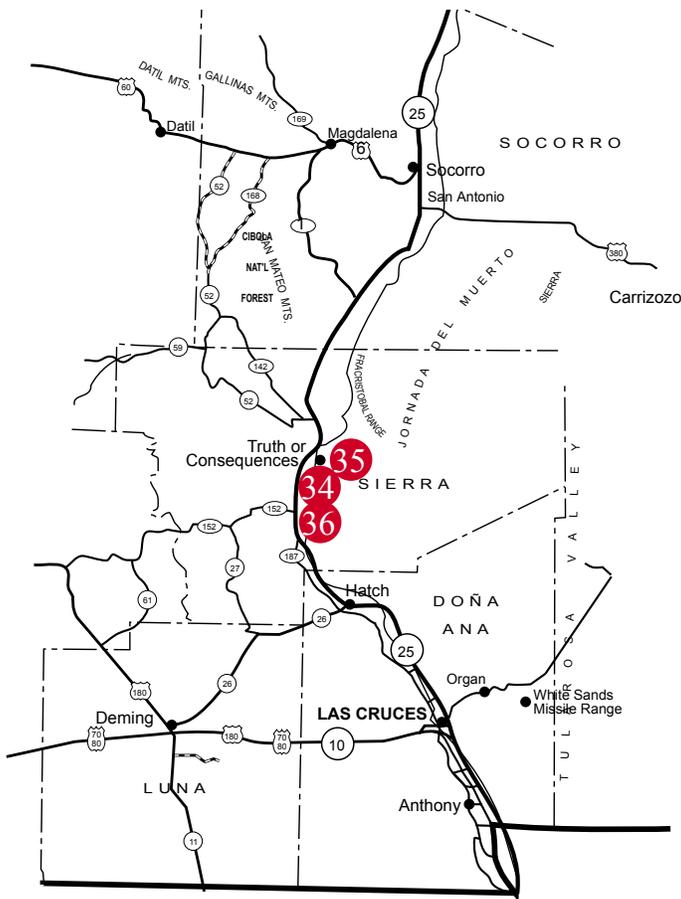




Southwest New Mexico Birding Trail



that follows the river, passing beside a thick cottonwood bosque. This area is excellent for birds in all seasons. Watch the river for ducks, shorebirds and kingfishers; the bosque for passerines, hawks, owls and woodpeckers. Sparrows are abundant in the scrub and mesquite. Check the woodland directly north of the fee station and canal. You can access it by the road leaving the park through a gate or by the foot bridge across the canal. In this small woodland there are commonly flycatchers, woodpeckers and numerous warblers during migration. Accipiters and falcons often seek the smaller birds here. Note: In spring and summer, bring your mosquito repellent.

Habitat: Cultivated grass, dry scrub, riparian woodland.

Directions: Take I-25 Exit 59 for Caballo Dam and Arrey. Upon exiting, turn south on State Highway 85 and proceed about 1 mile to a left turn at the south side of an abandoned baseball diamond. Proceed east on this good gravel road, which traverses cultivated fields. These fields are commonly good for sparrows and raptors, especially in winter. After about .75 mile the gravel road turns right and traverses creosote scrub habitat that is good for desert birds. The left side of this road varies from dry scrub and grass to a cattail marsh. Percha Dam State Park lies across a canal.

Site 34 - Percha Dam State Park

New Mexico State Parks (575) 743-3942



Located north of Hatch, where some riparian woodlands remain along the Rio Grande, the 11,000 acre park (elevation 4,100 feet) is one of the best places to watch birds in the state, especially excellent in migration. The central, developed area of the park is a relatively manicured, open bosque of cottonwoods with picnic tables and campsites. When not heavily occupied, this area is good for Phainopepla, woodpeckers, flycatchers and vireos. Flanking the east side of the park along the river is a thick growth of willow and cottonwood that boasts some of the best warbler watching in the valley during spring and fall migrations. You can park anywhere along the river edge of the park and walk along this riparian corridor. At the south end of the park near the river is a fence with a narrow gap. For about a half mile, there is a trail

Site 35- Caballo Lake State Park and Caballo Dam

New Mexico State Parks (575) 743-3942



Caballo Lake State Park (5,326 acres) is located on Caballo Reservoir, a shallow lake about 12 miles south of Elephant Butte Reservoir along the Rio Grande. The lake, at an elevation of 4,100 feet, covers 11,500 acres of surface area and is about 25 feet at its deepest point. It provides excellent winter viewing of grebes, raptors, geese and ducks, quail, gulls, doves, owls, woodpeckers, phoebes, wrens, thrushes, thrashers, sparrows, and finches. The Caballo Christmas Bird Count (which includes



Southwest New Mexico Birding Trail

Percha Dam and Animas Creek) usually has the highest number of species in New Mexico. Just below Caballo, the Rio Grande looks the way it did 100 years ago. It's one of the best examples of riparian woodland left in the state.

Habitat: Narrow, quiet reservoir, flanked by bare, dun-colored mountains with screw-bean mesquite. Desert scrub and riparian woodland.

Directions: About 16 miles south of Truth or Consequences on I-25, take Exit 59. Turn onto NM 187 and follow signs to Caballo Lake State Park on left, less than 2 miles. The west shore of Caballo Lake has a paved road and two well-developed campgrounds for day or overnight use.

Site 36 - Las Palomas Marsh

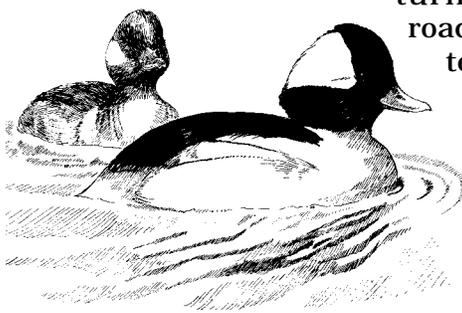
Bureau of Land Management 575 525-4300

No services

Las Palomas Marsh, a cow pasture when Caballo Lake is low and a marsh when the lake is high, is a 40-acre livestock enclosure located south of Truth or Consequences. When marshy, it offers good shore and marsh birding. Desert scrub species and winter sparrows are numerous. The cottonwoods at the south end may be productive in migration. You may walk to the Rio Grande from here.

Habitat: Mix of mesquite scrub and marshy terrain with willows, cottonwoods and grasses.

Directions: Take I-25 Exit 71 (Las Palomas). At the top of the off ramp, turn right and go to boulevard stop (0.7 mile) and turn left. Go 0.2 mile and turn right on gravel road. Go straight. After 0.8 mile you will cross a road. Bear slightly to your left and then back to the right to cross. You are there; the fenced enclosure is on your left.



Site 37 - Elephant Butte Lake State Park

New Mexico State Parks 575 744-5421



A prime area for waterbirds and shorebirds, Elephant Butte Lake is the largest lake in New Mexico and is best birded between September and May. A scope is essential. Depending upon water level, you may see American White Pelicans, thousands of Western and Clark's Grebes, several terns and unusual gulls.

Birding on land is best from Rock Canyon south, where tall scrub and houses with plants and feeders attract numerous species. The roads through desert scrub contain a variety of sparrows. Check any migrating Horned Lark flocks for longspurs.

Below the dam, Paseo del Rio Park is situated in a riparian canyon along the river. Because many miles of open desert and lake stretch to the north, this area is a migrant trap. From Paseo del Rio Park, continue north on the west side of Elephant Butte Lake on a paved road with side-roads leading toward the lake. Some of the better birding spots are the Dam Site Marina, Elephant Butte Resort Marina, Hot Springs Landing, Rock Canyon Marina (check the breakwater for gulls), Long Point, Three Sisters Point, South Monticello Point, and North Monticello Point (check for shorebirds, gulls, terns, waders, and ducks). Loons are more common at the southern end of the lake. All of these are worth checking, but if time is limited, Rock Canyon Marina and North Monticello Point are the best birding spots on the lake.

Note: Due to the current drought, the lake has shrunk to the point that North Montecello Point is no longer accessible.

Directions: State Park Headquarters is 5 miles north of Truth or Consequences on Exit 83 off I-25. Maps are available at Park Headquarters.