

# A Birder's Guide to Kittitas County



**A guide for birders of all ages and  
experience.**

## **Additional Resources:**

### *Book*

Opperman, Hal, *A Birder's Guide to Washington*, American Birding Association, 2003, ISBN 1-878788-20-5.

**BirdKitt**, (Kittitas County email listserv) <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/birdkitt>

**Kittitas Audubon**, [www.kittitasaudubon.org](http://www.kittitasaudubon.org)  
email: [info@kittitasaudubon.org](mailto:info@kittitasaudubon.org)

### *Maps*

**Kittitas County Road Atlas**, [www.co.kittitas.wa.us/publicworks/gis.asp](http://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/publicworks/gis.asp)

**Wenatchee National Forest**, Cle Elum Ranger District, 803 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> St, Cle Elum, WA 98922, (509) 852-1100 or [www.naturenw.org](http://www.naturenw.org)

**WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife**, available at local and regional offices: 201 N Pearl, Ellensburg or 1701 S 24<sup>th</sup> Ave, Yakima.

### *Permits*

**Northwest Forest Pass** available at any ranger station, online at [www.naturenw.org](http://www.naturenw.org) or 1-800-270-7504

**WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Vehicle Use Permit** (required on all WDFW lands) available at any hunting/fishing license detailer, online at [fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov](http://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov) or 1-866-246-9453

**SnoPark Permit** available at state parks, ranger stations and some local retailers. Visit [www.parks.wa.gov/winter/vendor.asp](http://www.parks.wa.gov/winter/vendor.asp) for more information.

### **Credits:**

#### *Photos on front cover:*

Lazuli Bunting ©Doug Kuehn

Sage Thrasher ©Craig Johnson

Mountain Chickadee ©Christine Webb

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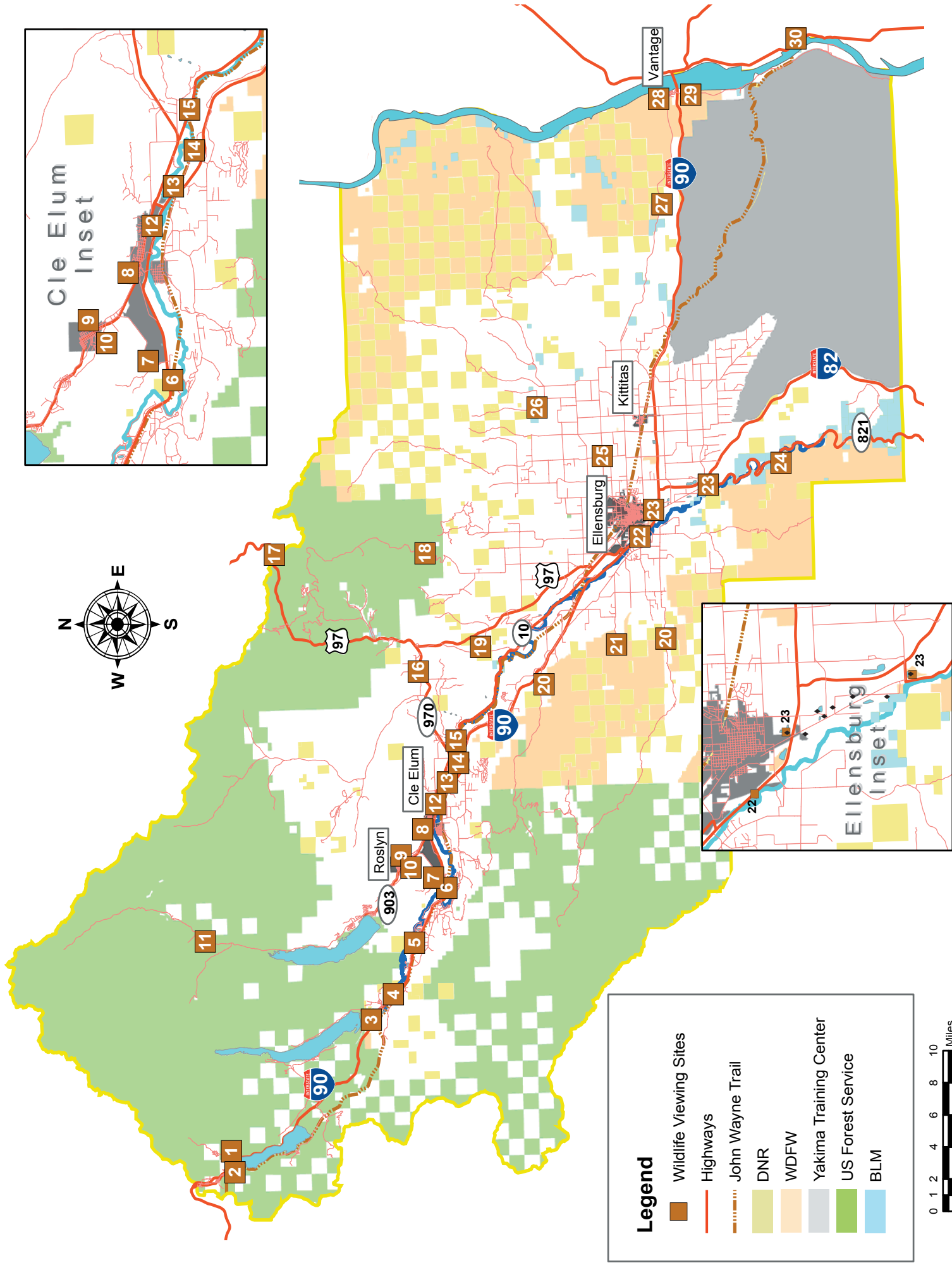
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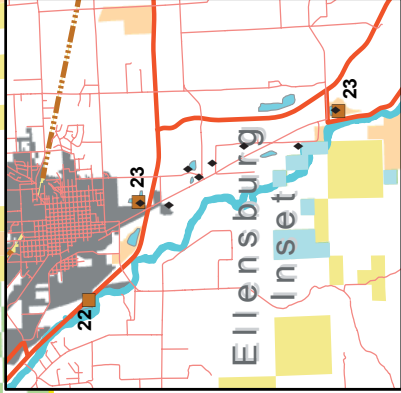
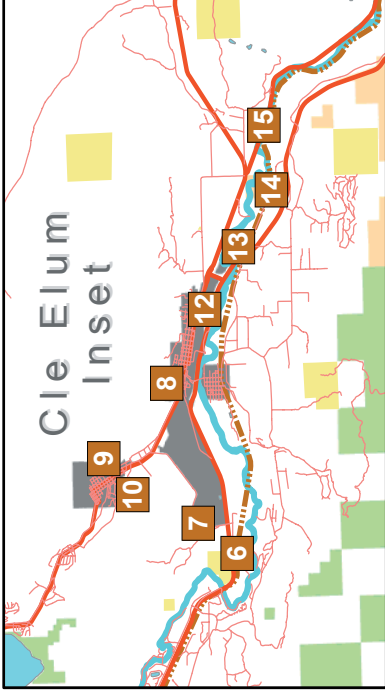
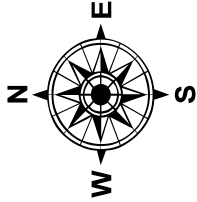
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**Legend**

- Wildlife Viewing Sites
- Highways
- John Wayne Trail
- DNR
- WDFW
- Yakima Training Center
- US Forest Service
- BLM



☼ = summer ♠ = fall ❄ = winter ☀ = spring ❖ = all seasons, FP = NW Forest Pass, FW = WDFW Vehicle Use Pass, Sno = SnoPark Pass, R = restroom (primitive to flushable), M = Supplemental maps recommended, H = Handicap accessible, C = Good clearance vehicle recommended

The Kittitas County Birding Trail Map begins just east of Snoqualmie Pass where the Iron Horse State Park/John Wayne Trail (JWT) begins its span of the County from west to east traversing many of the variety of habitats. A few of the best trailheads are mentioned here but others are worth exploring. The JWT is non-motorized and allows hiking, bicycles, horses, skiing & snowshoeing.

1. **GOLD CREEK POND.** Riparian forest, pond, & meadow. **Birds:** warblers, Gray Jay, hummingbirds, & swifts. **Directions:** I-90 exit 54, turn north. In <1/4 mile east on FS 4832. At 0.9 mile north onto FS road "Gold Creek", follow about a mile. At the gate, turn left into paved parking lot. ❖ **FP Sno R H**

2. **JOHN WAYNE TRAIL (JWT) at HYAK.** Shrubby wetlands surrounded by mixed fir forests. **Birds:** Red-breasted Sapsucker, hummingbirds. **Directions:** I-90 exit 54, turn south. In <1/4 mile turn east on SPUR 906 towards Iron Horse State Park. At 0.4 mile, just before the WSDOT facility, turn right, followed by immediate right into the parking lot. ❖ **Sno R**

3. **LAKE EASTON STATE PARK.** Forested lake transitioning from fir trees to Lodgepole Pine. **Birds:** Osprey, Bald Eagle, Pileated Woodpecker, Harlequin Duck, Bufflehead, merganser. **Directions:** I-90 exit 70, turn south following signs to Lake Easton State Park. Turn right into the Park at the first stop sign, travel one mile to the second stop sign and turn right again. Continue on to the "fishing bridge". Parking is on the left side just before the bridge. Walk across bridge for trail along the Lake. The boat launch offers good viewing of winter ducks. ❖ **R H**

4. **EASTON PONDS.** Riparian creeks and ponds accessible by trails, bridges & other amenities. **Birds:** kingfisher, raptors, osprey, cormorants, Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Merganser. **Directions:** I-90 exit 71, north to Tree Farm Rd. Follow the road around the bend to where it parallels I-90. Make a left into the parking area. ❖ **R**

5. **HUNDLEY ROAD.** Heavily wooded river bottom with interlinked wetlands & ponds. **Birds:** warblers, kingfisher, ducks, osprey, woodpeckers, flycatchers, chickadees, creepers, & nuthatch. **Directions:** I-90 exit 78, turn north and then left on Hundley Rd. Continue to the turn around and turn right onto the WDFW access to the Yakima River. Parking area at the River. ☼♠ FW R

6. **JWT AT BULLFROG ROAD.** Dry Ponderosa Pine forest & riparian river corridor. **Birds:** warblers, kingfisher, & Common Merganser. **Directions:** I-90 exit 80, turn south & then right on Leisure Land Lane. The JWT crosses the road

in about a mile with an unimproved parking area just beyond it. The road continues on to the Yakima River (parking and tables). Traveling west on the JWT takes you through open Ponderosa Pine & meadows before reaching the next trailhead at Golf Course Rd. Traveling east, the JWT passes a timber storage facility & into the confluence area of the Yakima & Cle Elum Rivers. ☼♠

7. **CLE ELUM RIVER CORRIDOR.** River bottom, wet forest & pond. **Birds:** finches, sparrows, dipper, & thrushes. **Directions:** I-90 exit 80 north on Bullfrog Rd then left on Tumble Creek Drive & an immediate left into a parking area. (Watch for improvements such as restrooms, improved parking, viewing blinds, and access to paved & unpaved non-motorized trails.)❖

8. **COAL MINES TRAIL.** Mostly riparian with open Ponderosa Pine transitioning to Douglas-fir along a 5 mile, gravel trail from Cle Elum to Ronald with 4 trailheads. **Birds:** sparrows, finches, (feeder birds), & forest hawks. **Directions:** a) Cle Elum at West 2<sup>nd</sup> and Stafford Avenue. I-90 exit 84 turn north at the South Cle Elum Way stoplight. Travel one block crossing 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. ❖ **R** b) Roslyn at Pennsylvania Avenue. From the Cle Elum trailhead continue north on SR903 (2<sup>nd</sup> St) to Roslyn. At Pennsylvania Avenue turn right. The trailhead/parking is on the right in about a block. ❖ c) Roslyn off Washington Avenue. From Pennsylvania Ave turn left. The street deadends in the city park parking lot and the trail continues behind the stand of trees past the ballfield. ❖ **R** d) Ronald behind the Ronald General Store. Continue on SR 903 to Ronald and watch for the General Store on your right. The trail ends here. Kiosk and a couple of parking spots are available. ❖

9. **STREAM "C" CORRIDOR.** Wet woods & riparian streamside. **Birds:** warblers, tanager, vireo, crossbills, & hummingbirds. **Directions:** From downtown Roslyn go west on Pennsylvania Ave, follow the signs to the cemetery winding through a residential neighborhood. At the cemetery turn right & just beyond the cemetery on your left is a chained driveway. Park here without blocking the entrance. The Trail starts just past the fenced area. The trail is not marked. At the first road it jogs to the right & goes straight across at the second. Near the bottom of the drainage is a large meadow. Continuing along the trail brings you to a wetland and the Cle Elum River. ☼♠☀

10. **ROSLYN URBAN FOREST.** Mixed open Ponderosa Pine/Douglas-fir forest. **Birds:** woodpeckers, tanager, jays, finches, sparrows, & flycatchers. **Directions:** Follow the directions to and use the parking lot for site 8b. Walk up the paved driveway through the Plum Creek Timber facility. Follow any of several trails through the Forest. Some trails have markers left by mountain bikers. ❖

11. **SALMON LA SAC NORTH.** Old-growth forest, riparian corridor & grassy lakes. **Birds:** Varied Thrush, warblers, Clark's Nutcracker, Gray Jay, raptors, Harlequin Duck, mergansers, chickadee, nuthatch, & swallows. **Directions:** From Cle Elum go north on SR903 19 miles toward the

Salmon la Sac Campground; paved road. Just before crossing the bridge to enter the campground turn right onto the gravel FR4330 (Fish Lake Rd). Follow FR4330 to its end, about 12 miles at the Cathedral Pass trailhead. Hike the old growth forest and listen for nesting Varied Thrush in summer. Parking at other trailheads & recreation sites. There are concrete creek crossings on FR4330 so take care as warmer days may cause snowmelt to increase water depth at the crossings. ☼ ♠ FP R M

12. **NORTHERN PACIFIC PONDS.** Ponds, wetlands & dry forest. **Birds:** ducks, eagle, osprey, woodpeckers, & warblers. **Directions:** From First Street in Cle Elum turn south on South Cle Elum Way. At I-90 overpass turn right on Hatchery Rd which parallels RR track & I-90. Ponds are on your left. Parking is on the right across from the kiosk. Continuing west on Hatchery Rd, the Yakama Nation operates a fish hatchery which can be toured by appointment. ❖

13. **MCDONALD ROAD POND.** Private salmon acclimation pond. Auto/roadside viewing; stay outside the fence. A scope is useful. Pond usually freezes in winter. **Birds:** eagles, ducks, geese, & swans. **Directions:** From First Street in Cle Elum turn south on South Cle Elum Way. Go through South Cle Elum and follow Lower Peoh Point Rd. After the road passes under I-90, MacDonald Rd is the first left. ❖

14. **JWT at LOWER PEOH POINT ROAD.** Farms, river corridor, dry forest, & cliffs. Picnic tables & river viewing areas. **Birds:** Chestnut-backed Chickadee, dipper, merganser, nuthatch, & Winter Wren. **Directions:** Follow directions to site #13 but continue 2 miles further on Lower Peoh Point Rd to a school bus turnaround on your left. Parking is restricted during AM and PM busing times when school is in session. The trail access from the parking is a small path on the east end. Following the JWT east at this point is the best way to access the Upper Yakima River Canyon. ❖

15. **TEANAWAY RIVER BRIDGE AND ENVIRONS.** Wetlands, pond & river riparian. **Birds:** dipper, Virginia Rail, ducks, (River Otter) **Directions:** I-90 exit 85, turn north on SR970 (toward Wenatchee). In approximately 2.1 miles turn right onto SR10. In about 1.1 miles SR10 crosses the Teanaway River on a concrete bridge. Parking is on both sides of the road with wider than normal shoulders near the bridge. Areas to check: a) under the Teanaway River bridge there have been nesting dippers; b) about 0.25 miles back toward Cle Elum (walk it) is a metal gated entrance & access to a pond; c) a second non-maintained entrance about 0.1 miles west is an overgrown path giving access to a wetland. ❖

16. **SWAUK PRAIRIE ROAD.** Dry forest, prairie, & private farmland. Driving Loop-Auto Viewing **Birds:** Horned Lark, Mountain and W. Bluebirds, W. Meadowlark. Rough-legged Hawk (winter) & other raptors; Long-billed Curlew have been spotted here. **Directions:** I-90 exit 85, turn north onto SR 970 (toward Wenatchee). In about 7 miles turn north (left) onto Ley Rd and then east (right) on Swauk Prairie Rd. Continue for about 1 mile turn onto East Ballard Hill Rd and return to SR970. ❖

17. **SWAUK DISCOVERY TRAIL.** A 2.8 mile interpretive trail through mid-elevation forest. **Birds:** sapsuckers, warblers, chickadees, & nuthatches. **Directions:** I-90 exit 85 turn north on SR970 (toward Wenatchee). In about 10 miles it merges into US 97. Continue to Blewett Pass, watch for Swauk Discovery Trail signs and turn right into the parking area. Trail access is from FR 9716 at the upper end of the parking area. ❖ R FP SNO

18. **REECER CREEK-TABLE MOUNTAIN.** High mountain forest & grassland. **Birds:** owls, hawks, Clark's Nutcracker, chickadees, crossbills & fall migrating raptors. **Directions:** I-90 exit 106, north and straight at the 4 way stop (east on University Way) for about .5 miles. Turn north (left) onto Reecer Creek Rd. Stay on Reecer Creek Rd for 12 miles at which time the road becomes FR35 and becomes a 1 lane paved road with turnouts. Follow signs toward Lions Rock/Haney Meadows. The pavement ends in about 9 miles. Continue for 2 miles on the gravel road and you will come to an intersection. To complete the Loop continue toward Haney Meadows until you reach FR 9712, take a left to FR 9716 then to US97 near Blewett Pass and site 17. One highlight is Diamond Head, which was used by Hawkwatch International until the late 1990s. ☼ ♠ R M C

19. **HAYWARD HILL/BETTAS ROAD.** Prairie & open pine forest. Auto Viewing. **Birds:** bluebirds, raptors, sparrows, Horned Lark, & Sage Thrasher; also deer & elk. **Directions:** I-90 exit 101(Thorp), north on North Thorp Highway through the town of Thorp to the intersection of SR10. Go straight across onto Hayward Hill Rd. This is a non-maintained county road and may be marginal in some weather conditions. The road climbs the hill and meanders along the top of the ridge before starting down toward the north end of the hill. It dead ends into Bettas Rd which can be traveled in either direction to US97. At US97 turning south goes back to Ellensburg, north goes to site 17. This is some of the best auto birding around. Spring flowers are wonderful. ☼ ♠ ☼ C

20. **ROBINSON CANYON.** Wetlands, riparian, & open pine forest. Open May 1 to late November. **Birds:** owls, warblers, sparrows, woodpeckers, vireos, jays, & flycatchers. **Directions:** I-90 exit 101, south on SouthThorp Highway, right on Killmore Rd. In 2.5 miles turn right on Robinson Canyon Rd 1 mile paved & 1 mile gravel to the west gate to L.T. Murray Wildlife Area where there is parking. When open you are allowed to drive past the gate to a second parking area. This site is known statewide for unusual birds. Walk the bottom up, the closed road produces the most sightings. ☼ ☼ ♠ FW

21. **TANEUM/MANASTASH LOOP.** Farms, riparian, variety of forested & alpine areas. **Birds:** forest raptors, warblers, chickadees, nuthatch, vireos, Lazuli Bunting, owls, Golden Eagle. **Directions:** I-90 exit 93, turn north. Turn right onto Thorp Prairie Rd. At the bottom of the hill take a right onto East Taneum Rd. Cross the freeway overpass and take another right onto West Taneum Rd. Follow it west to Gnat Flat Rd. Follow signs to Buck Meadows, Manastash Creek

and exit to Ellensburg via Manastash and Umptanum Rd. This can be an all-day drive. Stay on the main graveled road or explore dirt side roads to places such as Quartz Mtn. This loop may be reversed by taking I-90 exit 109, north on Canyon Rd to Umptanum Rd, to Manastash Rd. ☼ ☼ ♠ FP FW R M

22. **IRENE RINEHART RIVERSIDE PARK.** River flood plain with mature cottonwood forest interspersed with Ponderosa Pine. **Birds:** ducks, shorebirds, dipper, oriole, woodpeckers, wrens, kinglets. **Directions:** I-90 exit 109, north on Canyon Rd & then left on Umptanum Rd. Just prior to the Yakima River take a right at the park sign. Parking is to your left. During the summer season you may continue through a gate to Carey Lakes with additional parking. There are trails along the river and around Carey Lakes. Meet us here at 8:00AM for the First Saturday BirdWalk every month. ❖ R

23. **PONDS SOUTH OF ELLENSBURG.** Variety of ponds & riparian areas. **Birds:** ducks, osprey, raptors, shorebirds, dipper, & heron. **Directions:** I-90 exit 109, north take the first right into Bar 14 Restaurant parking lot. Travel to the back of the Bar 14 Restaurant lot to the farmer's access. Bar 14 Pond (private) is to the east. Use a scope from outside the gate. Return to Canyon Rd and turn south. If open, check the Ellensburg Sewer Treatment Plant on the right across from Berry Rd. Otherwise, turn east onto Berry Rd, and south at the next intersection to Morris Sorensen's Pond (private) on the left side and observe from wide spot on the eastside of Berry Rd. Continue south to Tjossem Rd, turn right and Tjossem Pond is on the right, parking on the south end. Turn south on Canyon Rd to Woodhouse Loop Rd., turn left for .2 mi, park on the left near the ponds. Continue east and south on Woodhouse Loop Rd to ponds on the right. Continue south on Woodhouse Loop across Canyon Rd onto Ringer Loop Rd. Watch for nesting Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Stop at either of the parking areas. This loop road returns east to Canyon Rd, turn right. Helen McCabe State Park is on the left at Thrall Rd. ❖ FW

24. **UMTANUM CREEK RECREATION AREA.** Riparian corridor, river, & shrub-steppe. **Birds:** pelicans, falcon, eagle, swallows (all 5 species), Canyon and Rock Wren, Lazuli Bunting, Yellow-breasted Chat & California Bighorn Sheep. **Directions:** I-90 exit 106 turn south on Canyon Rd. about 12 miles, turn right at the sign to a parking lot near the swinging bridge which crosses the Yakima River. Watch for rattlesnakes in the summer. ❖ R Fee

25. **FAIRVIEW DISTRICT LOOP.** Private farmland & pasture. **Birds:** This area is best known for wintering hawks & Bald Eagles. Also look for Barn Owls, magpies, swallows, swifts, nesting Swainson's Hawk, and a variety of migratory sparrows & warblers. **Directions:** Take Old Vantage Hwy (University Way) east from Ellensburg. Turn north on Wilson Creek Rd. The Fairview District is the farmland east & north of Wilson Creek Rd & Lyons Rd. Explore the roads by auto and park safely on the side of the road. ❖

26. **NE KITTITAS COUNTY.** Riparian, shrub-steppe climbing to high alpine near the top. Most of NE Kittitas

County above the farming areas belongs to WDFW. **BIRDS:** woodpeckers & warblers. Many roads & canyons allow access to this area. One of the best for condition & birds is Coleman Canyon. Travel east from Ellensburg on Vantage Hwy (University Way). Turn north onto No. 81 Rd, east on Brick Mill Rd, north on Cooke Canyon Rd, & west on Coleman Canyon Rd. Other areas can be explored including the Colockum Wildlife Area. DO NOT ATTEMPT COLOCKUM PASS WITHOUT 4WD. ☼ ☼ ♠ FW M C

27. **QUILOMENE/WHISKEY DICK WILDLIFE AREA.** The largest accessible shrub-steppe in the county. **Birds:** Shrub-steppe obligates including raptors, sparrows, bluebirds, shrike, & Sage Thrasher. **Directions:** From University Way (Vantage Hwy) in Ellensburg head east 18 miles. A signed parking lot is located on the north side of the highway; walking the dirt road produces the most sightings. This area is subject to seasonal wildlife and fire closures. ☼ ☼ ♠ FW C

28. **VANTAGE AREA (NORTH OF I-90).** River, cliffs, large deciduous trees, & shrub-steppe. **Birds:** wintering ducks, raptors, migrating warblers, phoebe, sparrows. **Directions:** Exit I-90 exit 136, north toward Vantage. This area is best during the winter when ducks are on the Columbia River but can also be productive during migration. Highlights include the County Boat Ramp which offers close up viewing of waterfowl behind the causeway without having to get out of your car, Ginkgo State Park Visitor Center offers a view of the Columbia River from above (a scope is advisable), and the area where the old highway crossed the river has nice access to the river with a trail that goes along the bank to the north. ❖ R

29. **COLUMBIA RIVER (SOUTH OF I-90).** River, shrub-steppe, & cliffs. **Birds:** Bald & Golden Eagles, sparrows, ducks, pelicans, egrets, herons, & loons. **Directions:** I-90 exit 136, south on Huntzinger Rd. There is very little parking along this road. Some highlights with parking are Wanapum Recreation Area day use, at Wanapum Dam and finally at JWT access. ❖ R

30. **LOWER CRAB CREEK.** Shrub-steppe, pond, wetland, & river. **Birds:** terns, ducks, loons, thrushes, sparrows, & swallows. **Directions:** This is a site across the River worth checking out (especially during spring migration). At the Columbia River: a) I-90 exit 137, south on SR26, turn right onto SR243. At MP20 Crab Creek enters the River (parking on left). b) And, east on Crab Creek Rd to Nunally Lake trailhead. ❖