

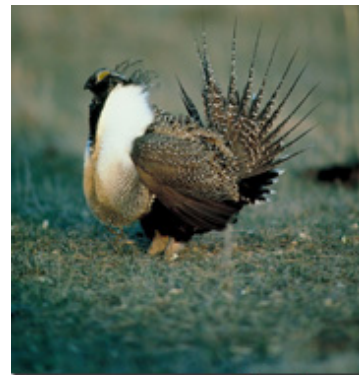
## CUSTER COUNTRY SOUTHEASTERN MONTANA BIRDING TRAIL

1. Roundup River Walk Heritage Trail
2. Lake Mason National Wildlife Refuge
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## ABOUT THE SAGE GROUSE

In Southeastern Montana's Custer Country, thousands of acres of big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) serve as habitat for the stunning sage grouse. In the early spring, sage grouse males exhibit an elaborate drumming dance, strutting and displaying their plumage. Their long pointed tails open up to a large fan, and they inflate the air sacs in their neck and chest - all to attract and impress a mate. The sage grouse have traditional dancing grounds located on patches of short grass surrounded by sagebrush. This sensitive dancing ground is termed a "lek." Learn more about the sage grouse by visiting the Audubon Society website [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).



Sage Grouse

## ROUNDUP RIVER WALK HERITAGE TRAIL

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** The trail follows the Musselshell River Valley in cottonwood-dominated river bottomland with an optional upland path into ponderosa pine and juniper-dominated sandstone rims above the river. The upland path is the traditional hike to the Roundup “R.” An annual bird walk is hosted in the early morning on the 4th of July. The annual Audubon Musselshell Valley Christmas Bird Count (CBC) includes the trail loop.



*Yellow-breasted chat*

**HABITAT:** The river bottom is dominated by cottonwood and green ash. The sandstone rims are dominated by ponderosa pine, chokecherry, and juniper.

**SPECIES:** Over 80 bird species are present in the spring and summer including nesting Great horned owl; Yellow-breasted chat; Lazuli bunting; Yellow, Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, and MacGillivray’s warbler; Belted kingfisher; and Yellow-headed, Red-winged, and Brewer’s blackbird. Blue jays and Ferruginous hawks overwinter in the Cowbelles Camp Ground.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** Year-round.

**FACILITIES:** The trail is marked by kiosks in the parking area at the end of Main Street and at the Cowbelles Campground.

**CONTACT:** For information on the annual bird walk and the annual Audubon Musselshell Valley CBC, call 406-323-3544

**DIRECTIONS:** Turn south at the flashing yellow light at the junction of Main Street and US Hwy 12/87 in Roundup and follow the signs to the River Walk Heritage Trail at the south end of Main Street.

From here, try a nice side trip to Lake Mason.

**HABITAT:** Lakeshore, emergent marsh, big sagebrush, and mixed grass prairie.

**SPECIES:** Abundant waterfowl are present in years with sufficient rainfall. Burrowing owls reside on the site in spring/summer. Lapland longspur, Snow bunting, and Horned lark are present in the winter. Sage grouse may be present in the prairie habitat of the Refuge where sagebrush is abundant.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take Main Street/US Hwy 12/87 north. Turn west at Roundup Memorial Health Care and take Golf Course Road west approximately 6.5 miles. Turn north at the wildlife viewing sign and drive to the Refuge boundary. The Refuge has walk-in access only.

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### **REHBERG RANCH ESTATES BILLINGS CITY PARK**

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Nearly 50 acres of dedicated natural parkland, the site is unique in its proximity to a major urban area and its surprisingly remote natural environment. The habitat attracts uncommon species such as the Lesser goldfinch and the Plumbeous warbler, as well as the frequently seen meadowlark and robin.



*Ring-necked pheasant*

**HABITAT:** Year-round springs and dripping water, deep ravines, ponderosa pine and prairie grasslands.

**SPECIES:** Lesser finch and Plumbeous warbler, Turkey vulture, Canada geese, Mallard, Golden and Bald eagle. A variety of hawks include Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawk; Northern goshawk, American kestrel, Prairie falcon, Mourning dove, Eastern and Great horned owl and the Common nighthawk. A flock of Wild turkeys is frequently seen in the park, as well as bluebirds and a variety of woodpeckers, swallows, wrens, chickadees, flycatchers, shrike, vireos, and warblers.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** Primarily spring and summer, though many species stay year-round.

**FACILITIES:** The city park is located in a new residential subdivision. Parking is available at the mail station. Other commercial facilities, including lodging, shopping, restaurants and camping facilities are located within 10 to 15 minutes of the Ranch.

**CONTACT:** Rehberg Ranch – 406-245-3441

**DIRECTIONS:** Rehberg Ranch Estates is located on top of the rimrocks in Billings just west of Logan International Airport. From the airport, travel west 2 miles on Montana Highway 3 and turn north/right onto Rod and Gun Club Road. From the west end of Billings take Zimmerman Trail to Highway 3 and head east ½ mile and turn north/left onto Rod and Gun Club Road. Drive north and turn left into the Rehberg Ranch subdivision. Follow Iron Horse

Trail around the first curve to a parking area at the log mail station on the right side of the road. A natural walking path leads down to Pa Hollow, one of the favorite bird viewing points on the Ranch.

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### **LAKE ELMO STATE PARK**

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Visitors can enjoy all the pleasures of a natural setting without leaving the city. Open year-round, Lake Elmo State Park offers an abundance of recreational opportunities including swimming, fishing, non-motorized boating, hiking, bird watching, and more.

**HABITAT:** Deciduous woods and shrubs, man-made reservoir, urban park.

**SPECIES:** Lark, House, and Chipping sparrow; American robin; Rousouf-sided and Spotted towhee; Red-winged blackbird; Western tanager; American goldfinch; Yellow warbler; Bullock's oriole; Black-capped chickadee; Black-billed magpie; American crow; Lazuli bunting; Bald eagle; Rock and Mourning dove; Northern "Yellow-shafted" flicker; Common and Yellow-billed loon; Eared, Western, and Horned grebe; Mallard; Say's phoebe; Blue jay; Belted kingfisher.



*Bald eagle*

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** Morning and evening, year-round.

**FACILITIES:** Parking, restroom, covered pavilion, paved trail, picnic area, public programs with lodging, campgrounds, grocery, restaurants, and fuel nearby.

**CONTACT:** Park Manager – 406-247-2955

**DIRECTIONS:** In Billings, follow Main Street (US Hwy 87) north past Metra Park to Pemberton Lane, then .5 mile west.

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## PICTOGRAPH CAVE STATE PARK

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Pictograph Cave State Park offers easy access and is well marked. It is adjacent to Billings—Montana’s largest city. Prehistoric hunters camped in Pictograph Cave over 10,000 years ago, leaving behind 30,000 artifacts and over 100 pictographs. One of the most extensive archaeological excavations ever undertaken in Montana took place between 1937 and 1941. The Park has interpretation and facilities that offer a well-rounded experience for bird watchers.



*Meadowlark*

**HABITAT:** Mixed woods, shrub/scrub, sagebrush/grassland, short-grass prairie.

**SPECIES:** Rock, House, and Canyon wren; Pine siskin; Lark, House, and Chipping sparrow; American robin; Rufous-sided and Spotted towhee; Red-winged blackbird; Western tanager; Western meadowlark; Mountain and Western bluebird; Yellow-breasted chat; Yellow warbler; Bullock’s oriole; Western wood peewee; Western and Eastern kingbird; Black-capped chickadee; Black-billed magpie; American crow; Lark and Lazuli bunting; Bald and Golden eagle; American kestrel; American and Lesser goldfinch; Prairie and Peregrine falcon; Rock and Mourning dove; Cliff swallow; White-throated swift; Turkey vulture; Wild turkey; Ring-necked pheasant; Northern “Yellow-shafted” flicker.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** Morning and evening, year-round.

**FACILITIES:** Parking, restrooms, paved trail, picnic area, interpretive materials, guided tours, and public programs. Lodging, campgrounds, grocery, restaurants, and fuel nearby.

**CONTACT:** Park Manager – 406-247-2955 or Park Naturalist – 406-245-0227

**DIRECTIONS:** On I-90, exit at Lockwood/Roundup exit, turn south onto Colburn Road and travel approximately 6 miles to park.

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## CHIEF PLENTY COUPS STATE PARK

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Chief Plenty Coups gave his log home and farmstead “to all cultures as a place for all peoples to come together in a peaceful and cooperative nature.” The Chief’s two-story log cabin, a modern interpretive center, and “Crow Lifeways Trail” are available for visitors’ enjoyment and education.

**HABITAT:** Mixed woods, shrub/scrub, sagebrush/grassland, short grass prairie.



*Golden eagle*

**SPECIES:** Black-capped chickadee; Lark, House, and Chipping sparrow; American robin; Ruffed-grouse and Spotted towhee; Red-winged blackbird; Western tanager; Western meadowlark; Mountain and Western bluebird; Yellow-breasted chat; Yellow warbler; Bullock’s oriole; Western wood-peewee; Black-billed magpie; American crow; Lazuli bunting; Golden eagle; American kestrel; American and Lesser goldfinch; Prairie falcon; Rock and Mourning dove; Ring-necked pheasant; Northern “Yellow-shafted” flicker; and Mallard.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** Morning and evening, year-round.

**FACILITIES:** Parking, restrooms, interpretive trail, picnic area, guided and self-guided tours, and public programs; restaurant and fuel nearby.

**CONTACT:** Park Manager – 406-252-1289

**DIRECTIONS:** On I-90 take Exit 447 at Billings and travel 35 miles south to Pryor and then 1 mile west.

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## POMPEYS PILLAR NATIONAL MONUMENT

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Pompeys Pillar National Monument and the surrounding area supports a remarkable diversity of bird species including many neo-tropical migratory species that use the riparian corridor for nesting or resting cover during migration. Peregrine falcons have historically occupied rocky cliff habitat near Pompeys Pillar, and in 1996, 21 peregrines were released east of the Pillar. The Monument is open daily to drive-in traffic from April 30 through October 28. An entrance fee is charged. All valid federal recreation passes are honored at the National Monument and there is no separate fee for access to the interpretive center. Although no services are available after October, visitors may still walk into the site during daylight hours. The walk from the gates to the Pillar is about 3/4 mile.



*Sandhill crane*

**HABITAT:** Cottonwood, green ash and willow tree species dominate along this braided, prairie river. Many standing cottonwood trees within the flood plain are estimated to be more than 100 years old.

**SPECIES:** Ferruginous hawk, Loggerhead shrike, Franklin's gull, Forster's tern, Northern goshawk and Peregrine falcon are all on the BLM's sensitive species list. Others species include American white pelican, Double-crested cormorant, Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Spotted sandpiper, Belted kingfisher, Hairy woodpecker, Western wood peewee, Tree and Cliff swallow, Blue jay, White-breasted nuthatch, House wren, Brown thrasher, Yellow-rumped warbler, Common yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted chat, Spotted towhee, Bullock's oriole, American goldfinch, Gray catbird, Black-headed grosbeak, Lazuli bunting and Bald eagle.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** May through October

**FACILITIES:** The site has an interpretive center, restrooms, and picnic tables. An approximately 1,000-foot long, 200-step boardwalk leads up the pillar to Clark's signature and continues to the top of the mesa. The interpretive center, restrooms, parking lot, and day use area are fully accessible. Pets must be on a leash at all times except in the pet exercise area. No overnight camping is allowed.

**CONTACT:** Pompeys Pillar National Monument Interpretive Center – 406-875-2400, or Bureau of Land Management, Billings Field Office, 5001 Southgate Drive Billings, MT 59101 – 406-896-5013

**DIRECTIONS:** Located 25 miles east of Billings on the south bank of the Yellowstone River. The site is accessible from Interstate 94 via exit 23. The site can also be accessed from Montana Highway 312.

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### **HOWREY ISLAND RECREATION AREA AND NATURE TRAIL**

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Howrey Island consists of approximately 321 BLM-administered acres and is in the floodplain of the Yellowstone River. This is a “Pack In, Pack Out” area and all garbage must be removed. Some road sections may be closed due to high river flows or to protect habitat. The entire area is open to walk-in visitation, regardless of conditions. Overnight camping is permitted. No fireworks are allowed. Be mindful of seasonal and area fire restrictions.



*White pelican*

**HABITAT:** Native grasses, forbs and shrubs. Cottonwood, green ash and willow trees. Forest canopy and meadows.

**SPECIES:** American white pelican, Double-crested cormorant, Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Spotted sandpiper, Belted kingfisher, Hairy woodpecker, Western wood peewee, Tree and Barn swallow, Blue jay, Black-capped chickadee, White-breasted nuthatch, House wren, Brown thrasher, Yellow-rumped warbler, Common yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted chat, Spotted towhee, Bullock’s oriole, American goldfinch, Gray catbird, Cedar waxwing, Black-headed grosbeak, Lazuli bunting, and Bald eagle.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** May through October.

**FACILITIES:** Restrooms, picnic tables, fire pits, interpretive kiosk, boat ramp and a 1.3-mile nature trail are on-site. No dumpsters—all garbage must be removed.

**CONTACT:** Bureau of Land Management, Miles City Field Office, 111 Garryowen Road, Miles City, MT 59301. Call 406-233-2800

**DIRECTIONS:** Off Highway 311, 6 miles southwest of Hysham, located along the Yellowstone River.

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## PIROGUE ISLAND STATE PARK

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Pirogue Island State Park is located along the north bank of the Yellowstone River in the northern great plains of extreme eastern Montana. Due to the site's location, birds typically associated with a more eastern range are frequently observed at this locale during spring and fall migrations. Examples include Indigo bunting, Rose-breasted grosbeak and Green heron along with various mid-continent warblers. Woodland and wetland/riparian birds can be found along the river and side channel as well as grassland/meadow birds.



*Wood duck*

**HABITAT:** Cottonwood and Russian Olive riparian areas, gravel and sandbars along the Yellowstone River together with narrow, stream-like side channels and grassland meadow.

**SPECIES:** American white pelican, Red-tailed hawk, Bald eagle, Turkey vulture, American kestrel, Wild turkey, Mourning dove, Eastern screech owl, Belted kingfisher, Northern flicker, Eastern and Western kingbirds, Blue jay, Eastern bluebird, House wren, Gray catbird, Brown thrasher, American redstart, Yellow warbler, Yellow-breasted chat.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** May through September.

**FACILITIES:** Interpretive trail, latrine, benches, picnic area.

**CONTACT:** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, P.O. Box 1630, Miles City, MT 59301. Call 406-234-0900

**DIRECTIONS:** Drive 1 mile north of Miles City on Montana Highway 59 (I-94 Exit 138), then 2 miles east on Kinsey Road (Highway #489), then 2 miles southeast at Pirogue Island State Park Sign.

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## MATTHEWS RECREATION AREA

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Access Matthews Recreation Area by gravel road. Launch canoes or kayaks on the Yellowstone River, but no improved boat launch facilities are present. Fishing, bird watching, and wildlife viewing are frequent activities. Overnight camping is permitted. This is a “Pack In, Pack Out” area and all garbage must be removed. No fireworks are allowed. Be mindful of seasonal and area fire restrictions.

**HABITAT:** Cottonwood, green ash, and willow trees are prominent near the riverbank flanked by open grassy meadows. A seasonal irrigation canal loops through the area.



*Great horned owl*

**SPECIES:** American white pelican, Double-crested cormorant, Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Spotted sandpiper, Belted kingfisher, Downy woodpecker, Western wood peewee, Barn swallow, Blue jay, Black-capped chickadee, White-breasted nuthatch, House wren, Brown thrasher, Common yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted chat, Spotted towhee, Bullock’s oriole, Gray catbird, Cedar waxwing, Black-headed grosbeak, Lazuli bunting and American goldfinch. Raptor species include: Bald eagle, Cooper’s hawk, American kestrel, Red-tailed hawk, Great horned owl and Osprey.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** May through October.

**FACILITIES:** Restrooms, picnic tables, fire pits, standing grills, covered picnic area, interpretive kiosk, handicap-accessible fishing platform and cement walking path. No dumpsters—all garbage must be removed.

**CONTACT:** Bureau of Land Management, Miles City Field Office, 111 Garryowen Road, Miles City, MT 59301. Call 406-233-2800

**DIRECTIONS:** At Miles City take I-94 exit 141 north approximately 1 mile to Valley Drive, then northeast 9 miles.

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## TERRY BADLANDS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** The Terry Badlands Wilderness Study Area has a triangular shape, measuring about 10 miles wide at the base adjacent to the Yellowstone River and 8 miles long from the river to the area's northwest corner. The badlands exhibit soft marine and non-marine sedimentary rock which has been eroded by eons of wind and water into arches, bridges, flat tabletops, pinnacles, spires and scoria escarpments. Landforms reach up to 2,900 feet in elevation in some areas.



*Burrowing owl*

**HABITAT:** Coulee bottoms and higher benches feature dense mats of short-grass prairie blue gamma, needle grass, and wheat grass. Ponderosa pine and juniper adorn higher benches. A rare eastern-occurring stand of limber pine grows on 800 acres of rimrock in the northern edge of the wilderness study area.

**SPECIES:** Downy and Hairy woodpecker, Cliff swallow, Blue jay, Steller's jay, Mountain bluebird, Black-capped chickadee, White-breasted nuthatch, Common yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted chat, Spotted towhee, American goldfinch and Lark Sparrow. Raptor species include: Bald and Golden eagle, Prairie falcon, Cooper's hawk, American kestrel, Red-tailed hawk, Turkey vulture, Burrowing owl, Long-eared owl and Great horned owl. Sage and Sharptail grouse inhabit the lower elevation grass and sagebrush flats.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** May through October.

**FACILITIES:** Overnight camping is allowed; no facilities provided. Roads are unimproved and impassable when wet. This is a "Pack In, Pack Out" area and all garbage must be removed. Be mindful of seasonal and area fire restrictions. Nearest medical help is in Terry.

**CONTACT:** Bureau of Land Management, Miles City Field Office, 111 Garryowen Road, Miles City, MT 59301. Call 406-233-2800

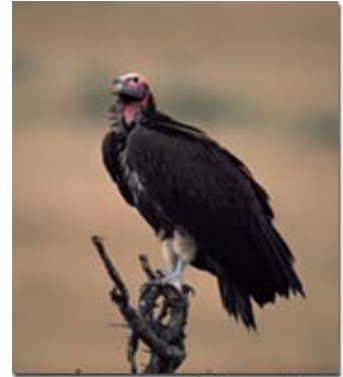
**DIRECTIONS:** Take the Terry exit off I-94 for 3 miles. Follow "The Big Sky Backcountry Byway" Highway 235 to the Terry Scenic Overview road sign on your left, and follow the westbound dirt road.

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## MAKOSHKA STATE PARK

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Bird lists for Makoshika State Park indicate 200+ bird species having been observed in the park, either as permanent residents or as transient and migratory species. During a 3-day 1982 terrestrial wildlife resource evaluation, 60 species of birds were observed, ranging from riparian to badlands habitat species. Of those, 16 species were identified as species of special interest or concern.

**HABITAT:** 11,531 acres of badlands – habitat types include dissected sedimentary plains; bare, exposed clay, shale and sandstone outcrops; grassland mesas; forested hillsides on northern exposures; and lower coulees with seasonal water.



*Turkey vulture*

**SPECIES:** The most significant is the Turkey vulture. Other species include the Mountain bluebird, Northern flicker, Western meadowlark, Horned lark, Rock wren, and numerous sparrow species. Birds of prey include American kestrel, Merlin, Prairie falcon, Red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, Northern harrier, Great horned owl, Short-eared owl, Swainson's hawk, Rough-legged hawk, Ferruginous hawk, and Golden and Bald eagle.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** May through August

**FACILITIES:** Interpretive center, gift shop, restrooms, group use facilities, amphitheater, camping, hiking trails, special events and activities.

**CONTACT:** Makoshika State Park, 1301 Snyder Avenue, P.O. Box 1242, Glendive, MT 59330. Call 406-377-6256      [www.makoshika.org](http://www.makoshika.org)

**DIRECTIONS:** From I-94 Exit 215, head south on Merrill Avenue and turn left under the railroad underpass. Proceed to Taylor, then turn right to Snyder Avenue; turn left on Snyder Avenue to the park.

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## MEDICINE ROCKS STATE PARK

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Medicine Rocks State Park consists of large sandstone buttes rising above rolling prairie, tall lush grass and wildflowers in early spring. The sandstone rocks are a result of sediment from an ancient stream bed and now are pockmarked by erosion. Early-day Native Americans came to practice “Big Medicine” in this place they thought hauntingly beautiful and considered to be sacred – hence the name Medicine Rocks. During the 1800s, Theodore Roosevelt camped, carved his name on a rock, and wrote in his journal, “altogether it was as fantastically beautiful a place as I have ever seen.”



*Killdeer*

**HABITAT:** Sandstone cliffs with extensive rock cavities, buttes, ponderosa pine, and rolling mixed grass prairie with tall grass prairie remnants.

**SPECIES:** Western meadowlark, Sage and Sharptail grouse, Rock wren, Killdeer, Golden and Bald eagle, Mountain bluebird, Song sparrow, American robin, Red-tailed hawk, Great horned owl, Downy woodpecker, and Red-winged blackbird.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** Spring, summer, and fall during migration.

**FACILITIES:** Camp sites, excellent water from well at entrance, picnic tables, camp stoves, outdoor toilets.

**CONTACT:** Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1420 Sixth Avenue, Helena, Mt. 59620

**DIRECTIONS:** Off State Highway 7, 25 miles south of Baker and 10 miles north of Ekalaka. Turn-off is clearly marked and park is very close to the road.

### McNab Pond

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** This pond is located in a pristine scenic area surrounded on two sides by pine trees and hills, and on the other sides by deciduous trees and berry bushes.

**HABITAT:** Water, ponderosa pine, chokecherry, big sage, tall grasses, and deciduous trees.

**SPECIES:** Mallard, Canada geese, Eared grebe, Western meadowlark, Mountain bluebird, Long-billed wren, Killdeer, American robin, Burrowing and Great horned owl, Lark and White-crowned sparrow, Red-tailed hawk, Golden and Bald eagle, Sage grouse, Merriam's turkey, Downy woodpecker, Long-billed curlew, Black-capped chickadee, and Western tanager.

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** May through September

**FACILITIES:** Campsites, fire rings, public restrooms, trout fishing.

**CONTACT:** U. S. Forest Service, P.O. Box 37, Camp Crook, SD 57724. Call 605-797-4432

**Directions:** In Ekalaka Hills, take Montana Highway 323 and go 8 miles southeast of Ekalaka, turn left at Prairie Dale Road and take the first left on gravel road. Drive approximately 1 mile to the pond. Gravel roads may be impassable when wet.

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### **BLACK'S POND**

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** This area was originally Black's Sawmill Pond. In 1989, cooperative efforts between the Forest Service and Ducks Unlimited resulted in construction of a dam and a resultant increase in the size of the pond. This area is along the Black's Pond Watchable Wildlife Route.

**HABITAT:** Man-made pond, beaver ponds, green ash woodland draws, ponderosa pine forest, burned forest, shrub/scrub, grassland, and sagebrush.

**SPECIES:** Common yellow throat, Yellow-rumped, and Yellow warbler, Red-eyed and Warbling vireo, Rufous-sided towhee, House wren, Brown thrasher, Hermit thrush, Swainson's thrush, Lazuli bunting, Red-winged blackbird, Marsh wren, Tree and Rough-winged swallow, Great blue heron, Gadwall, Mallard, and Merriam's turkey.



*Great blue heron*

**BEST VIEWING SEASON:** Mornings and evenings from mid-May to mid-June and early September through October.

**FACILITIES:** Parking, picnic area, outhouse, camping.

**CONTACT:** Ashland Ranger District – 406-784-2344

**DIRECTIONS:** On US Hwy 212, travel to Otter Creek Road (County Road 484, 5 miles east of Ashland, turn south and go 20 miles to Cow Creek Road (Forest Road 4095). Turn right/west and travel 6.5 miles to Forest Road 4131. Go right/north on this road for 3 miles, then continue on Stocker Branch Road (Forest Road 4021) to Black's Pond.

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