

A GUIDE TO BIRDING BY CAR IN MESA COUNTY



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



GRAND VALLEY



AUDUBON

ALSO IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



GRAND MESA
UNCOMPAHGRE NATIONAL FOREST



BLM GRAND JUNCTION FIELD
OFFICE



COLORADO NATIONAL MONUMENT



COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE

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INTRODUCTION

Mesa County, Colorado is a wonderful place to birdwatch. It is the 4th largest county in Colorado ranging from high elevation mesas to the riparian areas of the Colorado and Gunnison rivers. Over 200 bird species live and breed in its many diverse habitats. This brochure describes a variety of places to “bird by car” for those who cannot use Mesa County’s many trails. Federal and State partners along with local birders provided suggestions of places that have pull-offs with a high probability of seeing birds. Enjoy the landscapes and birdlife of our amazing county.

LEGEND:

SEASONS:



Winter



Spring



Summer



Fall

HABITAT:



Pinyon Juniper



Riparian



Desert



Aspen Conifer



Farm Land

ROAD CONDITIONS:



Paved



Winding



Dirt



Difficult

ACCESSIBILITY:



Restrooms




Parking




Trail

COLORADO NATIONAL MONUMENT

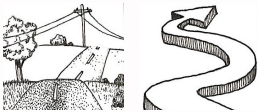
SEASONS




HABITAT




ROAD CONDITIONS



ACCESSIBILITY





There is a fee to enter the Monument. Late Fall to early Spring, it is recommended to check road conditions.

COMMON BIRDS

- Along canyon walls: Peregrine Falcon, Red-Tailed Hawk, Turkey Vulture (April-October) and Canyon Wren
- In Pinyon/Juniper Woodlands: Pinyon Jay, Scrub Jay, White-Throated Swift, Hummingbirds (May- September), Juniper Titmouse and Western Blue Bird

NOTES ON THE AREA

- The monument has two entrances. These directions start at the West (Fruita) Entrance and should be used along with the monument brochure available at the entrance.
- Rim Rock Drive is 23 miles long, and has about 20 pull-outs with interpretive signage. The road has an 1,800 foot elevation gain, several tight switchbacks, and steep drop-offs. Not all of the pull-outs have accessible paths to the overlooks, however, most provide excellent viewing from the car. The pullouts included here are the best for bird viewing, although at a few it will be difficult to see over the rim from the vehicle. They are listed for those who can view beyond their car.


MILE MARKERS

From West Entrance (Fruita Entrance)


2.0	Tunnels	7.1	Monument Canyon View (not accessible) but good viewing of canyons from car.
4.0 - 4.1	Saddlehorn Campground Loop Road: excellent views of the canyons from vehicle Visitor Center: Information, books, accessible Alcove Nature Trail and flush restrooms	10.6	Liberty Cap Trailhead
		10.9-18.6	Glade Park road
5.4	Independence Monument View (accessible) Use west side of parking areas for viewing the canyon from your car	19.0	Cold Shivers Point (accessible) no viewing from car, but accessible path and views of the canyon are excellent.
		20.0	Tunnels
		22.1	Devils Kitchen Picnic Area - accessible flush restrooms
5.9	Grand View (not accessible) but good viewing of canyons from car	23.0	East (Grand Junction) Entrance

HIGHLINE LAKE STATE PARK

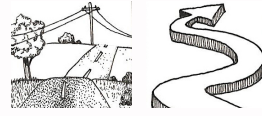
SEASONS




HABITAT



ROAD CONDITIONS



ACCESSIBILITY



fyi

A Colorado State Park Pass is needed to enter the park. There are two areas for this state park. Use the directions in the brochure for Mack Mesa Lake.

COMMON BIRDS

- **Summer:** Osprey, Nesting Cooper's Hawk, Northern Harriers, Kestrels, Loggerhead Shrikes, Bullock's Orioles
- **Fall and Winter:** Canada geese, Mallard, Pintail Greenwing, Bluewing and Cinnamon Teal, Gadwall, Canvasback, Northern Shovelers, Buffleheads, Goldeneyes, Bald Eagles
- **Spring:** Sandhill Cranes, American Avocets, White Faced Ibis, Godwits

NOTES ON THE AREA

The Lake is closed to boating from September 30th to March 1st, although those dates may change due to weather conditions. This is the best time to bird the Park, because the summer season has a high number of power boat users and human activity around the lake.

Waterfowl and small game hunting is permitted Monday through Friday during the appropriate hunting season/s.

PARK AREAS

Directions: Take Exit 15 off Interstate 70 and follow the brown State Park Signs along the way. Signs are provided for both the main entrance to the Park as well as Mack Mesa Lake.

Bookcliff Campground

Park visitors must have a valid Campground Reservation and Park Pass to use the campground.

Visitor Center and Boat Ramp

The area has a large paved parking area that allows viewing of the lake and the marsh area to the east. The visitor center has additional information about the park and birds.

Day Use Area

A large grassy area for picnicking beside the lake is shaded by large cottonwood trees. Several parking areas are provided that will provide viewing from a car.

Mack Mesa Lake

Mack Mesa Lake is a separate area of the park. This area is located on the west side of the park, and has a separate entrance

- 0.0** Entrance off R Road
- 0.4** Picnic Area is beside the lake. (Accessible) The fishing dock's path is accessible but the running grade of the ramp might be too steep for some.
- 0.6** Watchable Wildlife Overlook and viewing area
- 1.0** Nature Study Area - driving loop above the lake, accessible restroom in same area, picnic sites with shelter
- 1.5** Picnic site (not-accessible) best viewing from car

HORSETHIEF CANYON STATE WILDLIFE AREA

SEASONS



ROAD CONDITIONS



HABITAT



ACCESSIBILITY



There are no services within the site. There is only one accessible restroom and no other accessible features.

COMMON BIRDS

- Migrating waterfowl, Turkey, Raptors, Wading birds, Migrating Warblers, Songbirds
- There are often wintering flocks of sparrows, such as White-crowned, Song, Lincoln

NOTES ON THE AREA

- The Horsethief Canyon Wildlife Area is south and west of Fruita and marked with signs for its turn off from Highway 340. This is the highway used for the west entrance to the Colorado National Monument.
- The Wildlife Area is managed by the Colorado State Parks and Wildlife. Adjacent to the wildlife area is the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (NCA), which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.
- Several parking areas along the road in McInnis Canyon NCA have restrooms. This wildlife area is active during hunting seasons.

MILE MARKERS

- 0.0** Entrance off Highway 340
- 1.3** Paved road turns to dirt
- 3.0** Pull-off on right (north) to overlook area above river
- 3.3** Pull-off for river viewing
- 3.7** Interpretive area with accessible restroom
- 4.0** Road to right (north) to small pond and Colorado River. There are gates at turnaround that could be CLOSED during Nesting Bird Season (March 15 – July 15). NO ACCESS OF ANY KIND IS ALLOWED.
- 4.9** Turnaround and a road may continue to other ponds. Gates may be CLOSED during the Bird Nesting Season WITH ONLY FOOT TRAFFIC ALLOWED.

RESOURCES

Colorado State Parks and Wildlife
970-255-6100

Bureau of Land Management
970-244-3000

LAND'S END ROAD

SEASONS



ROAD CONDITIONS



HABITAT



NO ACCESSIBILITY



Land's End Road has no cell phone services. It is often closed from mid-fall to late spring. Call US Forest Service for road conditions.

COMMON BIRDS

- **Lower Elevation:** Juniper Titmouse, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Mountain Chickadee, Chipping Sparrow, Mountain Bluebird, Northern Flicker.
- **Upper Elevation:** Scrub Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Orange-crowned Warbler, Spotted and Green-tailed Towhee, Warbling Vireo, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Steller's Jay

NOTES ON THE AREA

- This is a challenging graded dirt road on the west side of the Grand Mesa but the view is amazing and it takes the user through several habitats for birding. The road is steep, curvy and does not have guard rails.
- There is an elevation gain of about 5,800 ft in 41 miles. Road sign states "No Maintenance 10/15 – 6/1" but may be extended depending on the snow depth of the previous winter. Cell coverage is very limited. The lower section is closed to motorized use from December 1st to May 1st to provide for wintering wildlife by the BLM.

MILE MARKERS

From Highway 50 (West of Whitewater)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>0.0 Turn off Highway 50 (Between MP 45 and 46) to Kannah Creek Road</p> <p>2.8 Junction of Land's End Road and Kannah Creek Road</p> <p>9.1 U. S. Forest Service boundary cattle guard. This is the only designated pull-off by the USFS, but there are wide areas along the road that should provide safe pull-offs.</p> <p>15.6 Wild Rose Picnic Area</p> | <p>15.8 Gate is closed if snow remains at high elevations</p> <p>18.0 Land's End Observatory was built 1936-37. The road was built by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and finished in 1934</p> <p>30.0 Highway 65 (paved)</p> |
|--|---|


US FOREST SERVICE

970-242-8211

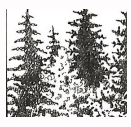
Please call for road conditions

GRAND MESA

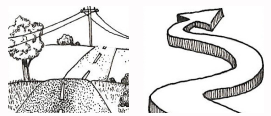
SEASONS




HABITAT



ROAD CONDITIONS



ACCESSIBILITY



fyi

Limited cell phone service. Often closed from mid-Fall to late Spring due to weather or avalanche conditions.

COMMON BIRDS

- Fox and Lincoln's Sparrows, woodpeckers, owls and water fowl in the mountain lakes

NOTES ON THE AREA

- The Grand Mesa is the world's largest flat-top mesa with an elevation of up to 11,000 feet and is about 500 sq. miles in size.
- Mileage begins from the Grand Mesa exhibit area on highway 65 just off from I-70 at Exit 49.

MILE MARKERS

Mileage begins from the Grand Mesa exhibit area on Highway 65 just off from I-70 at Exit 49.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 0.0 Grand Mesa Exhibit Area, Scenic Way | 28.3 Skyway Point View Parking Area |
| 9.8 Turn off to Collbran and Vega State Park | 28.6 Skyway Parking and Accessible Restrooms |
| 19.0 Powerhorn Ski Area (private property) | 29.7 Land's End Road turn off |
| 20.5 Grand Mesa National Forest Boundary. Interpretive signs are provided, as well as parking. | 30.0 Mesa/Delta County Line with accessible parking, restroom and changing room |
| 21.5 Accessible Restrooms | 34.4 Grand Mesa Visitor Center - USFS, open late May to early October. |
| 24.4 Mesa Lakes Recreation Area | |

US FOREST SERVICE


970-242-8211

Please call for road conditions


PLATEAU VALLEY

OE ROAD (OFF HIGHWAY 330) TO ME 3/4 ROAD

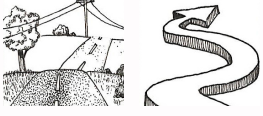
SEASONS




HABITAT



ROAD CONDITIONS



NO ACCESSIBILITY



This area has limited cell phone service and no services.

COMMON BIRDS

- Western Meadowlark, Mountain and Western Bluebirds, Western Kingbird, Green-tailed and Spotted Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow Warbler, Bobolinks

NOTES ON THE AREA

- It is important to follow the mileage given as road signs and mileage posts can be missing.
- The roads change from paved to graded dirt and back throughout this drive. The roads are Mesa County maintained through agriculture lands. Please pull off the roads for courtesy to the locals as well as others including agricultural equipment. There are no services or restrooms and limited cell coverage.


MILE MARKERS

Highway 65 begins at Exit 49 off from Interstate 70. The mileage begins at the Plateau Valley exhibit area, just off the Interstate.


- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>0.0 Plateau Valley interpretive signs and parking</p> <p>9.8 Highway 330-To Collbran and Vega State Park</p> <p>18.1 Turn onto OE Road (after mileage post 8 on Hwy. 330) Road turns to dirt</p> <p>19.2 Big Creek Bridge, Cottonwood Grove</p> | <p>19.9 Turn at Intersection with County Road 57 (No road sign) paved. Scan the miles of fences for birds.</p> <p>20.2 Eagalite Cemetery</p> <p>21.2 Intersection with ME ¾ Road. This road can be birded in either direction.</p> |
|--|--|

UNAWEEP SCENIC BYWAY

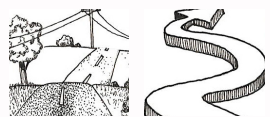
SEASONS




HABITAT



ROAD CONDITIONS



ACCESSIBILITY



fyi

There is little cell phone coverage and no services along this scenic byway.

COMMON BIRDS


- Mountain Bluebird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Meadowlark, American Kestrel, Spotted Towhee, Red-Tail Hawk, Lark Sparrow, Golden Eagle

NOTES ON THE AREA


- This section of the Byway is 40 miles long and has narrow shoulders but many safe pull-offs.
- The highway is open all year round (with the exception of the Divide Road) but the pull-offs may not be plowed in the winter months.

MP: 156

SEASONS



HABITAT



0.0 Junction of Highway 50 and 141

0.03 Whitewater ponds

Notes on the Area

- Possible sightings of a variety of waterfowl in the spring.
- A window mount with a scope or camera would be helpful.

MP: I50

HABITAT



1.7 East Creek Day Use Area

Notes on the Area

- Big Horn Sheep may be seen in this area.

MP: I39.8

SEASONS



HABITAT



ROAD CONDITIONS



14 Divide Road Turn Off (FS 402)

Notes on the Area

- The US Forest Service lists this as an important birding site that goes through sage parks, pine and aspen habitats.
- It is important to check road conditions for late or early snow.

MP: I36 - I30

SEASONS



HABITAT



18 - 24 Bob Wilson's Mountain Bluebird Trail

Notes on the Area

- Over 40 nest boxes are monitored and maintained by Audubon of Grand Valley.
- Turkeys and a large herd of elk are often seen in this area.

MP: 134.3

HABITAT



ROAD CONDITIONS



19.7 Unaweep Divide

Notes on the Area

- Unaweep is a Ute word meaning “canyon with two mouths”.
 - The east side drains to the Gunnison River and the west to the Dolores River. This is a unique geological feature.
-

MP: 119.8

HABITAT



ACCESSIBILITY



34.1 Unaweep Seep Viewing Area

Notes on the Area

- This is an Audubon Important Birding Area and a BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern.
 - Nokomis Fritillary Butterfly can be seen in this area.
-

MP: 117

HABITAT



ACCESSIBILITY



36.9 West Creek Picnic Area

MP: 114

ACCESSIBILITY



40 Town of Gateway

Notes on the Area

- Gateway General Store restrooms are open when the store is open. Please call 970-931-2876 for store hours.