



WHITE MOUNTAINS WILDLIFE TRAILS

Tips to increase your wildlife viewing success

Wildlife is everywhere. To begin to see more wildlife, focus on looking for it. All animals have specific needs that make them more likely seen in certain places. Learning about these needs and habits will make your viewing more rewarding. Following are some tips that, with the right combination of patience and know-how, will enable you to have experiences you won't soon forget.

When to look - Generally, more wildlife activity occurs in the first and last hours of daylight than at any other time of day. That's when you should be out, too. Choose the right season because some of Arizona's wildlife can be seen only at certain times of the year. Many birds migrate north or south in spring and fall.

How to look - You can best improve your chances of seeing wildlife by slowing down and moving quietly. Take time to sit and wait for wildlife to appear. Wildlife viewing requires patience. Moving noisily in the wild and talking even in a normal voice won't aid your cause. Be as unobtrusive as possible. Use all of your senses, including smelling and hearing.

The proper use of a good pair of binoculars can't be over-emphasized. Most looks at wildlife are from a distance. A good pair of binoculars or a spotting scope will open up a whole new world of wildlife viewing.

Where to look - Many wildlife species, especially deer and elk, spend time along the edges of differing types of habitat, such as where the forest meets a meadow. They seek the shelter of cover for protection, but they use habitat edges for forage or to seek prey. Learning about what a particular animal needs gives clues as to where you can find it. For instance, a black bear has different requirements than a tree squirrel for food, water, shelter and adequate space.

Learn to look for movement, shapes and color contrasts against the natural background. Motion is a giveaway that an animal is close by. Quite often, only a part of an animal, such as its head, ear, tail or antler, will be visible instead of its entire body. Finding signs or clues of wildlife, such as tracks, nests, rubbing spots, trails or gnawed wood, also indicate animals are in the area.

Learn to use field guides - Field guides can tell you what habitats an animal prefers, when it is active, what it eats and much more. Guides are available for nearly every kind of plant and animal in Arizona. Check guides to find out about the life history of wildlife.

Safety - Remember that some wildlife is dangerous. Arizona is home to rattlesnakes, mountain lions and black bears. Be aware that in certain areas these animals could be nearby and maintain a safe distance if you encounter them.

Make sure you come prepared. Many wildlife-viewing sites in Arizona are remote and have no facilities. Always carry water, even in the winter. Whether it is in the mountains or the middle of the desert, dress appropriately for the site you plan to visit.

Birds by Habitat

Spruce / Fir Forest
Mexican spotted owl, Clark's nutcracker, three-toed woodpecker, blue grouse, rufous hummingbird, olive warbler, golden-crowned kinglet, pine grosbeak, red-breasted nuthatch, olive-sided flycatcher, red crossbill, gray jay

Ponderosa Pine Forest
Northern goshawk, northern pygmy-owl, Cooper's hawk, Merriams turkey vulture, Steller's jay, acorn woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker, Lewis' woodpecker, northern flicker, band-tailed pigeon, broad-tailed hummingbird, American robin, western bluebird, dark-eyed junco, mountain chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, western tanager, red-faced warbler, Grace's warbler, yellow-rumped warbler

Pinyon Pine / Juniper Woodland
American kestrel, junco, towhee, Townsend's solitaire, mourning dove, northern mockingbird, loggerhead shrike, greater roadrunner, Say's phoebe, gray flycatcher, bush-tit, spotted towhee, pinyon jay, scrub jay, Brewer's sparrow, black-headed grosbeak

Grasslands
Prairie falcon, American kestrel, red-tailed hawk, northern harrier, golden eagle, horned lark, mountain bluebird, Cassin's kingbird, killdeer, lark sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, western meadowlark

Riparian Woodland
Yellow-breasted chat, yellow warbler, black phoebe, gray catbird, yellow-billed cuckoo, belted kingfisher, blue grosbeak, common yellowthroat, American dipper, southwestern willow flycatcher, MacGillivray's warbler

Open Water / Wetlands
Western grebe, Clark's grebe, eared grebe, Virginia rail, sora, black-crowned night-heron, green heron, great blue heron, white-faced ibis, spotted sandpiper, common snipe, American pipit, bald eagle, osprey, double-crested cormorant, violet-green swallow, yellow-headed blackbird, red-winged blackbird, cinnamon teal, common merganser, hooded merganser, ring-necked duck, gadwall, bufflehead, redhead, ruddy duck, northern shoveler, canvasback, mallard, Canada goose

Did you know?

Arizona's largest rodent, the **beaver** must chew wood each day or its teeth will grow so long it will be unable to eat, leading to starvation. A beaver is able to bring down a tree measuring 3 inches in diameter in just 10 minutes; however, it can't control the direction of the fall.

A **gray squirrel** can hide up to 25 nuts in half an hour; it can snore a nut buried beneath 12 inches of snow.

Contrary to popular belief, the **raccoon** does not wash everything it eats.

Thirty-thousand quills provide the **porcupine** with a unique means of defense. When confronted by a would-be attacker, the porcupine covers its face with its front feet and makes a loud chattering sound. If the attacker is persistent, the porcupine swats it with its 10-inch tail loaded with quills. Quills measure up to 4-inches in length and have barbed-like ends.

Woodpeckers have tongues specially adapted for catching insects; the tip is barbed and has a sticky surface. Woodpeckers also have skull adaptations that prevent headaches.

Learn To Look...
Watching wildlife is a lifelong experience. It can begin at any age, and everyone can participate.

Map Legend

- SITES & HIKES**
- 1 Fool Hollow Lake Recreation Area
 - 2 Pintail Lake (Allen Severson Wildlife Area)
 - 3 Jacques Marsh Wildlife Area
 - 4 Woodland Lake Park
 - 5 Concho Lake
 - 6 Lyman Lake State Park
 - 7 Wenima Wildlife Area
 - 8 Becker Lake Wildlife Area
 - 9 White Mountain Grasslands Wildlife Area
 - 10 Pole Knoll Recreation Area
 - 11 Greer
 - 12 South Fork of the Little Colorado River
 - 13 Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area
 - 14 Nelson Reservoir
 - 15 Luna Lake
- DRIVING LOOPS**
- 16 Greens Peak Loop
 - 17 Mount Baldy Loop
 - 18 Water Canyon - Big Lake Loop
 - 19 Escudilla Mountain - Terry Flat Loop
 - 20 Blue River Route
 - 21 Coronado Trail
 - 22 Wildcat Point Loop

SPECIES BY SITE

	Spruce - Fir Birds	Ponderosa Pine Birds	Pinyon - Juniper Birds	Grasslands Birds	Riparian Birds	Wetland Birds	Pronghorn Rangeland	Male Deer	Cowes White-tailed Deer	Elk	Rocky Mtn. Bighorn	Medium-sized Mammals	Small Mammals
1. Fool Hollow Lake													
2. Pintail Lake													
3. Jacques Marsh WL Area													
4. Woodland Lake Park													
5. Concho Lake													
6. Lyman Lake State Park													
7. Wenima Wildlife Area													
8. Becker Lake WL Area													
9. Grasslands WL Area													
10. Pole Knoll Rec. Area													
11. Greer													
12. South Fork													
13. Sipe Wildlife Area													
14. Nelson Reservoir													
15. Luna Lake													
16. Greens Peak Loop													
17. Mount Baldy Loop													
18. Water Canyon Loop													
19. Escudilla Mtn. Loop													
20. Blue River Route													
21. Coronado Trail													
22. Wildcat Point Loop													

Additional Resources

Arizona Game and Fish Department
azgfd.gov
Pinetop regional office (928) 367-4281
White Mountains wildlife areas open to public
Summer wildlife speaker programs at Pinetop office
Wildlife and birding festivals in Arizona

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
fs.fed.us/3/aznif
(928) 333-4301
Recreational information on camping and hiking
White Mountains birding checklist

White Mountain Audubon Society
whitemountainaudubon.org
Monthly meetings with speaker programs
Monthly field trips

Watchable Wildlife, Inc.
watchablewildlife.org
Wildlife viewing and nature appreciation

Arizona State Parks
azstateparks.com
(602) 542-4174 or (800) 285-3703
Individual park Web sites can be accessed through general Web site

Regional Chambers of Commerce
Alpine (928) 339-4330
Pinetop-Lakeside (928) 367-4290
Show Low (928) 537-2326
Snowflake (928) 536-4331
Springerville-Eagar (928) 333-2123
St. Johns (928) 337-2000

Area lodging, services and additional attractions

Arizona Office of Tourism
arizonaguide.com
(602) 364-3700



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WHITE MOUNTAINS WILDLIFE TRAILS



Explore Connect Reflect



White Mountains Wildlife Trails

Funding for this project was provided by the Arizona Game and Fish Department Heritage Fund.

Our Photo: Ek Bazoon - Jon & Maria Cornta
Scrub Jay - George Andriago
Bighorn Ewe - Randall D. Babl
Black-headed Grosbeak - Barbara L. Davis



azgfd.gov
Arizona Game and Fish Department
2221 W. Greonomy Road
Phoenix, AZ 85023
(602) 942-3000

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October 2005

SYMBOLS	
No Facilities	Drinking Water
Barrier-Free	Picnic Area
Restrooms	Hiking
Daily Use Fee	Camping

Observing these striped gophers will enable you to make the most of your time viewing wildlife — and that's where the fun begins. For further detailed photos and observation information, visit our website at www.azgfd.gov.

Respect the space of others who may be viewing the same wildlife. Please do not touch, feed, or otherwise disturb the animals. Observe animals from a distance. They consider you a predator. Observe animals from a distance. They consider you a predator.

When the animals' behavior is a guide, limit the time you spend with them. Many animals are shy and will flee if they feel threatened. Observe animals from a distance. They consider you a predator. Observe animals from a distance. They consider you a predator.

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1. Fool Hollow Lake Recreation Area

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, administered by Arizona State Parks (928) 537-3680

Walk campsite loops and look for megaransers and other diving ducks on the eastern arm of the lake. In winter, one can often see bald eagles perched on snags. On the west side of the lake, fishing jays are good places to spot spotting scopes to view both dabbling and diving ducks. In addition to a wide variety of waterfowl, other water birds here include double-crested cormorant, great blue heron, black-crowned night-heron, spotted sandpiper and long-billed dowitcher.

The upland areas offer rock wren, dark-eyed junco, pygmy and white-breasted nuthatch and several woodpecker species, like red-naped sapsucker and northern flicker. At the bluffs, look for belted kingfisher and black phoebe. During spring migration, check clusters of trees for migrating warblers, including Virginia's, red-faced and warbling vireo. Also watch for northern harrier, osprey, turkey vulture and American kestrel.

Free interpretive programs are available during summer months; inquire at the park entrance for dates, times and topics.

Habitat: Aquatic, wetland riparian, juniper woodland, bluffs
Seasons: All year. Birding is best during migration and winter.
Location: From downtown Show Low at the traffic light junction of Deuce of Clubs and Old Linden Road. Travel 2.5 miles northwest on Old Linden Road to the signed state park entrance. An alternative route is to take the signed turnout from State Highway 260 onto Old Linden Road on the west side of Show Low and travel a half-mile to the park entrance.
Access: 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Roads are paved. The day-use fee is waived at times in winter during low season.
Near: Show Low

2. Pintail Lake (Allen Severson Wildlife Area)

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Lakeside Ranger District (928) 368-5111

The city of Show Low, cooperating with the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests and Arizona Game and Fish Department, became the first Arizona community to create artificial wetlands for disposal of wastewater effluent. The marshes here treat and purify wastewater, resulting in eye-pleasing wetlands.

The wetlands offer an array of water birds, including waterfowl such as cinnamon teal, ruddy duck, gadwall, bufflehead, American widgeon and pintail. Other wetland species seen here are black-crowned night-heron, black-necked still, long-billed dowitcher, sora, Virginia rail, yellow-headed and red-winged blackbird, great blue heron and American avocet. Keep an eye on strategically placed snags and in the air for various raptors, including bald eagle (in winter), red-tailed hawk, northern harrier and prairie falcon.

Pinyon-juniper woodland surrounds the wetland, offering observations of Townsend's solitaire, juniper titmouse and mountain chickadee. Big game species, such as elk, mule deer and pronghorn antelope may be seen in the distance, offering a different type of wildlife to enjoy. This is a good area to find colorful lizards, including their bright colors rivaling the showy plumage of songbirds.

Note that hunting in riparian is allowed in this area.
Habitat: Wetland riparian, pinyon pine and juniper woodland
Seasons: All year. Birding is best in spring, summer and fall.
Location: From the traffic light at the junction of U.S. Highway 60 and State Highway 77 in Show Low, drive north on Highway 77 for three miles to the signed turnout. Take the dirt road east for a half-mile to the cinder parking area. The quarter-mile trail to an enclosed viewing blind with interpretive signage and open observation deck is paved and fully accessible. Sunrise to sunset. Parking is at designated site only. Show Low

3. Jacques Marsh Wildlife Area

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Lakeside Ranger District (928) 368-5111

This 93-acre artificial wetland has been created from reclaimed wastewater and includes 18 waterfowl nesting islands. The complex of ponds and marsh areas may be easily walked on berms, although there are no maintained trails. The area is bordered by forest and grassland.

Among the waterfowl that the marsh habitat attracts are pintail, redhead, ruddy duck, canvasback, bufflehead, and green-winged teal and cinnamon teal. Migration brings numerous wading birds and sandpipers, such as white-faced ibis and spotted and western sandpiper. Bank swallows and purple martin can also be seen during migration periods. In the summer, sora and yellow-headed blackbird are common in cattails. A variety of raptors are often here, sometimes resting on nearby snags, including bald eagle (in winter). Open areas in the grassland provide habitat for loggerhead shrike, western kingbird, western bluebird, northern mockingbird, sage thrasher, and vesper lark and savannah sparrow. Woods surrounding the ponds contain species like pygmy nuthatch, brown creeper and Graec's warbler. There is a high probability of seeing elk at sunrise and sunset in cooler months.

Note that hunting in season is allowed in this area.

Habitat: Aquatic, wetland riparian, grassland, juniper woodland
Seasons: All year. Birding is best in spring, summer and fall.
Location: From the traffic light at the junction of White Mountain Blvd. (State Highway 260) and Penrod Road in Lakeside, proceed north 1.5 miles on Penrod Road to Juniper Drive. Take this dirt side street through a residential area and over a cattle guard. Follow the road curving to the right and over a second cattle guard to a parking lot and information kiosk, 7 miles from Penrod Road.
Access: Sunrise to sunset. Parking is at designated site only. Lakeside

Near: Lakeside

4. Woodland Lake Park

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, administered by Arizona State Parks, Pinetop-Lakeside Recreation Department (928) 368-6700

This park has numerous trails, which makes it an ideal outdoor setting for the entire family. The one-mile loop trail around the lake is paved and fully accessible. Because of varying habitats, an interesting array of birds is found here.

In fall and winter, numerous waterfowl are seen, including an occasional Canada goose, hooded merganser, and eared and western grebe. Bald eagles often perch on snags during the winter months. Lewis' and acorn woodpecker, dark-eyed junco and ruby-crowned kinglet are regulars. In spring and summer, look for common yellowthroat, red-winged and yellow-headed blackbird, sparrow hawk, broad-tailed and rufous hummingbird, lesser goldfinch, yellow-rumped warbler, marsh and house wren, purple martin, western tanager, western and mountain bluebird, mountain chickadee, pygmy and white-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, and violet-green, barn, tree and northern rough-winged swallow.

Habitat: Aquatic, wetland riparian, ponderosa pine forest, oak-juniper woodland
Seasons: All year.
Location: From the intersection of White Mountain Blvd. (State Highway 260) and Woodland Lake Road in east Pinetop, proceed west a quarter-mile to the signed state park entrance on the right. Follow the paved road through the park to the parking area adjacent to the lake.
Access: Sunrise to sunset. Parking is at designated sites only. Pinetop

5. Concho Lake

Arizona Game and Fish Department (928) 367-4281

The Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the middle portion of the lake, though much of the lake is accessible to the public. You can park in the campground area, and walk in either direction along the shoreline. Birding is good here at any time of year. From fall to winter, the lake harbors abundant wintering waterfowl, such as Canada goose, redhead, ring-necked duck, common goldeneye, gadwall, bufflehead, canvasback, northern shoveler and ruddy duck. Common loonlets and other oddities are sometimes present. Other winter species are bald eagle, phainopepla, Townsend's solitaire, sage thrasher, an occasional prairie falcon, and western and mountain bluebird. The lake can freeze in some years, causing birds to go elsewhere, but it is often open throughout most of the winter. Fall and spring migration periods are the most productive times to visit, when waterfowl, shorebirds, thrushes, warblers, flycatchers, vireos and sparrows. This is a reliable place to see American pipit.

Habitat: Aquatic, wetland riparian, grassland, juniper woodland
Seasons: All year. Birding is best during migration and winter.
Location: From the traffic light at the junction of U.S. Highway 60 and State Highway 61, Concho is 27 miles northeast of Show Low and 15 miles west of St. Johns. Sunrise to sunset.
Access: Sunrise to sunset.
Near: Concho

6. Lyman Lake State Park

Arizona State Parks (928) 337-4441

Primarily a birding site, a spotting scope is helpful for birding the lake. On the road to the ranger station, in about a quarter-mile, is a small marshy area that attracts birds. In summer, look for black phoebe, yellow-breasted chat, yellow warbler and Virginia rail. Birding is good on the lake near the dam where waterfowl sometimes congregate. Trees below the dam attract migrants and phainopepla have been seen here. Cordilleran flycatcher and several species of swallow are seen in picnic and camping areas. A dirt road leads to the south end of the lake where shallow waters invite migrating shorebirds, such as American avocet, black-necked still, greater and lesser yellowlegs, long-billed dowitcher, snowy egret, white-faced ibis and western sandpiper. Gulls and terns also use the lake during migration. From fall through spring and Clark's grebe can be found on the lake, and Barrows' goldeneye has been seen here. Common merganser, double-crested cormorant and a variety of ducks are more common. Some other birds seen in the park include Canada and rock wren, canyon towhee, common yellowthroat, Townsend's solitaire and pinyon jay. The park has hiking trails to archaeological sites.

Habitat: Aquatic, wetland riparian, pinyon pine and juniper woodland, grassland
Seasons: All year. Birding is best during migration and winter.
Location: From the intersection with U.S. Highway 60 and State Highway 191, go north 15 miles on Highway 180/191 to the state park entrance. 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.
Access: The entrance road is paved.
Near: St. Johns or Springerville

Near: Lakeside

7. Wenima Wildlife Area

Arizona Game and Fish Department (928) 367-4281

This corridor of river riparian habitat stretches over two miles along the Little Colorado River, laid back trails providing easy access to both streams and upland areas where you can view beaver, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, ringtail cat, ground squirrel, chipmunk, rabbits and lizards. Powerhouse Trail is 7 mile in length, proceeding south from the east side of the bridge over the Little Colorado, while Beavertail Trail runs 1.5 miles north starting from the west side of the bridge. Numerous waterfowl, birds and raptors can also be seen, including golden eagle, American kestrel, belted kingfisher, blue grosbeak, indigo bunting, black-crowned night-heron, green-backed heron, yellow-browed chat, black phoebe, gray catbird and a variety of migrating warblers and songbirds. Check the bluff edges for raptors. Both mountain and western bluebird are found in the junipers in winter.

Habitat: River riparian, juniper woodland, fields, bluffs
Seasons: All year. Birding is best in spring, summer and fall.
Location: At the junction of U.S. Highways 60 and 180/191, go a quarter-mile north on Highway 180/191 and look to turn right onto a graded dirt road going northeast. After 1.5 miles, the road drops a short distance into the Little Colorado River canyon corridor.
Access: Sunrise to sunset. Parking is at designated site only. The road is suitable for passenger cars.
Near: Eagar or Springerville

8. Becker Lake Wildlife Area

Arizona Game and Fish Department (928) 367-4281

This wildlife area has two hiking trails. The Lakesview Trail is a one-mile loop following the western edge of Becker Lake on an observation platform overlooking the southern, marshy end of the lake. Here, waterfowl and shorebirds, such as white-faced ibis and killdeer, can easily be seen, especially during migration. River Walk Trail meanders along the Little Colorado River for a half-mile where mule deer and beaver are readily found. Several types of raptors also can be seen here, including bald eagle (in winter), American kestrel, osprey, northern harrier and great horned owl. The surrounding grasslands are good places to spot pronghorn antelope, Gunnison's prairie dog, coyote, and a variety of ground squirrels and chipmunks.

Habitat: Aquatic, river riparian, grassland
Seasons: All year. Birding is best in spring, fall and winter.
Location: Within the town limits of Springerville, Lakesview Trail access is two miles west of the traffic light in Springerville on U.S. Highway 60; turn south into the main Becker Lake area, designated with signage. River Walk Trail access is one mile west of the traffic light on Highway 60; turn south into the parking area just before crossing the bridge over the Little Colorado River.
Access: Sunrise to sunset. Parking is at designated sites only. Eagar or Springerville

9. White Mountain Grasslands Wildlife Area

Arizona Game and Fish Department (928) 367-4281

A three-mile hiking trail of moderate difficulty overlooks and loops a large draw containing juniper woodland, grassland and ponds. There is a high probability of seeing pronghorn antelope, rock and golden-mantled squirrel, chipmunks and rabbits. There's also a possibility of seeing elk, coyote, badger, striped skunk and gray fox. Both mountain and western bluebird are found in the junipers in winter. Meadows and grasslands offer opportunities to see golden eagle, northern harrier, red-tailed hawk and other raptors.

Habitat: Grassland, juniper woodland
Seasons: All year. Birding is best in spring, summer and fall.
Location: From the traffic light in Eagar, drive west on State Highway 260 about five miles to the junction of the road to the Springerville transfer station at milepost 3914. Follow the paved road north, then west 6 mile to the southwest corner of the first hill. When the road turns north again, take the dirt road to the left three miles, in a northwest direction, to a cattle guard on the fence line boundary. Cross the cattle guard and proceed a short distance to the parking area. Sunrise to sunset. Parking is at designated sites only. The road is suitable for passenger cars.
Access: Sunrise to sunset. Parking is at designated sites only. Eagar or Springerville

10. Pole Knoll Recreation Area

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Springerville Ranger District (928) 333-4372

A complex of hiking trails surround Pole Knoll, totaling almost 30 miles in length and doubling as cross-country ski trails in the winter. The shortest loop is about one mile, and the longest is six miles, with trail ratings from easy to moderate. This knoll is typical of those found in the White Mountains area. The north slope is heavily timbered with spruce, fir and aspen. The east slope is a mix of ponderosa pine and mixed conifer, while the west and south aspects are mainly high-elevation grassland.

Hiking the trails in early morning or late evening offers the best chance to see many wildlife species. Elk, mule deer, Merriams turkey, Abert and red squirrel, blue grouse and a variety of songbirds can be found here. Bird species include western and mountain bluebird, horned lark, rufous and broad-tailed hummingbird, western tanager, and Bewick's and winter wren.

Habitat: Ponderosa pine forest, mixed conifer, high-elevation grassland
Seasons: All year. Primarily spring, summer and fall for wildlife viewing.
Location: From the traffic light in Eagar, drive west on State Highway 260 about 13 miles to milepost 383. Turn left into the trailhead parking area on the south side of highway. The trailhead is at 9,000-foot elevation. Sunrise to sunset. Parking is at designated sites only. Eagar or Springerville

11. Greer

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Springerville Ranger District (928) 333-4372

The area around Greer has some of the best summer birding in the White Mountains. Osprey, American dipper, Williamson's and red-naped sapsucker, band-tailed pigeon, willow and dusky flycatcher, and Graec's, MacGillivray's, Virginia's, red-faced and yellow-rumped warbler are each found here. In the open ponderosa pine forest surrounding the three Greer lakes, mule deer, elk, pronghorn antelope and numerous smaller mammals are commonly seen throughout the day.

Squirrel Spring Recreation Area is 2.2 miles from the junction with State Highway 260. Park and walk the old road following the creek, birding alongside the short creekside trail. Warblers and woodpeckers are found here. The upland area near the parking lot is a good spot to see pygmy nuthatch and plumbous vireo.

Drive south 4.1 miles on State Highway 373 to County Road 1126, and then turn left. Go another half-mile to the pullout on the left, which is on the south side of River Reservoir. Walk downhill to the water and look for osprey and waterfowl. Along the willow-lined Little Colorado River, look for dusky flycatcher, sapsucker, warblers, nuthatch and song sparrows. Bald eagle can be seen at the Greer lakes during winter months.

Return to Highway 373 and turn left to the village of Greer. Continue south 1.7 miles to where the road crosses a cattle guard and turns to gravel. There are several parking areas along this stretch before it ends. Walk the river looking for American dipper and warblers. The East Fork Trail, accessed from the first parking lot south of the cattle guard, climbs steadily before leveling out. Blue grouse, northern goshawk and three-toed woodpecker can be found along this trail.

Note that hunting in season is allowed in this area.

12. South Fork of the Little Colorado River

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Springerville Ranger District (928) 333-4372

The South Fork of the Little Colorado River has attracted several rare migrant birds over the years. The campground at the end of the road is a good place to look for birds; as is the seven-mile South Fork Trail. The primary trailhead is located in the campground on the west side of the creek. The lower trail, at 7,500-foot elevation, follows the river for 3.5 miles, through stands of cottonwood, pine, aspen and oak. The trail climbs to 9,000 feet, providing spectacular views on the upper bench, and eventually ending at another trailhead located at Mexican Hay Lake.

Graec's, red-faced and yellow-rumped warblers, plumbous vireo, great blue heron, western tanager and sapsuckers are found in the campground and along the trail. Northern pygmy-owl occasionally can be heard. Montezuma quail are resident, but are difficult to see. Look for American dipper along the river. Clark's nutcracker and golden-crowned kinglet can be found in the winter. Beaver, porcupine, elk, Coues white-tailed and mule deer, chipmunks, and a variety of tree and ground squirrels can be seen here as well.

Note that hunting in season is allowed in this area.

Habitat: Aquatic, river riparian, ponderosa pine, mixed conifer
Seasons: All year. Primarily spring, summer and fall.
Location: From the traffic light in Eagar, proceed west on State Highway 260 about 5.5 miles to milepost 390.7; then turn left (south) onto the road heading into South Fork. Follow the signs to the South Fork Campground. Sunrise to sunset. Parking is at designated sites only. Eagar or Springerville

13. Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area

Arizona Game and Fish Department (928) 367-4281

Purchased through a partnership of public and private funds in 1993 (primarily Arizona Heritage Fund monies), this 1,362-acre wildlife area reflects Arizona's concerns for wildlife of all kinds. Recreational opportunities include wildlife viewing and photography, picnicking and hiking to historic and prehistoric cultural sites. A small visitor center is also located at the site. Visitors are encouraged to look through the center first and then explore the grounds to enhance their wildlife viewing experience. Move about the property freely by hiking, biking or horseback riding on one of our four trails leading to wetlands, meadows and old homesteads. Several wildlife viewing points are located on trails, including one with a spotting scope for locating wildlife situated on the High Point Trail overlook.

While elk can be found here throughout the year, fall and winter are the best times to see them. Winter is also the best time to see bald eagle perched in trees around the reservoirs. Waterfowl are readily seen during the migration periods of fall and spring. A variety of raptors, including osprey, American kestrel, hawks, golden eagle and peregrine falcon, can be spotted throughout the wildlife area. In summer, rufous and broad-tailed hummingbird, Lewis' and acorn woodpecker, and mountain bluebird are easily found. The best birding location at site is along Red Creek and in the orchard and tall trees around the visitor center. Look for sora and cinnamon teal at the small pond next to the orchard. Other wildlife to look for are gray fox, striped skunk, badger, coyote, mule deer, Merriams turkey, pronghorn antelope, and a variety of ground squirrels, chipmunks and bats. There's a high probability of seeing elk and antelope at sunrise and sunset.

Note that hunting in season is allowed in this area.

Habitat: Grassland, pinyon pine and juniper woodland
Seasons: All year. Spring to fall is best.
Location: From the traffic light in Eagar, take State Highway 260 (the designation changes to U.S. Highway 180/191 at the rodeo grounds) east towards Alpine five miles. Look for turnout signs at the top of the mesa at milepost 404.7. Follow the graded dirt road, suitable for passenger cars, five miles to the wildlife area. Sunrise to sunset. Visitor center hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. May to October. Parking is at designated sites only. Eagar or Springerville

14. Nelson Reservoir

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Springerville Ranger District (928) 333-4372

Nelson Reservoir is a mile-long lake nestled in a canyon between two large mesas. It's a great place to find pinyon jay in the early morning. Large numbers of migrating waterfowl generally congregate at the southern end of the lake. Yellow-headed, red-winged and Brewer's blackbird nest here. Black-crowned night-heron, osprey, Virginia rail and sora are seen mostly in the summer. Look for bald eagle here in the winter months. Elk and an occasional mule deer can be found along the mesa slopes, primary at sunrise and sunset.

Habitat: Aquatic, wetland riparian, pinyon pine and juniper woodland
Seasons: All year. Spring and fall are best for migrating birds.
Location: From the traffic light in Eagar, take State Highway 260 (the designation changes to U.S. Highway 180/191 at the rodeo grounds) east and south towards Alpine 9.5 miles to the north parking area. The south parking area is one mile further along the highway.
Access: 24 hours daily. Park only in the designated parking areas at each end of the lake.
Near: Eagar or Springerville

15. Luna Lake

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Alpine Ranger District (928) 339-4384

This high mountain lake, with a 7,900-foot elevation, offers excellent waterfowl viewing. Shore and boat access to the upper, western end of the lake is closed from April to August, providing safe nesting habitat for cinnamon teal, Canada goose, mallard and other waterfowl. Bald eagle can be seen here in the winter, with a nesting pair usually present in spring and early summer. Both eastern and western meadowlark can be found here. Walk the San Francisco River drainage below the spillway to see nesting Graec's and yellow-rumped warblers, pygmy and white-breasted nuthatch, hairy woodpecker and an occasional Lewis' woodpecker. Mule deer and elk can be seen watering at sunrise and sunset. Beaver and muskrat are best seen in late evening.

Habitat: Aquatic, wetland riparian, ponderosa pine forest
Seasons: Spring through fall.
Location: From Alpine, go east four miles on U.S. Highway 180. Turn north onto Forest Road 570 to access the lake shoreline and the Forest Service campground located on the northeast side of the lake.
Access: 24 hours daily. The gravel road is suitable for passenger cars.
Near: Alpine

16. Greens Peak Loop

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Springerville Ranger District (928) 333-4372

This 20-mile driving loop on Forest Roads 117 and 118 passes through high-elevation grassland, ponderosa pine, aspen and mixed conifer forest. The north slope of Greens Peak and the surrounding mixed conifer and aspen forest is a traditional place to look for elusive blue grouse. This route is also good habitat for three-toed woodpecker and Williamson's and red-naped sapsucker. Elk, pronghorn antelope, mule deer and Merriams turkey are frequently seen from the road, especially at sunrise and sunset. An occasional black bear also can be found here.

Leaving State Highway 260 on FR 117, check Bechtle Spring (1.2 miles from Highway 260) for sapsuckers. Continue another three miles on FR 117 to the intersection with FR 61. A short juniper on FR 61 leads to the fire lookout atop Greens Peak for a panoramic view of the surrounding forest. Clark's nutcracker, red-breasted nuthatch and golden-crowned kinglet are found in this area. Burnt Mill Spring is 4.2 miles from the junction of FR 117 and 61. A short walk in the mixed conifer forest around the spring can be quite productive for birds, including red crossbill, western tanager, ruby-crowned kinglet, yellow-rumped warbler, brown creeper and gray jay. Look in the aspen stands for sapsuckers, blue grouse, northern flicker, mountain chickadee and Cooper's hawk. Bird species in grassland habitats include western and mountain bluebirds, horned lark, northern harrier, and red-tailed hawk.

Habitat: Ponderosa pine forest, mixed conifer, high-elevation grassland
Seasons: Spring, summer and fall.
Location: At the junction of Highway 260 and FR 117 (milepost 380.2), go four miles on FR 117 to the intersection with FR 61 (the spur to Greens Peak). At the junction of FR 117 and 61, continue on FR 117 another seven miles to the junction of FR 117 and 118. Take FR 118 back to Highway 260, which is 10 miles.
Access: 24 hours daily. The gravel road is suitable for passenger cars in good weather.
Near: Eagar or Springerville

Mixed conifer
Habitat: Spring through fall.
Location: From Alpine, go north on U.S. Highway 191 almost six miles (milepost 421), and then turn east onto Forest Road 56 (Terry Flat - Hulseley Lake Road). Continue upward for about five miles to the road fork that begins the six-mile loop of Terry Flat atop Escudilla Mountain. The road is gravelled, but suitable for passenger cars. FR 56 is closed during the winter.
Near: Alpine

17. Mount Baldy Loop

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Springerville Ranger District (928) 333-4372

This 26-mile scenic driving loop passes through high-elevation grassland, ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forest, and wetland and river riparian habitats, including the West Fork of the Little Colorado River at Sheep Crossing, Lee Valley Reservoir, Basin Lake Marsh, Crescent Lake and Mexican Hay Lake. Pronghorn antelope, elk, mule deer, coyote and an occasional Merriams turkey can be seen from the road, especially at sunrise and sunset. In marsh and riparian areas, look for great blue heron, belted kingfisher, Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawk, red-winged and yellow-headed blackbird and a variety of waterfowl.

Sheep Crossing is a favorite fishing and picnic area. Look here for American dipper, red crossbill, golden-crowned kinglet and an occasional olive warbler. Lee Valley Reservoir is located a half-mile south of State Highway 273. Here you can find long-tailed weasel, Abert and red squirrel, and a variety of ground squirrels and chipmunks. Bird species include great blue heron, osprey, bald eagle, common merganser, great grebe (migrant), and migrating and breeding songbirds.

Habitat: Aquatic, wetland riparian, ponderosa pine forest, mixed conifer, high-elevation grassland
Seasons: Spring, summer and fall.
Location: From the junction of Highway 260 and 273 (milepost 377.4) on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, take Highway 273 southeast about six miles to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests boundary. Follow Highway 273 11.5 miles to the junction with Highway 261 at Crescent Lake. Follow Highway 261 18.5 miles to the intersection with Highway 260, three miles west of Eagar.
Access: 24 hours daily. Highway 273 is gravelled, but suitable for passenger cars in good weather. Highway 260 and 261 are paved. Highway 261 and 273 are closed in the winter.
Near: Eagar or Springerville

18. Water Canyon - Big Lake Loop

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Springerville Ranger District (928) 333-4372

This 45-mile scenic driving loop passes through high-elevation grassland, ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forest and wetland riparian habitats, including several mountain marshes like Salt House Marsh and Mexican Hay Lake. Pronghorn antelope, elk, mule deer and Merriams turkey are frequently seen from the road, especially at sunrise and sunset. In marsh areas, look for great blue heron, belted kingfisher, red-winged and yellow-headed blackbird, and a variety of waterfowl. Bird species in grassland habitats include western and mountain bluebird, horned lark, northern harrier, and an occasional golden-crowned kinglet. Mixed conifer forest birds include red crossbill, red-breasted nuthatch, western tanager, golden- and ruby-crowned kinglets, yellow-rumped warbler, Clark's nutcracker, and gray jay. Look in aspen stands for Williamson's and red-naped sapsucker and blue grouse. Pine grosbeak are occasionally seen around the Big Lake area. There's a high probability of seeing elk at Pat Knoll, located ten miles south of Eagar on Forest Road 285.

Note that hunting in season is allowed in this area.