

CACHE VALLEY VISITORS BUREAU

Cache Valley

BIRDING TRAILS:
A SELF-GUIDED TOUR



Photo by Mike Bullock

Welcome

Welcome to Cache Valley—a birder's paradise! Birding, or bird watching, is one of the fastest growing hobbies in North America. It is a great way to get in touch with nature and a rewarding activity for the entire family. Whether you're a novice or an experienced birder you will love northern Utah.

Cache Valley is host to over 270 species of birds and offers a wonderful variety of habitats to explore. This guide will direct you to 12 of the most accessible and enjoyable sites.

The following descriptions mention just a few of the bird species you might find at each site. Some species, such as the Black-capped Chickadee, may be found in almost any setting in any season. Other species, such as the beautiful Sandhill Crane, stop in farm fields during spring and fall migrations but are rare in other seasons and locations. Keep your eyes open as you travel between sites. Depending on the season, it's not unusual to see hawks, geese, White-faced Ibis or Sandhill Cranes in almost any farm field in the valley. The best viewing time is usually early morning. **Keep in mind that birds are capricious. A site may be teeming with birds one day and empty the next. There can even be a huge variance from hour to hour. Birding requires patience and perseverance but the rewards are worth the effort.**

Before heading out, there are three basic items that will make your trip more enjoyable: binoculars, a field guide and a blank notebook. All are available at various locations around the valley including the Visitors Bureau Gift Shop, 199 North Main Street, Logan. The Visitors

Bureau also sells *Birds of Cache County*, which is a complete list of species, habitats and seasonal distributions for this area.

Each site is coded for its best seasons:

Sp = Spring

S = Summer

F = Fall

W = Winter

Note: Directions to many of the sites in this brochure start at the Visitors Bureau. Pick up a free valley map there before starting your tour. Sites with the strongest family appeal are marked with this symbol:



Logan Canyon

First Dam Reservoir on the Logan River

Milepost 462.4; GPS N41° 44.570', W111° 47.300'
(Sp, S, W)



From Main Street in Logan, take 400 North (Hwy. 89) east toward Logan Canyon. Logan Canyon is a National Scenic Byway and one of the prettiest drives in Utah. As you descend the hill into the mouth of the canyon, turn right into Canyon Entrance Park. The reservoir is formed by the first of three dams on Logan River. In winter, flocks of Barrow's and Common Goldeneye ducks call this home. Bald Eagles may be seen overhead as they scan the reservoir for dead fish or a vulnerable duck. Check the shoreline carefully for the handsome Hooded Merganser. In warmer

months, look in the trees for Bullock's Orioles, Song Sparrows and Yellow Warblers. Kids will enjoy the flock of domestic ducks and geese that make their home here. The grassy lawn is an ideal place for picnics, volleyball and sunbathing.

Across the highway to the north and up a short paved drive is the entrance to Ray Hugie Park. Listen for Canyon Wrens on the steep cliffs and Townsend's Solitaires in the evergreens.

Tony Grove Lake and Campground

Milepost 480.8; GPS N41° 3.686', W111° 33.535'

(Late Sp, S) - NOTE: \$3 parking fee, cash or check only.

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A visit to Tony Grove can be a half-day or full-day trip. It's the gem of the Cache County high country. The *Guide to the Logan Canyon National Scenic Byway* brochure published by the Cache Valley Visitors Bureau is a good source for more information. To reach Tony Grove Lake, continue up Logan Canyon and turn left at the Tony Grove sign after mile marker 480. Follow the moderately steep, curvy road 7 miles to the parking area. There is a \$3 charge to park here. You will find great birding virtually everywhere! Red Crossbills, Mountain Bluebirds, Olive-sided Flycatchers, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Golden-crowned Kinglets use the treetops. Uncommon specialties like Northern Goshawk, Williamson's Sapsuckers and American Three-toed Woodpeckers may be found in mixed tree stands near the lake. Listen in the lakeside willows for Lincoln's and White-crowned Sparrows. In late June and early July, the wildflowers around the lake host many hummingbirds, including the tiny and rare Calliope. Non-birders will enjoy the lake, picnic areas, hiking trails and wildflowers.

Spring Hollow Campground

Milepost 465.5; GPS N41° 45.200', W111° 43.010'

(Sp, S, F)

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From First Dam (Site #1), continue up the canyon 4 miles to Spring Hollow Campground. At mile marker 465, take the next right and cross the bridge. You can park free in the lot on your right. This is the only free parking in the campground. From here, you can walk the Riverside Trail along the Logan River or take a stroll up the paved campground road into Spring Hollow. In the warm months, don't miss the hummingbird feeders adjacent to the campground host's trailer. They can be alive with Black-chinned, Broad-tailed and even Calliope Hummingbirds. Look for the rusty-red Rufous hummer from mid-July through August.

Spring Hollow is home to dozens of species including the beautiful yellow orange and black Western Tanager, Song Sparrows, Fox Sparrows and the always-singing Warbling Vireo. The tiny canary-like birds you may see nesting along the river are Yellow Warblers. Look for the American Dipper bobbing among the rocks at the water's edge. In cold months, listen for the scolding of Winter Wrens.

In The Valley

4

Willow Park

419 West 700 South, Logan; GPS N41° 43.130', W111° 50.820'
(Sp, S, F)

Zoo Admission: \$1, Children 12 and under 50 cents
(Subject to change)

Open: Seven days a week 9 a.m. - Dusk

Closed: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day



Take the whole family to Willow Park and the Willow Park Zoo. Parking is along 700 South at approximately 400 West. The park features several playgrounds shaded by enormous willow trees. The zoo has terrific exhibits of colorful native ducks, Sandhill Cranes, Trumpeter Swans and eagles, as well as exotic birds. In the spring, peacocks preen and fan their tail feathers in an impressive display. The zoo birds are not wild, but they are close, colorful and offer great photo opportunities. Don't miss the fish pond for both ducks and fish. Common Grackles nest here in the spring.

5

Logan River Golf Course Trail

GPS N41° 42.900', W111° 50.540'
(Sp, S, W)



From the Visitors Bureau, head south on Main Street (Hwy. 89/91) for 1.3 miles. Turn right on Golf Course Road just before Wendy's Restaurant. Drive .3 miles and (just prior to 300 West) and park on the street. This pleasant paved trail follows the Logan River southward. The trail can also be accessed from the south at Rendezvous

Park on Highway 89/91. From either entrance, enjoy the shade of the big Cottonwoods and view the golf course as you look for songbirds along the river. Watch for owls in the trees and listen for the croaking of Virginia Rails along the marshy edges of the fairways.

The next four sites can be thought of as the Great Loop Drive. It can be driven in reverse order if desired.

Logan River Wetlands

GPS Approximate N41° 43.876', W111° 52.800'
(Sp, F)

6

From the Visitors Bureau, head west on 200 North (Hwy. 30) for 2.2 miles. Turn left on 1900 West just past the landfill. After a few hundred yards, look for a gate and dirt road on the right. Two ponds can be scanned from the road. Read the sign at the gate before entering. There is a shallow playa pond behind the roadside ponds that is not visible from the road. Check this pond often in spring and fall, as it is the most accessible spot for shorebirds including Great Blue Herons, Dowitchers and Baird's, Western and Least Sandpipers. Enjoy the black-headed Franklin's Gulls, delicate Black-necked Stilts and a variety of ducks. In cold months, scout these ponds for Herring, Thayers and other visiting winter gulls.

Benson Marina

GPS N41° 47.240', W111° 57.125'
(Sp, S, W)

7



From Site #6, backtrack to Hwy. 30 and turn left. Continue west on Hwy. 30 for 1.7 miles. Turn right on 3200 West and drive 3 miles to 3000

North. Turn left (west) and proceed 2.2 miles to the Benson Marina and a bridge that spans Cutler Reservoir. North of the road on the east side of the bridge is a picnic area (with restrooms). From here you can view the reservoir for ducks and long-necked Clark's and Western Grebes. Canada Geese gather their young here and Barn Swallows fly near the bridge. Just west of the bridge, look for a small parking area on the south side. From here, walk along the shoreline on a trail that curves around to a defunct railroad bridge. As you walk the bridge, keep your eyes open for Osprey and Black-crowned Night Herons. If you see groups of dark colored birds with a long curved bill you may have spotted the White-faced Ibis. With a North American population of roughly 150,000, it is relatively rare. Significant numbers of this bird nest in northern Utah. Listen closely and you might hear the haunting calls of Long-billed Curlew from nearby fields or the eerie sound of the Common Loon from the reservoir. In winter, Tree Sparrows and Northern Shrikes inhabit the weeds along the trail.

8

The Oxbow

GPS N41° 48.130', W111° 55.620'
(Sp, S, F, W if not frozen)

From Site 7, backtrack east 1.1 miles on 3000 North to 4000 West. Turn left and drive 1.3 miles. Check the fields and marshes as you continue north for possible sightings of pheasants, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, ducks and herons. When the road crosses the Bear River and jogs to the east it becomes 3800 West. Shortly after passing the intersection of 3800 North look for a small parking area on your left. Signage denotes this area as the Lower Bear River Overlook. From

here you have a great view of an oxbow along the Bear River. Look for shorebirds, ducks, American White Pelicans, egrets and gulls on the river. In nearby fields, look for geese, gulls, shorebirds, hawks and Sandhill Cranes in season. During the spring this is a popular nesting area and depending on when you visit, you may see birds on the nest, birds tending a nest or adults tending to their young. Morning light is best for viewing.

Fantastic Avian Farm Fields

GPS for intersection at Darrell's Appliance – N41° 47.700',
W111° 53.470'
(Sp, F, W)

9

From Site 8, head back to the south for .2 miles to 3800 North. Turn left and follow this road for 1.6 miles as it heads east crossing the Bear River and angles south. You are now on 2900 West. You will pass a church on your left just before the stop sign at the 3400 North intersection. Turn left and drive .7 miles. Slow down when you notice Darrell's Appliance store on your right. **Be very cautious. The main road jogs to the right but you continue straight. The oncoming traffic from your right has the right-of-way.** Continue east on this unmarked dead-end road. Drive slowly and scan the fields and fence posts. During the spring when there is standing water look for White-Faced Ibis, Wilson's Snipe, Sandhill Cranes, shorebirds and ducks. In fall and winter, you'll enjoy many hawks, maybe a Shrike or two and have a good chance to see Short-eared Owls. This entire area can be good for open-country species and the farming vistas are always a pleasure. The road dead-ends at the airport so you will have a chance to check things again on the way back. The intersection is even more tricky

from this direction. Make a sharp left (almost a U-turn) and head back to the east. Traffic can be hard to see and everyone but you has the right-of-way so proceed with caution. Once you are on the main road (Airport Road/2500 North) and heading east, follow it approximately 3.3 miles until you reach the traffic light at North Main Street/Hwy. 91. Turn right to head back to Logan.

Out Along The Edges

beautiful blue Lazuli Buntings. In spring, look for Black-throated Gray, Virginia's and Orange-crowned Warblers. Farther up the canyon, listen for Ruffed Grouse, Hammond's Flycatchers and Hermit Thrush. At dusk in summer, you might hear Great Horned Owls and Common Poorwill. There is a pleasant picnic area on the right just a short way into the canyon.

Mack Park

50 North and 300 East, Smithfield;
GPS N41° 50.340', W111° 49.400'
(Sp, S, W)

11

10

Green Canyon, King Nature Park, Bonneville Shoreline Trail

GPS Approximate N41° 46.070', W111° 46.600'
(Sp, S, F, W)



Head north on Main Street (Hwy 91). Just past K-Mart, turn right at 1800 North. As you continue eastward make a jog north at 1000 East and then back east on 1900 North. Continue until you reach the mouth of Green Canyon. There is a small parking lot on your left past the power station with access to King Nature Park. The short park trail is a nice walk through a bit of Pinyon-Juniper forest. Look across the road for the Bonneville Shoreline Trail sign. This trail heads southward along the east bench and can be birdy, with everything from soaring Golden Eagles to singing Lark Sparrows.

To access Green Canyon itself, continue east onto the U.S. Forest Service road. We recommend walking the trail that begins at the parking area on the right. In winter, you can snowshoe or ski up the road beyond the closed gate. Green Canyon birds include Western Tanagers, Chukars and



Smithfield's Mack Park is small but an oasis for birds and a fun family site. From the Visitors Bureau in Logan, head north on Main Street (Hwy. 91) for 6.8 miles. When you reach Center Street in Smithfield, turn right. Proceed east for 3 blocks and turn left on 300 East. At the next stop sign (corner of 50 North and 300 East), you will see the park. There is parking to your left on 50 North and directly ahead on Canyon Road. A grove of spruce trees provides summer shade and there are picnic and playground facilities. In winter, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Townsend's Solitaires and sometimes White-breasted Nuthatches use this area. Exotics like the Varied Thrush and Blue Jay seem to favor the park area when they are in town. Mack Park is at the mouth of Smithfield Canyon, which is a beautiful area worth exploring if you extend your tour by continuing up Canyon Road.

Sherwood HillsGPS N41° 35.100', W111° 58.540'
(Sp, early F)

Sherwood Hills Resort is great for migrant songbirds. Head south out of the valley on Hwy. 89/91 toward Brigham City. Once in the mountains look for a golf course on the right and then the entrance to the resort 13.9 miles from the Visitors Bureau. Park in the upper lot. You are birding with permission on private property so be discrete, don't disturb guests and avoid the golf course and cart trails. Heading uphill into the forest brings you to the U.S. Forest Wilderness boundary. Birding up these short trails in mid-August to mid-September can be a warbler migration delight, with the chance to see Nashvilles, Townsends, Wilsons, McGillivrays and Black-throated Grey warblers. Returning to the hotel area, head for the lawns downhill between the main buildings. If you sit quietly near the man-made waterfalls, you can enjoy the birds as they fly in to bathe and drink.

Top off your morning or afternoon by stopping at the Sherwood Hills restaurant. You can get a cup of coffee or a great meal and watch birds from a window near your table.

Additional Birding Information

Other Birding Areas

Keep in mind that birds know no boundaries and are not confined to the sites mentioned here. Be observant as you travel between sites and you may find unexpected bonuses. Farm fields, fence

posts, power lines, fence rows and urban trees all provide habitat for our feathered friends.

Bridgerland Audubon Society

The Bridgerland Audubon Society is one of Utah's most active chapters. They conduct frequent field trips throughout the year. The trips are free and non-members are welcome. If you would like to go on an outing with a group of knowledgeable birders, schedules and descriptions can be found at www.bridgerlandaudubon.org or call the Cache Valley Visitors Bureau (1-435-755-1890) for contact information.

Binocular Basics

Binoculars are a vital tool for good birding but their descriptions (8X32, 7X35, 10X40, etc.) can be confusing. The first number is the magnification and the second number is the diameter of the objective lens in millimeters. You will almost always get a sharper, brighter view with binoculars that have a greater ratio between the magnification and the objective lens size. For example, 8X42 will give a brighter, sharper image than 8X32 or 10X42. Don't buy too much magnification. A 7X or 8X power binocular is about right for birding. Higher-powered binoculars give a narrower field of vision, a dimmer view and are harder to hold steady. Zoom binoculars are generally inferior and not recommended.

If you become serious about birding, buy a good set of binoculars. The old adage that you get what you pay for is particularly true when it comes to optics. If you want advice on buying binoculars for birding, ask a serious birder. Hikers, hunters and other sportsmen have different needs.

Birding Etiquette

Don't let your eagerness to see Cache Valley birds get in the way of basic birding etiquette. These guidelines are provided by the National Audubon Association.

- In order to find birds you will be encroaching on their territory, so tread lightly and respect boundaries.
- Silence is golden. The keen senses of birds alert them to your presence, often long before you have a chance to see them. Whether alone or in a group, walk as quietly as possible and whisper. Take cues from the leader who might signal for quiet as the group approaches a bird. Quiet walks will also help when listening for bird calls.
- Take extra care when in a potential or active nesting area. It is hard enough for birds to compete with each other for mates and space; human interference causes additional stress. It could even cause the birds to abandon their nest. If a bird is altering its behavior due to your presence, you're too close.
- Do not trespass. Some bird sanctuaries are located on private land whose owners may not enjoy strangers with binoculars trekking around their backyard. Make sure you have permission to bird beforehand.
- Don't be a peeping Tom! Avoid pointing binoculars at other people or their homes.
- While some birders prefer solitude, others bird in groups and enjoy sharing their findings. If you are new to birding, don't be shy; there is sure to be a more knowledgeable birder around willing to pass on tips and sightings.
- And most important, enjoy yourself! Don't be too concerned about finding that rare bird or

spotting more species. Birding is meant to be informative and fun.

Cache Valley Visitors Bureau Gift Shop

This brochure is provided by the Cache Valley Visitors Bureau. Their office can provide a wealth of additional material to enrich your visit. Stop by and peruse the brochure rack for topics of interest. The staff will be glad to answer any questions.

The adjoining gift shop is a great resource and not only for souvenirs. You will find an extensive selection of field guides about popular topics such as birding, wildflowers, geology, hiking, biking, canoeing and rock climbing. Some of these are designed particularly for children and can help develop an early interest in nature and the great outdoors. *Animal Tracks* and *Bugs & Slugs* are continuing favorites. If you don't see what you want, be sure to ask.

Special Thanks

We extend a special thank you to Sue Drown for her invaluable contributions to this guide. Thanks also to Bridgerland Audubon and the local birding community.



Photo by Mike Bullock

Cache Valley Visitors Bureau

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www.tourcachevalley.com



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