SOUTHERN COLORADO BIRDING TRAIL

The mighty Cascade Range stretches the length of Oregon, from north to south, separating the interior and coastal areas from the deserts to the east. But you won't be able to avoid falling in love with other landscapes along the Colorado Birding Trail. In the treeless terrain of the prairies, many songbirds take to the sky and sing, and the air is often filled with the flight-songs of lark buntings and chestnut-tailed and McCown's longspurs. These short-grass plains are also the haunt of the rare mountain plover, a poorly named bird that sees mountains only from a distance. When you wind through the mountains, you can discover new thrush species and enjoy mountain bluebirds in the aspen groves, and prairie gophers and red crossbills chattering in the conifer forests. At the high summits, where the open landscape white with wildflowers in summer, you may see mountain plovers, a masked plover, and a host of other raptors. These birds thrive in the coolness and high altitudes, and you'll find them on the highest limits here. Everywhere in Colorado, from mountains to plains, you'll find peak experiences. For more information: www.coloradobirdertrail.org or contact Audubon Colorado (303-415-0139).

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDING TRAIL

Some of the most beautiful coastline on earth lies between San Francisco Bay and the Los Angeles basin. Not so well known—except among serious birders—is the fact that these four counties also hold hundreds of avian species. This trail, sponsored by Audubon California, leads to 83 prime birding locations. The sites are scattered through an incredible array of landscapes, from the coast to redwood forests and marshes. And this trail doesn't end at the ocean's edge; it leads you to explore offshore waters as well as the Channel Islands, where you'll find the island scrub-jay's entire world population. Back on the mainland you will see other treasures, including the flashy yellow-billed magpie, found nowhere in the world but California. A high point—literally—is the top of Mount Pinos, at almost 9,000 feet; this was one of the best places to see wild California condors before the last ones were captured for captive breeding in 1987. Today the program continues to be introduced to the wild and can be seen at other sites along the trail. For more information: http://ca-cbct.info or call Audubon California (916-649-7600).

SOUTHEASTERN ARIZONA BIRDING TRAIL

Southeastern Arizona, where isolated mountain ranges rise up like islands in the desert, lures you with more than 400 bird species, including dozens that spill across the border from Mexico. This birding trail, sponsored by the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory with help from the Tucson Audubon Society, identifies 52 key sites for finding these birds. If you go expecting to find only desert, you'll be in for a shock. Magnificent desert vistas are here, of course, but so are cold mountain forests and marshy lake basins where delightfully loud whistlers and noisy Albert's tawny owls are likely to be seen only where huge flocks of pinyon jays, harsh-voiced birds named for their taste for pinyon seeds, while at higher elevations you could find the soft-voiced Townsend's solitaire or the flashy western tanagers. In the ponderosa and fir forests, habitat for stunning red-faced warblers, Mexican chickadees, and other prized finds. Many of the sites are included as storm centers, after which. Portions of this trail are only accessible by jeep and 4x4 vehicles. For more information: www.sazabiordertrail.com or contact the Tucson Audubon Society (520-622-1602).

SOUTHERN MONTANA BIRDING TRAIL

In northeastern Montana's high plains, the surroundings and the birds are completely different. The plains and canyons along the Snake River are renowned for their concentrations of birds of prey, making it a top site for raptor biologists and enthusiasts. But most of the real action occurs at higher elevations. Brushy thickets may hold bright golden Wilson's and MacGillivray's warblers and the elusive sapsuckers, but the brash, noisy Clark's nutcracker is more likely to find you. For more information: www.montanabirdingtrail.org/cascademtn.htm or contact the Montana Natural History Center (406-392-6855).

SOUTHERN MONTANA BIRDING TRAIL

In Big Sky Country big plans are afoot to provide birding trails through six major regions of the state. Routes are already completed for the northwestern and northeastern sections, and more are in the works. In the southwest, the Bitterroot and Missoula loops are finished, majestic forests and meadows, which are open year-round to the public. The mountain town of Darby and the surrounding area are famous for their nesting peregrine falcons, while at higher elevations you could see the soft-voiced Townsend's solitaire or the flashy western tanagers. In the ponderosa and fir forests, habitat for stunning red-faced warblers, Mexican chickadees, and other prized finds. Many of the sites are included as storm centers, after which. Portions of this trail are only accessible by jeep and 4x4 vehicles. For more information: www.montanabirdingtrail.org/cascademtn.htm or contact the Montana Natural History Center (406-392-6855).

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