitat. From Highway 85 northeast of Belle Fourche, take Old Highway 85 (or Old Harding Road) north toward Harding and Highway 20. This drive through remote sagebrush country can yield excellent birding, but there are important cautions. Make this drive only in dry weather. Also, one needs a full tank of gas, a sound vehicle, food and water, as no services are available on this route. This sagebrush country in South Dakota is at the far eastern edge of sagebrush habitat, and the best viewing of Greater Sage-Grouse is probably in Wyoming. Nonetheless, it is occasionally possible to see these birds in this area. Additionally, look for Brewer's Sparrow, Lark Bunting, Loggerhead Shrike, Upland Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Sharp-tailed Grouse and rarely Sage Thrasher. In winter: Rough-legged Hawk and rarely Snowy Owl.



### CONTACT:

SD Department of Game, Fish and Parks, 11361 Nevada Gulch Road, Lead, SD 57754, (605) 584-3896, Email: [RockyPoint@state.sd.us](mailto:RockyPoint@state.sd.us)

# BUTTES AND PRAIRIES *Birding Trail*

## 21 NORTH CAVE HILLS, CUSTER NATIONAL FOREST: PICNIC SPRINGS CAMPGROUND

### HABITAT:

This 14,500-acre unit of Custer National Forest offers open pine woodlands, sandstone rock cliffs, green ash riparian woodlands, grasslands, wooded draws around campground and large swaths of blooming pasque flowers in early May.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Golden Eagle, Merlin, Black-billed Cuckoo, Prairie Falcon, Ovenbird, Red Crossbill, Loggerhead Shrike, Rock Wren, Eastern and Mountain bluebirds, Swainson's Thrush, Spotted Towhee, Red-breasted and White-breasted nuthatches, Yellow-breasted Chat, Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Common Poorwill (calling at night), Say's Phoebe, Western Tanager, White-throated Swift, Red Crossbill, Lazuli Bunting, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Common Nighthawk. Along drive: Baird's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Lark Bunting, Ferruginous Hawk. At Gardner Lake, Western Grebe, Say's Phoebe, Spotted Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit. Rarity: Northern Mockingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

May through October.

### TIPS:

Check out cliffs for nesting or roosting raptors and swallows. Drive and walk along roads through the campground and south along the butte. Entry is from the east off Highway 85 just north of Ludlow, but if roads are rain-soaked, enter from the north. In years of normal rainfall, roads to Cave Hills will be dotted with small wetlands. Check for waterfowl and shorebirds. Use caution when stopping on hilly, curvy roads with blind spots. About 25 miles southwest of Cave Hills is Lake Gardner GPA, for water birds and shorebirds, including Eared and Western grebes.

### CONTACT:

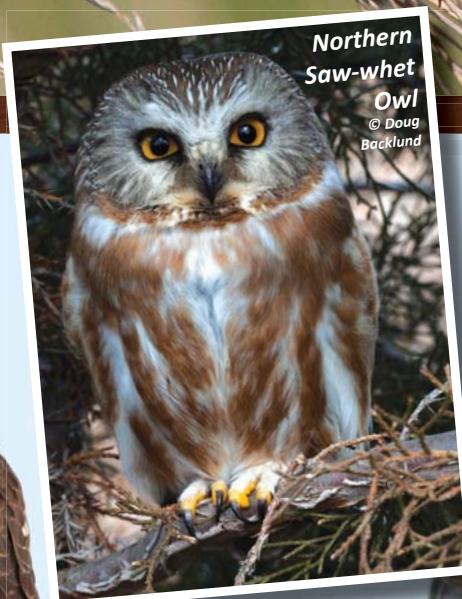
Custer National Forest  
Sioux Ranger District  
PO Box 37  
101 East First Street  
Camp Crook, SD 57724  
(605) 797-4432





^ Baird's Sparrow

© Doug Backlund



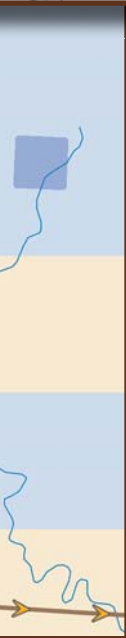
Northern  
Saw-whet

Owl

© Doug  
Backlund

∨ Merlin

© Doug Backlund



# BUTTES AND PRAIRIES *Birding Trail*

## 22 SLIM BUTTES, CUSTER NATIONAL FOREST:

### REVA GAP CAMPGROUND, DEER DRAW AND SORUM DAM GPA

#### HABITAT:

Slim Buttes is an approximately 47,000-acre unit of the Custer National Forest. Pine and green ash woodlands, sedimentary cliffs, grasslands, wooded draws. At Sorum Dam: nice pond/marsh. Surrounded by mixed-grass prairie and pasture.

#### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Merlin, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Great Horned Owl, Brown Thrasher, Harris's Sparrow, thrushes and warblers in migration, Spotted Towhee, Black-billed Cuckoo, Black-billed Magpie, White-throated Swift, Red Crossbill, Violet-green Swallow, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Mountain Bluebird, Common Poorwill, Say's Phoebe, Western Tanager, Brown Creeper, Rock Wren, Ovenbird, Lazuli Bunting, Yellow-breasted Chat, Least Flycatcher, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Eastern Kingbird, Plumbeous Vireo. Along driving loop: Baird's Sparrow, Greater Sage-Grouse, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Lark Bunting, Ferruginous Hawk, Long-billed Curlew, Burrowing Owl, Grasshopper Sparrow, other grassland and sage-associated birds. At Sorum Dam: Common Merganser, Green-winged and Blue-winged teal, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Western Grebe, Cliff Swallow, Franklin's Gull, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, breeding Savannah Sparrow, Lark Sparrow. Along drive to dam look for raptors, Burrowing Owl, grassland birds. Rarity: Greater Sage-Grouse.

#### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

May through September.

#### TIPS:

Look around the Castles limestone formation for White-throated Swift, Violet-green Swallow and raptors. A path that is good for walking and birding runs south from Reva Gap Campground through Slim Buttes forest. Deer Draw is approximately 13 miles south of Highway 20. Turn west into Deer Draw (FS 3148) from Highway 79, park at the cattle guard and walk up the draw. FS 3148 is sometimes passable up to the pond. From there a good hike will take one to the top of the buttes and some spectacular views. FS 3124, going north of Highway 20, can be walked and perhaps driven part way. FS 3150 going east of Highway 79, toward the south end of Slim Buttes, may be walked.



*Greater Sage-Grouse*  
© Doug Backlund



*Chestnut-collared Longspur*  
© Doug Backlund



*Violet-green Swallow*  
© Doug Backlund



## 22 SLIM BUTTES, CUSTER NATIONAL FOREST: SAGEBRUSH AND GRASSLAND DRIVING LOOP

Highway 20 (on N), Park Road (E) JB Road (S), Highway 85 (W).

### HABITAT:

Sagebrush, including big sagebrush, flats, sagebrush-grassland mix, mixed-grass prairie, small wetlands and stock dams.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Upland Sandpiper, Horned Lark, Wilson's Phalarope, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Swainson's Hawk, Green-winged Teal, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Upland Sandpiper, Say's Phoebe, Brewer's Blackbird, Ferruginous Hawk, Northern Harrier, Long-billed Curlew, Golden Eagle, Killdeer, Mountain Bluebird. Rarity: Greater Sage-Grouse, Baird's Sparrow.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through September.

### TIPS:

Caution: Much of this loop drives through private land on both sides of the road. Do not trespass off of road. Use great caution when stopping on these hilly, curvy roads with blind spots. A continuation to the east on JB Road leads into Custer National Forest (Slim Buttes). The road changes into a two-track going up the side of the bluff. Park and walk up the draw.

### CONTACTS:

Sioux Ranger District - Custer National Forest  
PO Box 37, 101 East First Street, Camp Crook, SD 57724  
(605) 797-4432

Sorum Dam GPA  
Department of Game, Fish and Parks - Wildlife Division  
Rapid City Regional Office, (605) 394-2391







## BUTTES AND PRAIRIES *Birding Trail*

### 23 GRAND RIVER NATIONAL GRASSLAND

#### HABITAT:

150,000 acres of native mixed-grass prairie with scattered wetlands and creeks. Prairie dog colonies are present. Inquire at Forest Service office for locations.

#### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Sprague's Pipit, Long-billed Curlew, Baird's Sparrow, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Burrowing Owl, Bobolink, Lark Bunting, Marbled Godwit, Upland Sandpiper, Common Poorwill, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Ferruginous Hawk, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Black-billed Magpie, Orchard and Baltimore orioles, Great Horned Owl, Lazuli Bunting, Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow-breasted Chat, Great Blue Heron. At Lemmon Lake: Eared and Pied-billed grebes, Blue-winged Teal, Black Tern, Double-crested Cormorant, Bald and Golden eagles, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Yellow-headed Blackbird. Snowy Owl in winter. Rarities: McCown's Longspur, Trumpeter Swan.

#### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through October.

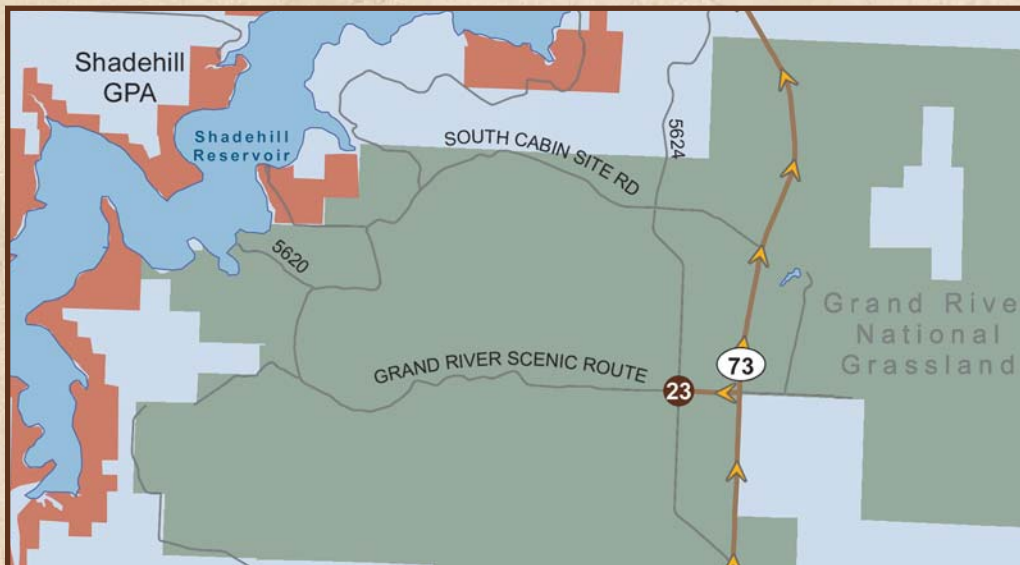
#### TIPS:

The best way to explore the grasslands is to purchase a Grand River and Cedar River National Grasslands Visitor's Map. Lemmon Lake GPA, Humphrey Draw Wildlife Area and a stretch of the North Fork of the Grand River running through Humphrey Draw Wildlife Area are all excellent for birding. Some roads will require a high-clearance vehicle, and some roads may be impassable after a rain. Check with the Forest Service office in Lemmon. Ask for a copy of Bird Status and Distribution on the Cedar River and Grand River National Grasslands, 2011. This booklet may be available to download at the website. Drive the Forest Service roads, watch for godwits, raptors, curlews and Burrowing Owls (in prairie dog towns), and listen for pipits, longspurs and sparrows. Baird's Sparrows are found in taller

grass; locations varying yearly depending on grazing patterns and the previous year's precipitation. Look for prairie dog town along 110th Street, on the way to Lemmon Lake.

#### CONTACT:

Grand River Ranger District  
Grand River National Grassland  
PO Box 390  
1005 5th Avenue West  
Lemmon, SD 57638  
(605) 374-3592





© Doug Backlund



Rock Wren  
© Doug Backlund

## 24 SHADEHILL AND LLEWELLYN JOHNS MEMORIAL RECREATION AREAS

### HABITAT:

Shadehill Recreation Area includes 8,000 acres surrounding Shadehill Reservoir, with grasslands, pine forests, deciduous and cedar draws and miles of shoreline. Llewellyn Johns Memorial Recreation Area includes 114 acres of dense pine plantings, deciduous areas and wetlands. Hugh Glass and Ketterling Point areas have dense pine and deciduous stands and shrubs.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

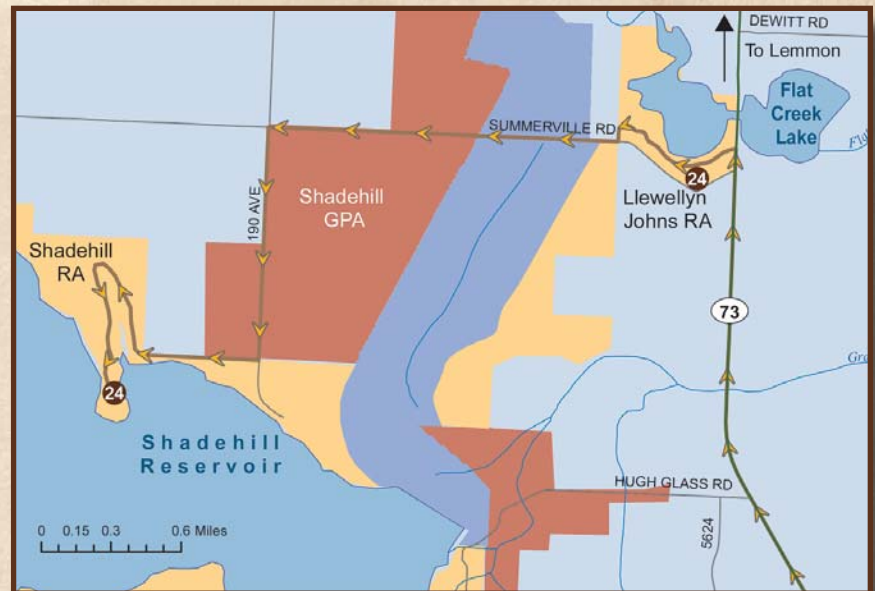
Least Flycatcher, Eastern and Western kingbirds, Orchard Oriole, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Ovenbird, Black-and-white Warbler, Rock Wren, Ferruginous Hawk, Lazuli Bunting, Black-billed Magpie, Yellow-breasted Chat, Eastern Bluebird, breeding Pine Siskins (Llewellyn Johns). At Ketterling Point and Hugh Glass picnic and campground areas, look for Northern Saw-whet Owl, Long-eared Owl, Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl in winter, warblers in migration, sparrows, thrashers, thrushes, flycatchers, cuckoos, towhees, wide range of songbirds and waterfowl on the lake.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through October.

### TIPS:

From April through September, State Park entrance license required. Parking, vault toilet, comfort station available during the summer. At Shadehill Dam spillway, scan for Osprey, Bald Eagle,



Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow. At Llewellyn Johns Recreation Area, walk north to Flat Creek Lake for grebes, ducks and shorebirds during migration. Check out Ketterling Point campground and Hugh Glass Day Use Area at Shadehill. Excellent in winter for owls and other raptors. Some roads are two-track; hiking only is suggested.

### CONTACT:

Shadehill Recreation Area, 19150 Summerville Road Box 63  
Shadehill, SD 57653, (605) 374-5114



Lazuli Bunting  
© Doug Backlund



Long-billed Curlew  
© Doug Backlund

# BUTTES AND PRAIRIES *Birding Trail*

## 25 DURKEE LAKE

### HABITAT:

Mixed-grass prairie, lake, riparian shrubs, marshland.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Virginia Rail, Sora, Great Blue Heron nesting colony, American Wigeon, Western Grebe, Lark Sparrow, Cliff Swallow, Long-billed Curlew, shorebirds, marsh birds, grassland birds.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

May through September.

### TIPS:

Park at east side of the lake. Walk grassy trails, drive gravel roads along the lake.

### CONTACT:

City of Faith - Business Office  
204 North Main Street, Faith, SD 57626





*Long-eared Owl*  
© Doug Backlund

## 26 FOUR CORNERS LOOP

### HABITAT:

Grassland, short-grass prairie, wetlands, pastureland, hillsides and draws thick with juniper, ditches lined with wild plum, Cheyenne River crossing with wide, scoured sandbars and ribboned river channels, riparian deciduous trees and shrubs, huge cottonwoods.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Black-billed Magpie, Lark Sparrow, Lark and Lazuli buntings, Spotted Towhee, Blue Grosbeak, Long-eared Owl, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, Grasshopper Sparrow, Long-billed Curlew, Western Kingbird, Great Horned Owl, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Bell's Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Yellow Warbler, Wild Turkey, Upland Sandpiper, Orchard Oriole, Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Say's Phoebe.

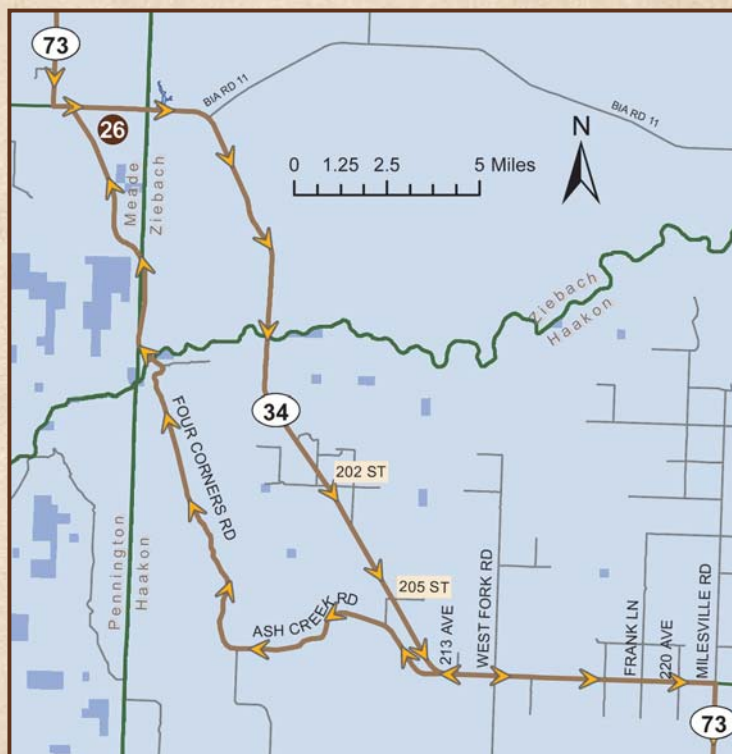
### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

May through October.

### TIPS:

The road across the bottom of this loop is called Ash Creek Road, which follows the old route of Highway 34 crossing the Cheyenne River via Four Corner Bridge, a beautiful old structure. Travelers will have to consult highway maps and pay attention so as to not miss this road. When traveling west, Ash Creek Road is approximately 7 miles beyond Billsburg. For those traveling from west to east, Ash Creek Road is the first right turn after Howes Corner. This truly is a wonderful drive down a winding road to

the Cheyenne River, perfect for Sharp-tailed Grouse, Long-billed Curlew, Lark Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting, Ferruginous Hawk, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bell's Vireo and Loggerhead Shrike. Stop at the bridge over the Cheyenne to view up and down stream, Least Terns have been seen from here.



# BUTTES AND PRAIRIES *Birding Trail*

## 27 BAD RIVER WATER ACCESS AREA

### HABITAT:

Four-acre riparian area just southwest of Philip beside the Bad River, with huge cottonwood trees, cedar trees, a small grassy area and shrubby riparian area along the Bad River.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Black-headed Grosbeak, Blue Jay, Northern Flicker, Wood Duck, Brown Thrasher, Wild Turkey, Chimney Swift, Great Crested Flycatcher, Cliff Swallow, Eastern Phoebe, Ring-necked Pheasant, Yellow Warbler, Downy Woodpecker, Indigo Bunting.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

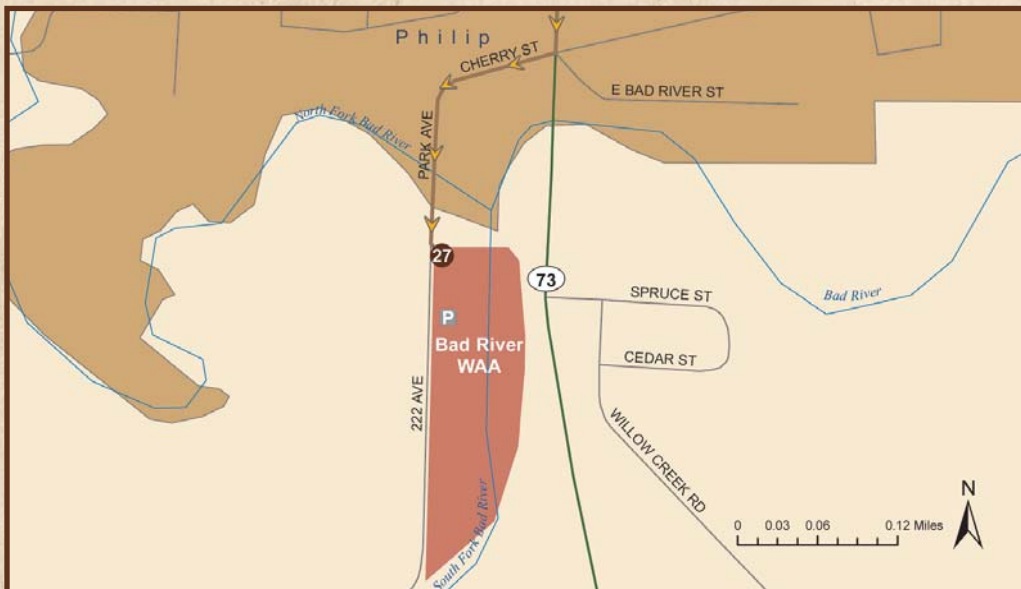
April through September.

### TIPS:

This tiny park offers a surprising number of species in late spring and summer. About 2 miles north of Philip is Lake Waggoner, with an impressive list of birds, such as Chestnut-collared Longspur, Eastern Phoebe, Horned Lark, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, Sora, Killdeer, Loggerhead Shrike, Barn Owl (beside dam face), Bobolink, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Sora, Gray Catbird, American Kestrel, Belted Kingfisher. Least Flycatcher and Northern Mockingbird in migration.

### CONTACT:

SD Department of Game, Fish and Parks - Wildlife Division  
Rapid City Regional Office, (605) 394-2391





*Chestnut-collared Longspur*  
© Doug Backlund

## 28 CURLEW LAKE GPA

### HABITAT:

440 acres. Open water, grassland and pastureland.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Waterfowl, shorebirds, grebes, Chestnut-collared Longspur, nice shelterbelt with various songbirds including nesting Bell's Vireo, Great Horned Owl.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

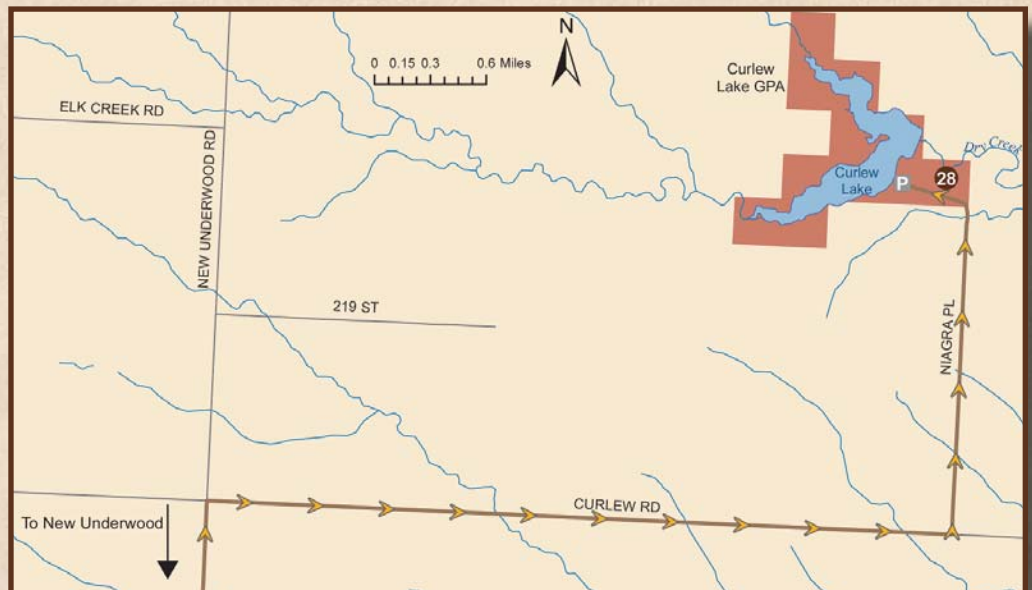
April through October.

### TIPS:

Park and walk, also drive across the dam and check the spillway area.

### CONTACT:

SD Department of  
Game, Fish and Parks - Wildlife Division  
Rapid City Regional Office, (605) 394-2391





# BADLANDS, LAKES AND CANYONS *Birding Trail*

## 29 COFFEE FLATS ROAD AND FIDDLE CREEK DAM



### HABITAT:

Coffee Flats Road passes south from Highway 18 west of Edgemont, through national grassland into private land on both sides of road. The drive down this public county road offers many grassland birds. Fiddle Creek Dam, located on the national grassland, may have many ducks and grebes on the water and nearby. Ferruginous Hawks nest in tree-rich draws on the national grassland along Coffee Flats Road. Habitats include big sagebrush, shortgrass and mixed-grass prairie and open water at Fiddle Creek Dam.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Vesper Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Lark Bunting, Loggerhead Shrike, Short-eared Owl, Long-billed Curlew, Common Nighthawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Common Merganser, Redhead, Greater Yellowlegs, Wilson's Phalarope, grebes, Grasshopper Sparrow. Rarity: Sage Thrasher, Cassin's Sparrow.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

May through September.

### TIPS:

The road (FS 7057) into Fiddle Creek Dam from Coffee Flats Road is rough and should not be driven in wet weather. Drive only as far as you feel comfortable, then walk the rest of the mile to the dam. As you drive public roads in this area, look for ponds and stock dams near the road. These may be quite rich with species of waterfowl and

shorebirds. Do not trespass. The land may be private, but you may pull over and observe from the road. Driving back toward Edgemont on Highway 18, Cassin's Sparrow has been seen along the road about 7 miles west of Edgemont. At Edgemont, Dewey Road goes north toward Dewey and on to Elk Mountain Lookout Tower, trail site #15.

### CONTACT:

Buffalo Gap National Grassland  
1801 Highway 18 Bypass, Hot Springs, SD 57747  
(605) 745-4107



*Prairie  
Falcon*  
© Doug Backlund



*Pygmy Nuthatch*  
© Doug Backlund



## 30 RED CANYON

### HABITAT:

Steep canyon, red sandstone-rock walls, cottonwoods along creek, deciduous wooded draws, pasture, pine woodlands, juniper thickets.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Long list of breeding woodland and cliff-nesting birds, including Pygmy Nuthatch at one time, Great Horned Owl, Long-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl, Prairie Falcon, Rock Wren, breeding Golden Eagle, White-throated Swift, Violet-green Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Canyon Wren, Black-billed Magpie, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole, Western Wood-Pewee, Dusky Flycatcher, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting, Plumbeous Vireo, Western Tanager, Yellow-breasted Chat.

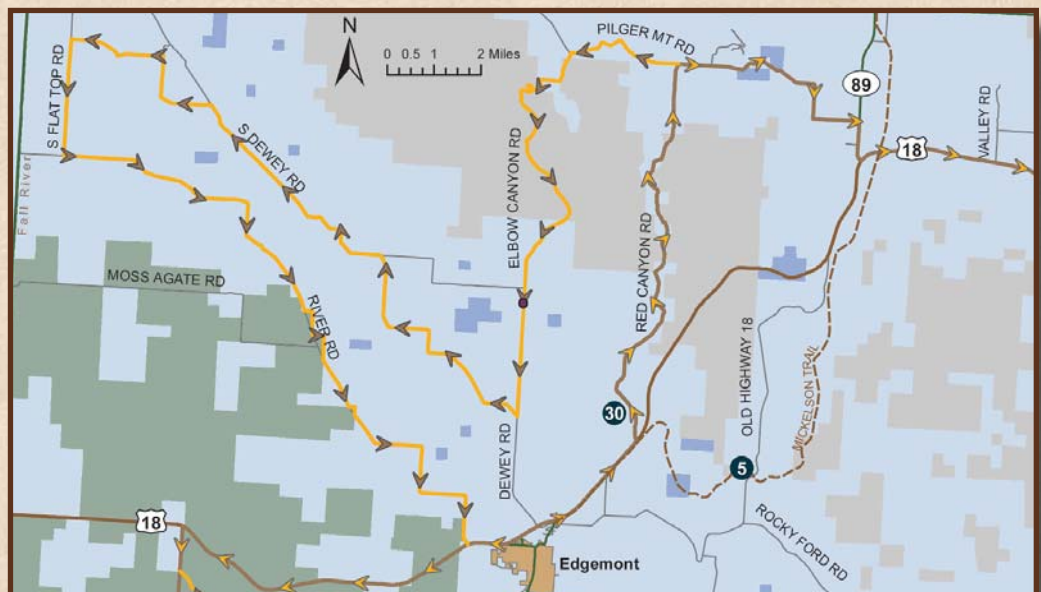
### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through October.

### TIPS:

From Highway 18, turn west onto Red Canyon Road (FS 322) and follow it through the canyon, pulling over at wide spots to walk or listen

for birds. Good bird variety in riparian cottonwood stands and brushy areas. After leaving Red Canyon, turn west at the T-intersection onto Pilger Mountain Road and turn south on Elbow Canyon Road (FS 318), birding the same way as in Red Canyon, to Dewey Road, then continue west toward Dewey. Dewey Road, between Dewey and Edgemont, is a good driving route. Look for rarity, Cassin's Kingbird, as well as prairie sparrows, Lark Bunting, Bullock's Oriole.







**Cordilleran Flycatcher**  
© Doug Backlund



**Pine Siskin**  
© Doug Backlund



**Lesser Goldfinch**  
© Doug Backlund

# BADLANDS, LAKES AND CANYONS *Birding Trail*

## 31 HOT BROOK CANYON AND CHAUTAUQUA PARK

### HABITAT:

Riparian woodlands line the canyon floor and steep, red-rock cliffs form the canyon walls. Higher up the canyon, pine forest. Chautauqua Park has shrubby areas and green ash along the creek.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Prairie Falcon, Red-naped Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Cordilleran and Dusky flycatchers, Red-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Plumbeous Vireo, Blue Jay, Gray Catbird, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Ovenbird, American Redstart, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Tanager, Lazuli Bunting, Black-headed Grosbeak and Bullock's Oriole. Look for White-throated Swift, Cliff and Violet-green swallows and Canyon Wren along the walls. Common Poorwills call from the canyon rim during summer evenings. Upper canyon: Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Pine Siskin and Red Crossbill. In migration: Orange-crowned, Blackpoll, Black-and-white and Wilson's warblers. Rarity: Lesser Goldfinch, Pinyon Jay.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

May through August.

### TIPS:

Park offers good parking and birding along pathways. Proceeding

up Hot Brook Canyon, walk or drive along road, pulling over at wide spots to check for birds as you proceed up the canyon. Nearby Cottonwood Springs Lake may have waterfowl on the lake and wading birds in the marshes. Common Loon has been seen here during spring migration. Another interesting area is Cold Brook Canyon, which is similar to Hot Brook Canyon. Bird this road the same as Hot Brook, pulling over at wide spots to check for birds. Cold Brook Canyon offers parking areas where one may spend time walking the area.

### CONTACT:

City of Hot Springs  
303 North River, Hot Springs, SD 57747



## Western Tanager

© Doug Backlund



## Western Wood-Pewee

© Doug Backlund



## 32 CASCADE FALLS AREA

(Cascade Falls Picnic Ground, J. H. Keith Cascade Springs Picnic Area, Nathaniel Whitney Preserve)

### HABITAT:

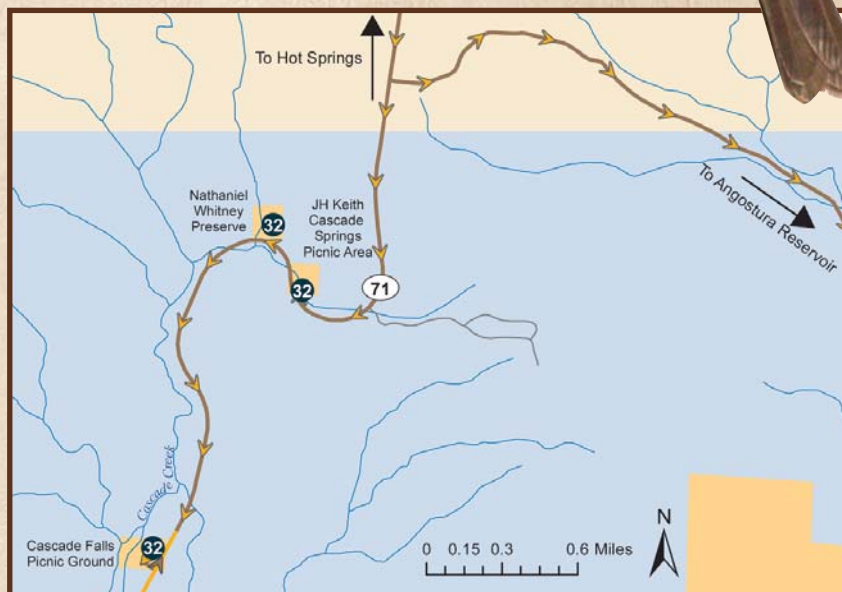
Cascade Springs and Cascade Falls are managed by the Black Hills National Forest. Both sites provide riparian woodlands along Cascade Creek of box elder, ash and cottonwoods, with pine forest on surrounding hills. The Nature Conservancy's Whitney Preserve, named after Nathaniel and Mary Whitney, contains a nice spring and small pond with marsh draining into Cascade Creek, upland open pine forest, grassland.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Riparian woodland birds, juniper shrub birds, raptors, woodpeckers, kingfishers, songbirds in migration, White-throated Swift, Townsend's Solitaire in winter. Wilson's Snipe, Lazuli Bunting, Yellow-breasted Chat at Cascade Springs. Northern Harrier, Mountain Bluebird, Marsh Wren at the falls. Bullock's Oriole in the pines above the spring, also Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco, Chipping Sparrow, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Pine Siskin. Green-winged Teal, American Kestrel, Wood Duck, White-throated Swift, Hairy Woodpecker, Mountain Bluebird at Whitney Preserve. Rarity: Lesser Goldfinch at Keith; Winter Wren or possibly Pacific Wren, late fall and early winter at the Whitney Preserve's hot springs.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

May through October.



### TIPS:

From the Whitney Preserve parking area, walk the nature trail about ¼ mile to the springs. Cascade Springs has paved trails around the springs.

### CONTACTS:

Black Hills National Forest - Hell Canyon Ranger District  
330 Mt. Rushmore Road, Custer, SD 57730, (605) 673-4853

Whitney Preserve  
28077 Cascade Road, Hot Springs, SD 57747, (605) 745-6990



Lewis's  
Woodpecker  
© Doug Backlund

Long-billed Curlew  
© Doug Backlund



# BADLANDS, LAKES AND CANYONS *Birding Trail*

## 33 ANGOSTURA RESERVOIR

### HABITAT:

4,600-acre reservoir along the Cheyenne River. Surrounded mostly by mixed-grass prairie, scattered sagebrush, a few areas of pines, riparian woodland, deciduous shrubs, plus mudflats. At Shep's Canyon, cottonwoods and shelterbelt plantings, pines, wooded draws.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Blue Grosbeak, migrant songbirds. At the reservoir, Horned Grebe, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, many gulls and terns, waterfowl, sparrows. In Shep's Canyon, Bald Eagle, Canyon Wren, Eastern Screech-Owl, American Tree Sparrow in winter,

many songbirds, raptors, Lewis's Woodpecker, Northern Shrike. Rarities: Pinyon Jay, Red-necked Grebe, Black and White-winged scoters. Black-legged Kittiwake, Pacific and Red-throated loons, plus Sabine's and Mew gulls have been seen here once or twice.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through October.

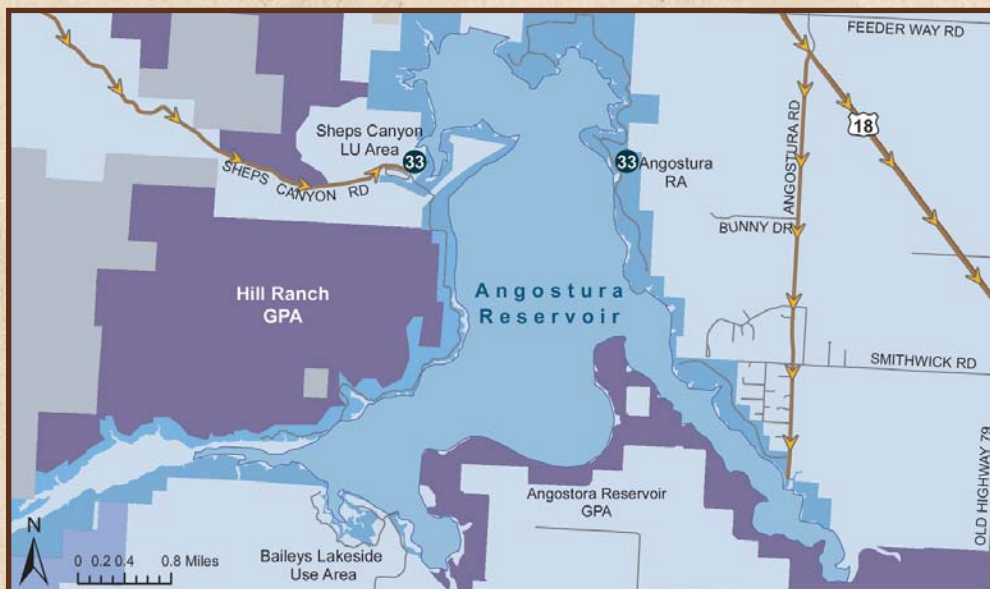
### TIPS:

State Park entrance license required for recreation areas and campgrounds. None required for Shep's Canyon on west side. Parking, vault toilet and comfort station available at the

campgrounds. No road circles the reservoir. One must drive into each side from surrounding roads, so a trip to all sides of the reservoir can take several hours. East side is good during migration and winter when water is open. South side offers parking and easy view of that end of the reservoir.

### CONTACT:

SD Department of Game, Fish & Parks  
13157 North Angostura Road  
Hot Springs, SD 57747  
(605) 745-6996  
Email: [Angostura@state.sd.us](mailto:Angostura@state.sd.us)



## 34 LIMESTONE BUTTE LAKE

### HABITAT:

Small lake on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland next to Limestone Butte.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, American Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope, American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Eared Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Western Grebe. At the dam face, Vesper Sparrow, Western Kingbird, warblers in migration, Red-winged and Yellow-headed blackbirds, American Kestrel.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

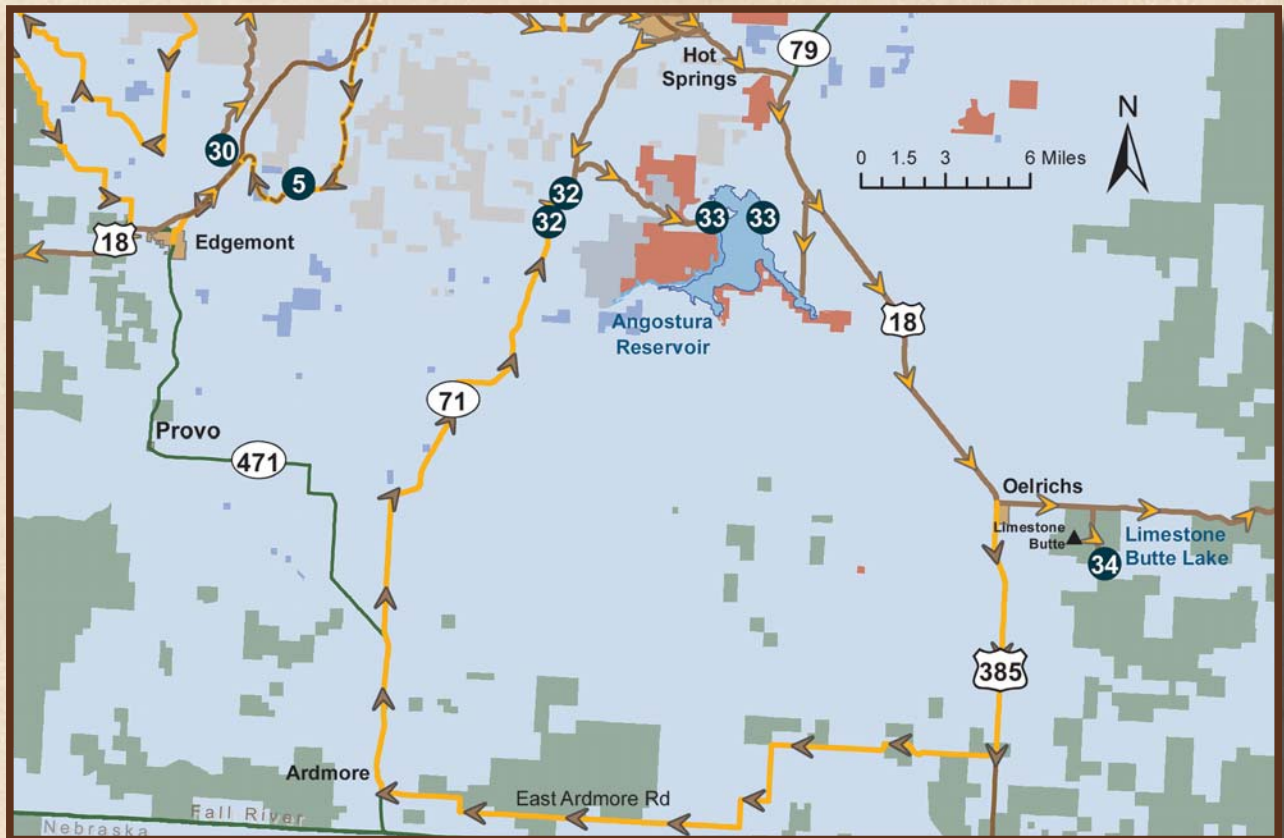
April through September.

### TIPS:

The two-track road going south about 2 miles from Highway 18 into the lake and dam is very rough. Drive only as far as comfortable, then park and walk. Look for grassland sparrows, Lark Bunting, Western Meadowlark and Ferruginous Hawk along road to the dam. A good driving route through grassland habitat from Oelrichs goes south on Highway 385 to 309th Street then west to Ardmore, turning north on Highway 71. This road passes Angostura Reservoir and continues to Hot Springs, or one can turn west onto Highway 471 to Edgemont. Look for many grassland species, including Vesper and Grasshopper sparrows, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous and Swainson's hawks, Loggerhead Shrike, Lark Bunting.

### CONTACT:

Buffalo Gap National Grassland  
1801 Highway 18 Bypass, Hot Springs, SD 57747, (605) 745-4107



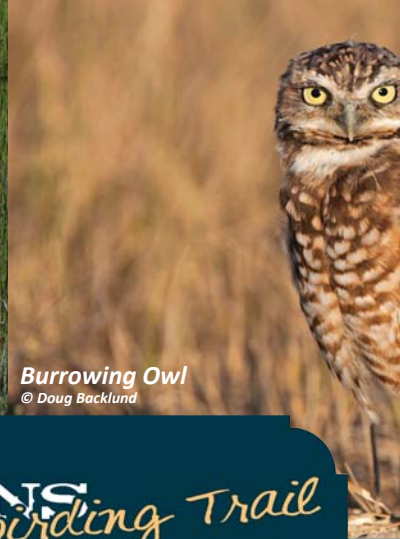
*Trumpeter Swan*

© Doug Backlund



*Burrowing Owl*

© Doug Backlund



# BADLANDS, LAKES AND CANYONS *Birding Trail*

## 35 LACREEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

### HABITAT:

Encompasses 16,410 acres of native sandhills, sub-irrigated meadows, impounded freshwater marshes, tallgrass and mixed-grass prairie uplands, woodlands, chokecherry and plum thickets, prairie dog colonies, tree plantings.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

A checklist of birds is available online. The list provided here is a small sample. Burrowing Owl, American Avocet, Blue-winged Teal, Trumpeter Swan, White-faced Ibis, American Bittern, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Peregrine Falcon, Virginia Rail, American Golden-Plover, Marbled and Hudsonian godwits, Wilson's Phalarope, Forster's Tern, Western Kingbird, Marsh Wren, Eastern Meadowlark, Bell's and Warbling vireos, warblers in migration, Sandhill Crane in migration, Cinnamon Teal, Lark Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Orchard Oriole.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through September (November through February for Trumpeter Swans).

### TIPS:

The refuge has roads, walking trails and a self-guided auto route. Park and walk where roads are muddy and rough. A good springtime shorebird stop is Lake Kadoka.

### CONTACT:

Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge  
29746 Bird Road, Martin, SD 57551  
(605) 685-6508, Email: lacreek@fws.gov





Hudsonian Godwit  
© Doug Backlund

## 36 LITTLE WHITE RIVER GPA AND RECREATION AREA AND TODD GPA

### HABITAT:

At Little White River, cottonwood and green ash forest, small wetland, marsh. At Todd GPA, grassland, pastureland, tree groves, riparian bottomland, shrubby areas.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Blue Grosbeak, Yellow Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Lazuli and Indigo buntings, Orchard Oriole, migrants, common woodland/shelterbelt birds, grassland sparrows, Cattle Egret, Loggerhead Shrike, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lark Bunting, Eastern Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

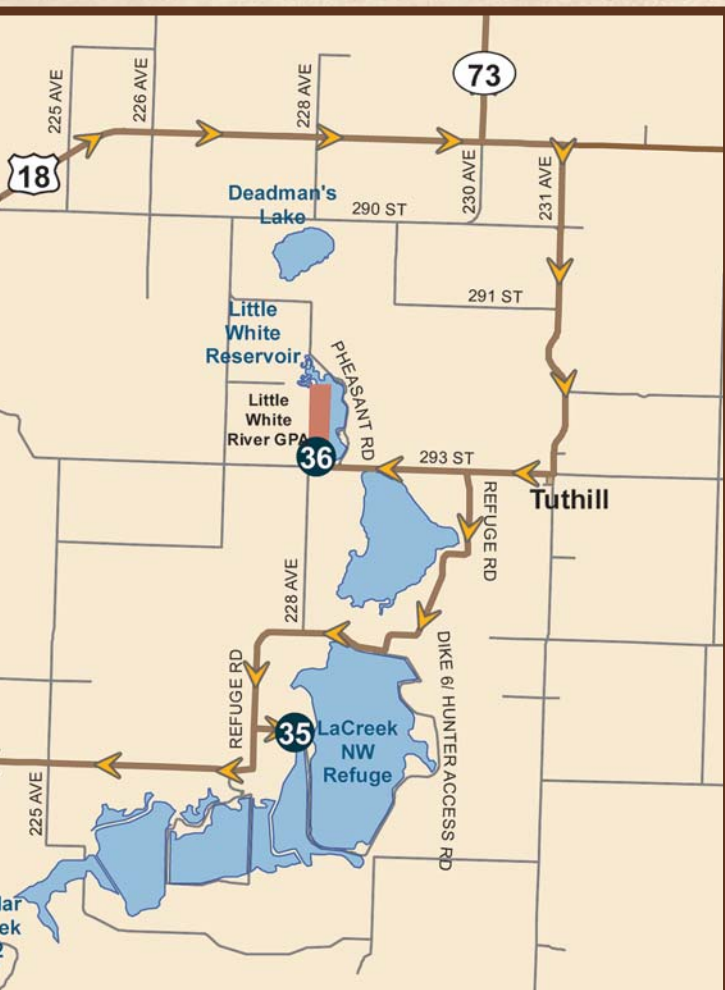
April through September.

### TIPS:

Both Little White River GPA and Todd GPA, with connection to Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge, offer good birding.

### CONTACT:

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks  
Wildlife Division  
Rapid City Regional Office  
(605) 394-2391



# BADLANDS, LAKES AND CANYONS *Birding Trail*

## 37 BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK

### HABITAT:

This 244,000-acre national park offers steep sedimentary cliffs, dramatically eroded spires, plateaus, prairie, cedar and deciduous shrubby draws. The best way to bird the Badlands is to contact the park headquarters for maps, bird checklist and recent sightings of note.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Black-billed Magpie, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Bell's Vireo on Cliff Shelf Trail. Auto route and walking the trails may yield Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Horned Lark, Turkey Vulture, Rock Wren, Long-eared and Short-eared owls, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Mountain Bluebird, Spotted Towhee, Say's Phoebe, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, White-throated Swift, Eurasian Collared-Dove, sparrows, swallows. Cliff-nesting species include Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, swallows. In winter: Rough-legged Hawk, Merlin, Townsend's Solitaire, Northern

Shrike, American Tree Sparrow, Lapland Longspur. Winter rarity: Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Snowy Owl.

### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through September.

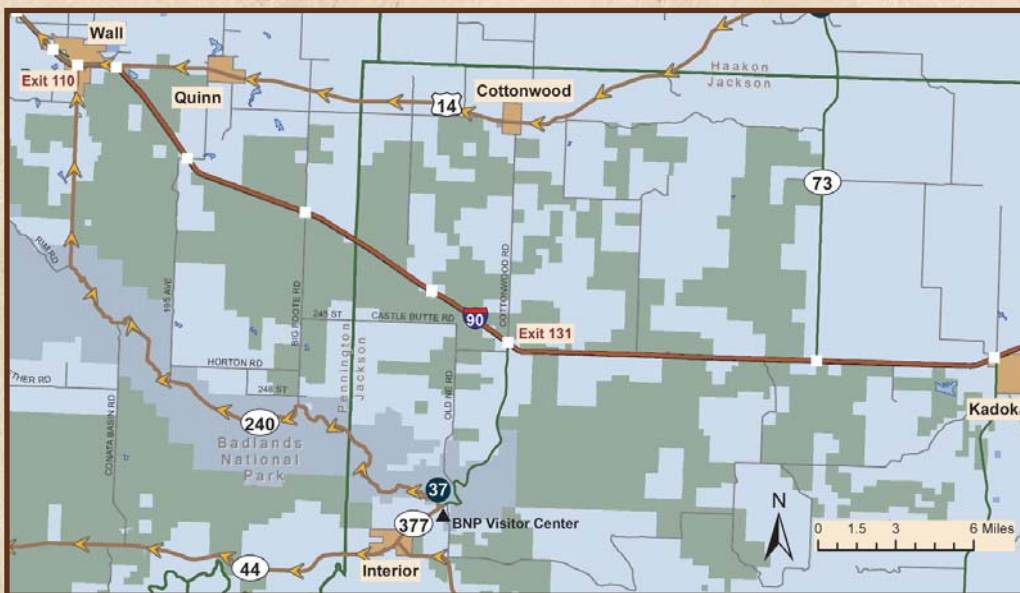
### TIPS:

Walk the Cliff Shelf Trail near the Visitor Center and around the grounds behind the Visitor Center, keeping a keen eye out for White-throated Swifts and Merlin flying high above. You may even see migrating Sandhill or Whooping cranes. Drive the main road through the park and consider visiting Sage Creek Wilderness Area. Long-eared Owls can be found in juniper draws. Look for Burrowing Owls at Roberts Prairie Dog Town, along with Bald and Golden eagles. Also drive Conata Basin Road for grassland species: Burrowing Owl, Horned Lark, Lark Bunting, Ferruginous Hawk, Northern Harrier, American

Kestrel, Common Nighthawk, Short-eared Owl, grassland birds and some large Bank Swallow colonies. Check out the South Unit of Badlands National Park, including Sheep Mountain Table Road and the Fog Creek area off BIA 2 for Prairie Falcons and other raptors. Other side trips include the 240 Loop Road and Sage Creek Rim Road.

### CONTACT:

Badlands National Park  
PO Box 6  
Interior, South Dakota 57750  
(605) 433-5361





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Lark Bunting  
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## 38 CHEYENNE RIVER GRASSLAND LOOP

### HABITAT:

Grassland, pastureland, Cheyenne River shrubby draws.

### BIRDS TO LOOK FOR:

Birds of prey, Long-billed Curlew, Upland Sandpiper, Lark Bunting, Grasshopper Sparrow. At School and Public Lands stretch, Sprague's Pipit and Baird's Sparrow heard here in spring (May). Chestnut-collared Longspurs nest here. On trails to Cheyenne River, look for Sharp-tailed Grouse, Burrowing and Short-eared owls, Bell's Vireo, Great Crested Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat.

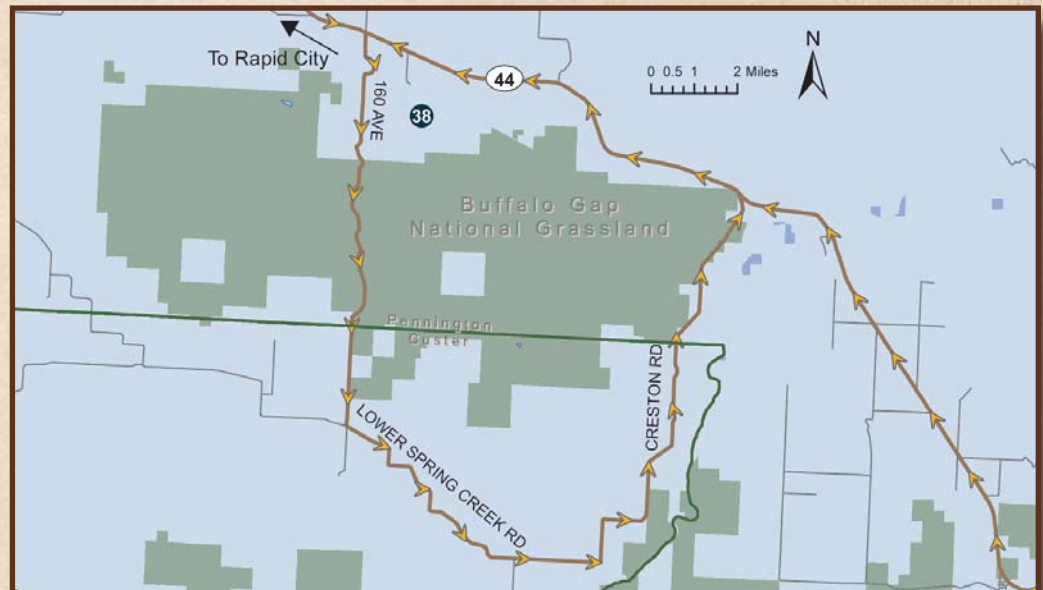
### BEST BIRDING MONTHS:

April through September.

### TIPS:

This driving loop allows one to periodically pull over and listen for birds. One may walk on the prairie in Buffalo Gap National Grassland (BGNG). Be careful to enter the national grassland only onto public land, as private land is intermingled. Do not trespass on private land.

On SD Highway 44 east of Rapid City: Go 1½ miles east of Farmingdale, turn south onto 160th Avenue. (Crossing at bridge over Rapid Creek is heavily wooded, private land, but good birding for arboreal species from the road.) After 3 miles, enter BGNG. Extensive public access in this area, but most roads are not passable when wet. Continue south on 160th Avenue, cross into Custer County. At 1.3 miles south



of the county line, SD School and Public Lands area begins on west side of road. This is 1 square mile of non-motorized access. Continue south, turn east at Y onto Lower Spring Creek Road. After 7½ miles, road becomes Creston Road. Two and a half miles farther, BGNG land is east of the road. Access is at barbed wire gate. Several trails lead down to the Cheyenne River. Creston Road continues north 7½ miles to intersect with Highway 44.

### CONTACTS:

Buffalo Gap National Grassland  
1801 Highway 18 Bypass, Hot Springs, SD 57747, (605) 745-4107

SD Office of School and Public Lands  
500 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501, (605) 773-3300



# BLACK HILLS, BADLANDS AND LAKES

## Bird Checklist

### Geese, Swans, and Ducks

- White-fronted Goose
- Snow Goose
- Ross's Goose
- Canada Goose \*
- Trumpeter Swan \*
- Wood Duck \*
- Gadwall\*
- American Wigeon \*
- Mallard \*
- Blue-winged Teal \*
- Cinnamon Teal \*r
- Northern Shoveler \*
- Northern Pintail \*
- Green-winged Teal \*
- Canvasback \*
- Redhead \*
- Ring-necked Duck
- Greater Scaup
- Lesser Scaup
- Bufflehead
- Common Goldeneye
- Barrow's Goldeneye
- Hooded Merganser
- Common Merganser \*
- Ruddy Duck \*
- Long-tailed Duck

### Grouse and Turkeys

- Gray Partridge \*
- Ring-necked Pheasant \*
- Ruffed Grouse \*
- Greater Sage-Grouse \*
- Sharp-tailed Grouse \*
- Wild Turkey \*

### Loons

- Pacific Loon
- Common Loon

### Grebes

- Pied-billed Grebe\*
- Horned Grebe
- Eared Grebe
- Western Grebe \*
- Clark's Grebe

### Pelicans and Cormorants

- American White Pelican \*
- Double-crested Cormorant \*

### Bitterns, Herons, and Ibises

- American Bittern \*
- Least Bittern \*
- Great Blue Heron \*
- Great Egret
- Snowy Egret \*
- Green Heron \*
- Black-crowned Night-Heron \*
- White-faced Ibis \*r

### Vultures

- Turkey Vulture \*

### Hawks, Kites, and Eagles

- Osprey \*
- Bald Eagle \*
- Northern Harrier \*
- Sharp-shinned Hawk \*
- Cooper's Hawk \*
- Northern Goshawk \*
- Broad-winged Hawk \*
- Swainson's Hawk \*
- Red-tailed Hawk \*
- Ferruginous Hawk \*
- Rough-legged Hawk
- Golden Eagle \*

### Falcons

- Gyrfalcon
- Peregrine Falcon
- Prairie Falcon \*
- American Kestrel \*
- Merlin \*

### Rails

- Virginia Rail \*
- Sora \*
- American Coot \*

### Cranes

- Sandhill Crane
- Whooping Crane

### Plovers

- Black-bellied Plover
- Semipalmated Plover
- Killdeer \*

### Sandpipers

- Black-necked Stilt \*r
- American Avocet \*
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Willet \*
- Spotted Sandpiper \*
- Upland Sandpiper \*
- Whimbrel
- Long-billed Curlew \*
- Hudsonian Godwit
- Marbled Godwit \*
- Ruddy Turnstone
- Sanderling
- Semipalmated Sandpiper
- Western Sandpiper
- Least Sandpiper
- White-rumped Sandpiper
- Baird's Sandpiper
- Pectoral Sandpiper
- Stilt Sandpiper
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper
- Short-billed Dowitcher
- Long-billed Dowitcher
- Wilson's Snipe \*
- Wilson's Phalarope \*
- Red-necked Phalarope

### Gulls and Terns

- Franklin's Gull
- Bonaparte's Gull
- Ring-billed Gull
- California Gull \*
- Herring Gull
- Glaucous Gull
- Sabine's Gull
- Caspian Tern
- Common Tern
- Forster's Tern \*
- Black Tern \*

### Doves

- Rock Pigeon \*
- Eurasian Collared-Dove \*
- Mourning Dove \*

### Cuckoos

- Black-billed Cuckoo \*
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo \*

### Owls

- Barn Owl \*
- Eastern Screech-Owl \*
- Great Horned Owl \*
- Snowy Owl
- Burrowing Owl \*
- Long-eared Owl \*
- Short-eared Owl \*
- Northern Saw-whet Owl \*

### Goatsuckers

- Common Nighthawk \*
- Common Poorwill \*

### Swifts

- Chimney Swift \*
- White-throated Swift \*

### Hummingbirds

- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- Calliope Hummingbird
- Broad-tailed Hummingbird\*
- Rufous Hummingbird

### Kingfishers

- Belted Kingfisher\*

### Woodpeckers

- Lewis's Woodpecker \*
- Red-headed Woodpecker \*
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Red-naped Sapsucker \*
- Downy Woodpecker \*
- Hairy Woodpecker \*
- American Three-toed Woodpecker \*
- Black-backed Woodpecker \*
- Northern Flicker \*

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## Flycatchers

- Olive-sided Flycatcher
- Western Wood-Pewee \*
- Willow Flycatcher \*
- Least Flycatcher \*
- Dusky Flycatcher \*
- Cordilleran Flycatcher \*
- Eastern Phoebe \*
- Say's Phoebe \*
- Great Crested Flycatcher \*
- Cassin's Kingbird \*
- Western Kingbird \*
- Eastern Kingbird \*

## Shrikes

- Loggerhead Shrike \*
- Northern Shrike

## Vireos

- Bell's Vireo \*
- Plumbeous Vireo \*
- Blue-headed Vireo
- Warbling Vireo \*
- Red-eyed Vireo \*
- White-eyed Vireo

## Jays and Crows

- Gray Jay \*
- Blue Jay \*
- Pinyon Jay \*
- Clark's Nutcracker \*
- Black-billed Magpie \*
- American Crow \*

## Larks

- Horned Lark \*

## Swallows

- Tree Swallow\*
- Violet-green Swallow \*
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow \*
- Bank Swallow \*
- Cliff Swallow \*
- Barn Swallow \*

## Chickadees, Nuthatches, and Creepers

- Black-capped Chickadee \*

- Red-breasted Nuthatch \*
- White-breasted Nuthatch \*
- Pygmy Nuthatch \*
- Brown Creeper \*

## Wrens

- Rock Wren \*
- Canyon Wren \*
- House Wren \*
- Pacific Wren \*r
- Winter Wren
- Marsh Wren \*

## Dippers

- American Dipper \*

## Kinglets, Gnatcatchers

- Golden-crowned Kinglet \*
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet \*
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher\*

## Thrushes

- Eastern Bluebird \*
- Mountain Bluebird \*
- Townsend's Solitaire \*
- Veery \*
- Gray-cheeked Thrush
- Swainson's Thrush \*
- Hermit Thrush
- American Robin \*
- Varied Thrush

## Mimids

- Gray Catbird \*
- Northern Mockingbird
- Sage Thrasher \*
- Brown Thrasher \*

## Starlings, Pipits

- European Starling \*
- American Pipit
- Sprague's Pipit \*

## Waxwings

- Bohemian Waxwing
- Cedar Waxwing \*

## Wood Warblers

- Golden-winged Warbler

- Tennessee Warbler
- Orange-crowned Warbler
- Virginia's Warbler \*
- Northern Parula
- Yellow Warbler \*
- Chestnut-sided Warbler \*r
- Magnolia Warbler
- Yellow-rumped Warbler \*
- Townsend's Warbler
- Palm Warbler
- Blackpoll Warbler
- Black-and-white Warbler \*
- American Redstart \*
- Ovenbird \*
- Northern Waterthrush
- MacGillivray's Warbler \*
- Common Yellowthroat \*
- Hooded Warbler
- Wilson's Warbler
- Yellow-breasted Chat \*

## Tanagers

- Summer Tanager
- Scarlet Tanager
- Western Tanager \*

## Towhees

- Green-tailed Towhee
- Spotted Towhee \*

## Sparrows

- Cassin's Sparrow \*r
- American Tree Sparrow
- Chipping Sparrow \*
- Clay-colored Sparrow
- Brewer's Sparrow \*
- Field Sparrow \*
- Vesper Sparrow \*
- Lark Sparrow \*
- Lark Bunting \*
- Savannah Sparrow \*
- Grasshopper Sparrow \*
- Baird's Sparrow \*
- Fox Sparrow
- Song Sparrow \*
- Lincoln's Sparrow
- White-throated Sparrow
- Harris's Sparrow
- White-crowned Sparrow

- Dark-eyed Junco \*
- McCown's Longspur
- Lapland Longspur
- Chestnut-collared Longspur \*
- Snow Bunting

## Grosbeaks and Buntings

- Rose-breasted Grosbeak \*
- Black-headed Grosbeak \*
- Blue Grosbeak \*
- Lazuli Bunting \*
- Indigo Bunting \*
- Dickcissel \*

## Blackbirds

- Bobolink \*
- Red-winged Blackbird \*
- Eastern Meadowlark \*
- Western Meadowlark \*
- Yellow-headed Blackbird \*
- Rusty Blackbird
- Brewer's Blackbird \*
- Common Grackle \*
- Brown-headed Cowbird \*

## Orioles

- Orchard Oriole \*
- Bullock's Oriole \*
- Baltimore Oriole

## Finches

- Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch
- Pine Grosbeak
- Purple Finch
- Cassin's Finch \*
- House Finch \*
- Red Crossbill \*
- White-winged Crossbill
- Common Redpoll
- Pine Siskin \*
- Lesser Goldfinch\*
- American Goldfinch \*
- Evening Grosbeak
- House Sparrow \*

{ \* denotes breeding, \*r denotes very rare breeder }



**BLACK HILLS, BADLANDS AND LAKES**  
*Bird Watching Journal*

[Faint pencil sketches of birds in flight, including a large bird with spread wings and a smaller bird below it.]

[Faint pencil sketches of birds, including a large bird in flight and a smaller bird below it.]

