

Places to go Spring-Summer: April, May, June, July, August

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge

Turnbull is located about 4 miles South of Cheney WA. on Cheney Plaza Rd. (DeLorme, Washington Atlas & Gazetteer page 72, coordinates A-4). A wonderful location to view both migrating and breeding waterfowl. In the refuge there are varieties of habitats: wetland, aquatic and terrestrial types. There are many observation trails that are easily accessed from the parking lot. Also there is a short road loop for access to more of the refuge. Turnbull also has restricted areas that we should all respect by staying out. These restricted areas are clearly posted. Look for the signs.

During breeding season for waterfowl this area can offer great opportunity for observing a large number of species. Some waterfowl use this area for stopover during fall and spring migration.

Kamiak Butte County Park

Overview:

Kamiak Butte County Park is one of the few wooded areas of Whitman County surrounded by an expanse of wheatfields. With its cover of dense coniferous forest on the north and open forest and grassland on the south, it is an island of unique habitat. The 298-acre park provides some of the best birding opportunities in southeastern Washington. With its hiking trails and picnic/camping facilities, it is a welcome retreat for birders and hikers.

How to Get There: (DeLorme, Washington Atlas & Gazetteer, page 57 coordinates B-7)

From Pullman Wa.

1. Go north on Grand Avenue (State Highway 27) toward Palouse for 12 miles. On the left there is a road and a sign directing you to Kamiak Butte County Park.
2. Turn left and go due west for 1 mile where you will come to the entrance to the park.
3. Turn left onto the park entrance road and continue for 0.7 mile where you will come to the lower parking lot and picnic area.

From Palouse WA

1. Go South on State Highway 27 toward Pullman for about 3 miles. On the right there is a road and a sign directing you to Kamiak Butte County Park.
2. Turn right and go due west for 1 mile where you will come to the entrance to the park.
3. Turn left onto the park entrance road and continue for 0.7 mile where you will come to the lower parking lot and picnic area.

What to Look For:

Birding in the park can be divided into several sections. You can choose which section(s) you wish to cover depending upon the time you have and/or your level of hiking ability. These sections are identified as:

- 1) picnic and campground area.
- 2) top of ridge and return (about 1 mile round-trip).

3) the Pine Ridge Trail (a loop of about 3 miles).

Before you start out, study the park map near the restrooms. The following directions are keyed to trails shown on the map.

Picnic and Campground Area:

Check the trees in the picnic area for warblers, woodpeckers, and nuthatches. Next, walk the road to the upper parking lot. In the brush on either side of the road, you may find warblers, wrens, flycatchers, Rufous-sided Towhees, and perhaps even a Gray Catbird. From the upper parking lot, continue straight ahead to the trail with a gate across it marked "No Vehicles." This takes you through the "walk-in" campground. Along this trail you should find chickadees, wrens, and nuthatches. Continue westwardly to the intersection with the cross-country ski trail. Keep going straight ahead (westward) to an opening from which you may scan the brushy/wooded hillside to the west. Black-headed Grosbeaks and Rufous-sided Towhees are often seen here. Also from here you have a panoramic view of the Palouse Hills and Steptoe Butte to the north. Next follow the ski trail in a northeasterly direction back to the picnic area. Along this trail in spring and summer there should be wrens, woodpeckers, Rufous-sided Towhees, and Black Headed Grosbeaks.

Top of Ridge and Return:

If you have limited time but want to check the ridge and get a panoramic view of the Palouse in about an hour or so, you can take the short round trip. Take the Pine Ridge Trail from the southwestern corner of the lower parking lot and head uphill. In the summer you can usually hear and perhaps see Western Wood Peewees in the conifers. You should also see Dark-eyed Juncos along this trail. Near the top if you look carefully in the tops of the conifers, you may spot Western Tanagers and Red Crossbills. Once on top of the ridge, take a short path in the southwestern direction to a bench where you can rest, relax, and drink in the panoramic view. Also from here you may spot Rufous-sided Towhees, sparrows, and other passerines in the brush and grass of the hillside. Also check for hawks over the fields.

If you still have time, take the trail in an easterly direction and look for bluebirds and wrens. This is a very pleasant walk in the spring and early summer. Return to the picnic area by the same trail you came up.

Pine Ridge Loop Trail:

Start at the southwestern corner of the parking lot and hike to the top of the ridge as described in the "Top of Ridge and Return" section. After absorbing the view at the top of the ridge, head west along the Pine Ridge Trail toward the summit of Kamiak Butte. Along these open woods you may see soaring hawks or American Kestrels. You should also see flickers, Black-billed Magpies, Common Ravens, and perhaps Red Crossbills. As you near the summit, check all the old snags for wrens and nuthatches (White, Red-breasted, and Pygmy).

Further up the trail is a branch: the left branch leads to the summit. It is only about one-tenth of a mile to the top, but it is steep. The right branch continues the loop back down the hill to the parking lots. Keep on the lookout for Cooper's Hawks in the forested areas. Also, in the winter, owls often roost in the park.

Wawawai and Steptoe Canyons

Overview:

The upper end of Wawawai Canyon attracts a number of migratory species in late spring and summer, and the lower end may have wrens, goldfinches, California Quail, geese, ducks, Song Sparrows and White-crowned Sparrows a good part of the year. Also Red-tailed Hawks, Robins, and Black-billed Magpies may be seen at any place along the canyon at any time of the year. It is best to bird the canyon early in the morning when the birds are most active and the canyon traffic is light.

How to Get There and What to Look For:

(Pullman location, DeLorme, Washington Atlas & Gazetteer page 57 coordinates C-7. Wawawai location, page 57 coordinates C-5) Start at the Pullman City Library, corner of Olsen Street and North Grand Avenue. Head west on highway 270 (Davis Way) for 0.6 mile and turn left onto the Pullman-Wawawai Road. At about 2.3 miles from the starting point, cross U.S. 195 (be careful--this is a dangerous intersection!) and continue westerly and then southerly on the Pullman-Wawawai Road. At about 12 miles from the starting point, the Pullman-Wawawai Road intersects with Wawawai Grade Road. Turn right and proceed down the canyon.

Go about another half-mile where there is a very good parking area on the right. Park there and check for birds in the brush and trees in the deepest part of the canyon. In the summer, you may find Lazuli Bunting, Rufous-sided Towhee, Black-headed Grosbeak, Gray Catbird, Black-capped Chickadee, American Goldfinch, House Wren, Yellow Warbler, Say's Phoebe, Willow Flycatcher, and Yellow Breasted Chat. In the larger trees and on the hillsides, check for Northern Oriole, Northern Flicker, and Eastern and Western Kingbirds.

After checking the upper part of the canyon, continue on downhill and keep your eye open for California Quail and Rough Winged Swallows. After about 2 more miles (before crossing the south-to-north side of the canyon), look for Bank Swallow on the opposite (north) bank. There is usually a large colony of these swallows in the light-colored Mazama ash deposit about 30 to 40 feet above the canyon bottom.

Continue on down the Wawawai grade and turn into Wawawai County Park. You may find Bewicks Wren and Song Sparrow in the thickets of blackberry bushes and reeds. Scan the trees and hillsides for Cedar Waxwing, finches, Western Meadowlark, and Mourning Dove. Also, one often finds ducks, geese, grebes, and Great Blue Herons on and around the pond at the park and on the Snake River.

If you still want to do more birding, follow the road along the river for about 16 miles until you come to Steptoe Canyon. Travel up that canyon checking for hawks, Great Horned Owl, sparrows, and most of the other birds seen in Wawawai Canyon. In winter you may also find Bald and Golden Eagles. You will eventually come to Colton and U.S. 195, about 12 miles south of Pullman. Turn left onto U.S. 195 and return to Pullman.
