

# Bird Track Springs Nature Trail

## TRAIL GUIDE AND BIRD CHECKLIST

*A cooperation between the Grande Ronde Bird Club and  
the LaGrande Ranger District, Wallowa -Whitman National Forest*

### **Introduction**

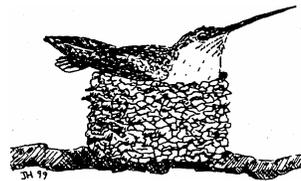
The Bird Track Springs Trail loops through a level floodplain of the Grande Ronde River. The area has long been a favorite spot for local birdwatchers. Its proximity to La Grande and easy access make for a pleasant family outing, too.

Bird Track Springs got its name when a bird left its tracks in the wet cement of a retaining wall around a nearby spring. Birds are drawn to the spring and to the surrounding forest and riparian habitats.

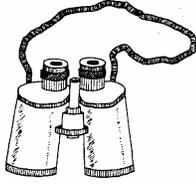
As you follow the trail, consider what makes this area attractive to birds and other wildlife. The floodplain supports thriving stands of old-growth black cottonwood with a lush understory of willow, hawthorn, alder, and other shrubs. This habitat provides food, cover, and nest sites for a greater variety of birds than is found in the surrounding coniferous forest. The many ponds in the floodplain are also home to spotted frogs and beavers.

### **The Seasons of Bird Track Springs**

April through June is the best time to see birds that pass through during migration as well as those that stay all summer. During spring, males of most bird species are highly visible in their brightest colors. They advertise their territories by singing, often from prominent perches. Other species, especially warblers, are more secretive as they sing from dense shrub cover. It takes a patient observer to spot these secretive birds, so knowing bird songs and calls is a real advantage.



Once nests are built and eggs are laid; male songbirds don't spend much of their time singing but busy themselves finding food for their broods. During the summer months, you're likely to see both male and female birds flitting through the brush, seeking caterpillars and other insects. Overhead, watch for flocks of tree swallows and Vaux's swifts as they feed on flying insects. And, if you're lucky, you may hear a hummingbird zoom past in search of flowers.



The autumn months find northern migrants heading south for the winter. At Bird Track Springs, you'll often hear or see flocks of Canada geese in their V-formations. The warblers that pass through have lost their vivid spring colors and are mostly quiet, making them much harder to spot than during the spring. Large flocks of robins are often seen at this time, too.

Winter at Bird Track Springs finds only the hardiest avian residents active: Mixed flocks of mountain chickadees, red-breasted nuthatches, brown creepers, and goldencrowned kinglets descend from the pine and fir forests to forage in the cottonwoods and willows. You'll probably hear the raucous call of a Steller's jay or Clark's nutcracker and see a few Canada geese, mallards, and belted kingfishers that remain along the Grande Ronde River even during the coldest months. And on some days, several bald eagles may be found perched in the cottonwoods or gliding overhead.

No matter what time of year you visit 'Bird Track Springs, be aware that birds and other wildlife are most active at dawn and dusk. Your best viewing times are early mornings and evenings.

### **Responsible viewing**

- Remember, you're a visitor to the home of the resident wildlife, so please practice responsible viewing
- Keep your distance from all wildlife, including birds, mammals and fish, to minimize disturbance and to reduce the chances of predation, especially on eggs and nestlings.
- Use binoculars for those close-up views. If you find a nest, watch it from a distance.
- Never pick up baby birds or other young wildlife - leave them where you find them so their parents can return and care for them.
- Dogs should be kept under close control at all times, so they do not chase wildlife or disturb ground-nesting species.
- Please, no shooting in the trail or campground areas.
- Camping is allowed only in the campground, not along the trail.
- Please help us keep the trail clean by picking up any litter you find.

### **How to Get to Bird Track Springs**

The Bird Track Springs Trail is located 15 miles west of La Grande. Take Interstate 84 west from La Grande to the Ukiah exit. Follow Oregon State Highway 244 for 6 miles to the Bird Track Springs Campground. You may park in the campground. Please be careful when crossing the Highway from the campground.

### **For Additional Information**

Contact the La Grande Ranger District, 3502 Hwy 30, LaGrande, Oregon 97850. Phone (541) 963-7186

## BIRD TRACK SPRINGS - BIRD CHECKLIST

Great blue heron	Eastern kingbird	European starling
Canada goose	Western kingbird	Warbling vireo
Mallard	Alder flycatcher	Orange-crowned warbler
Wood duck	Willow flycatcher	Yellow warbler
Cinnamon teal	Hammond's flycatcher	Yellow-rumped warbler
Common merganser	Dusky flycatcher	Townsend's warbler
Red-tailed hawk	Western wood pewee	MacGillivray warbler
Bald eagle	Violet-green swallow	Common yellowthroat
Osprey	Tree swallow	Western meadowlark
American kestrel	Steller's jay	Red-winged blackbird
Ruffed grouse	Black-billed magpie	Bullock's oriole
Wild turkey	Common raven	Brewer's blackbird
Killdeer	Clark's nutcracker	Brown-headed cowbird
Common snipe	Black-capped chickadee	Western tanager
Spotted sandpiper	Mountain chickadee	Black-headed grosbeak
Mourning dove	White-breasted nuthatch	Lazuli bunting
Great horned owl	Red-breasted nuthatch	Cassin's finch
Common knighthawk	Brown creeper	Pine siskin
Vaux's swift	American dipper	American goldfinch
Black-chinned hummingbird	House wren	Spotted towhee
Rufous hummingbird	Gray catbird	Dark-eyed junco
Calliope hummingbird	American robin	Chipping sparrow
Belted kingfisher	Veery	White-crowned sparrow
Northern flicker	Western bluebird	Song sparrow
Pileated woodpecker	Townsend's solitaire	
Red-naped sapsucker	Golden-crowned kinglet	
Hairy woodpecker	Ruby-crowned kinglet	
Downy woodpecker	Cedar waxwing	