

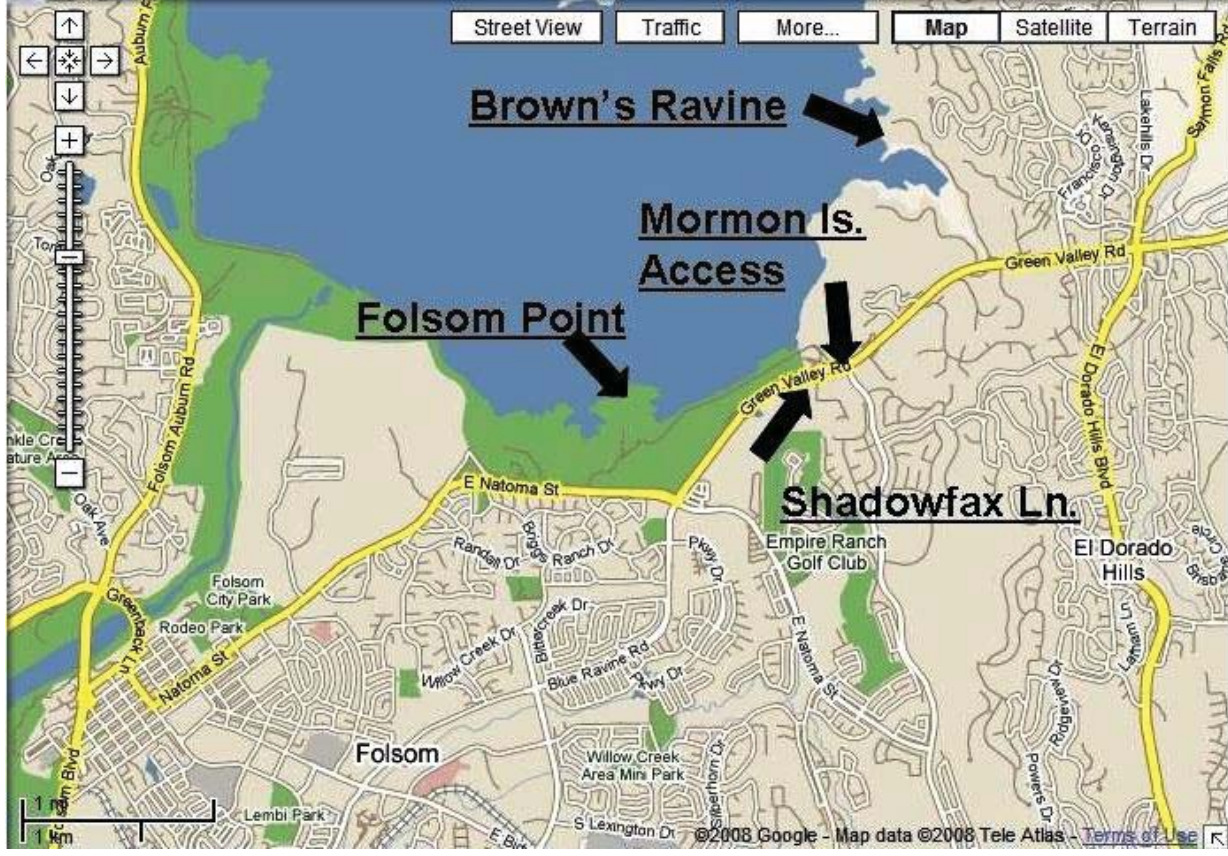
Folsom Lake Overview

Folsom Lake and other large reservoirs are magnets for water birds and can function almost like inland seas. As many as 100,000 gulls may be found roosting on the lake in winter. Most of them are California Gulls, along with many Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. With persistence, you can find Mew, Thayer's, and Glaucous-winged Gulls. With luck you might find a Glaucous Gull or something truly rare. Common Loons are expected in winter, sometimes a dozen or more, with Pacific Loons probably annual. Rarities have included all three species of scoter (fall, winter), Sabine's Gull (fall), and Common Tern (fall). There are often huge rafts of Western Grebes, which usually include many Clark's Grebes. Eared Grebes, and, more surprising for an inland location, Horned Grebes can be found in good numbers as well.

In addition to the lake, there are large sections of oak woodland and chaparral ringing the lake, with many miles of trails to provide wonderful birding. The lake and its surroundings are managed as Folsom Lake State Recreation Area by California State Parks. Only a sampling of the sites available to visit is included below. Areas that were once accessible from the Folsom Dam Road, and the road itself, are now closed for security reasons.

Parking fees range from **\$5 to \$12** depending on the location and the time of year. Payment of an entrance fee at any unit of the state parks system **should** grant access to any other access point with an equal or lesser fee; however, staff at Brown's Ravine have been resistant to honoring fees paid at self-registration sites. If your visit will include Brown's Ravine, getting your pass there first may save aggravation. Electronic payment stations have been installed at some access points. Unfortunately, they are not always working properly. For the latest on fees and other information, call the district office at 916-988-0205, or visit the state parks' Web site (parks.ca.gov).

Cars have been broken into at remote lots. Natural hazards include ticks, poison oak, and rattlesnakes. There are occasional reports of mountain lions.



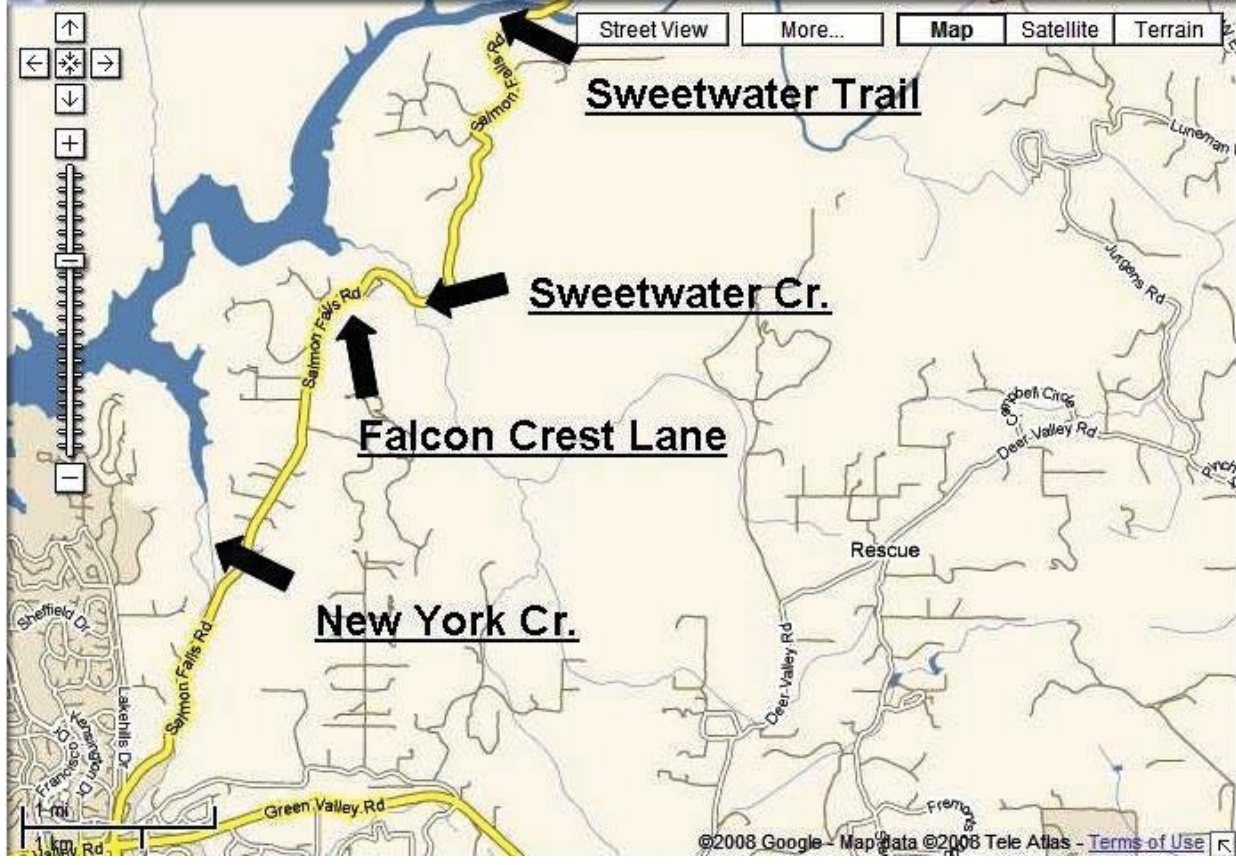
Folsom Point to Sweetwater Creek

Folsom Point juts out into the lake and is one of several good areas for scoping water birds. The open oak woodland usually harbors fair numbers of Western Bluebirds and other expected species for this habitat. Drive to the picnic area at the end of the road and scan the water. A spotting scope is almost essential to identify any but the closest birds.

Not far from Folsom Point is the Mormon Island Preserve (see directions). Along Green Valley Road, just before reaching Sophia Parkway, the Mormon Island Preserve will be on your right. You can park along Green Valley Road and walk through an opening in the fence. Alternately, a right turn on Shadowfax Lane, in another 0.2 mile, will take you to the Mormon Island Cemetery. You can park at the end of the road. There aren't many trees in the cemetery, but the old headstones are interesting, and there have been Red-breasted Sapsuckers here. You can check the Mormon Island Preserve by walking along Shadowfax Lane and walking the informal paths through the woods. It can be good for sparrows in winter and migrants in season. Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers (irregular) can be found in the ponds. Rubber boots might be needed since it is often soggy or partially flooded.

Back on Green Valley Road, at the intersection with Sophia Parkway, turn left to reach the Mormon Island lake access (currently closed—park on Sophia Parkway, cross Green Valley Road at crosswalk, and walk up levee). From the parking area, walk up the hill to get another view of the lake, and continue on a trail toward Brown's Ravine. Rock Wrens are often found in the rocks on and near the dike, and Rufous-crowned Sparrows may be present. The trail from here to Brown's Ravine has proven to be an excellent location for Phainopeplas. Hairy Woodpeckers (perhaps just one pair) and Purple Finches are also regularly found.

Another mile east on Green Valley Road will take you to Brown's Ravine. Turn left. Immediately past the entrance kiosk is a road on the right leading to a small parking area. This is a trailhead that leads back across the park road, through nice oak woodland toward the Mormon Island access (about two miles). The trail goes for many miles in the other direction as well. Brown's Ravine is also a good location for scanning the lake; pass the marina to the road's end at the boat ramp.



Folsom Lake Area

From Brown's Ravine, continue east on Green Valley Road for 0.7 mile and turn left on Salmon Falls Road. Unfortunately, many of the good locations to check along Salmon Falls Road, such as New York Creek, are now marked with "No Parking" signs. One exception is the large dirt lot (no fee) at Falcon Crest Lane on the north side of Salmon Falls Road (2.9 miles from Green Valley Road). Currently, there is an old wooden sign, but the metal street sign for Falcon Crest is missing. You can park here and walk a portion of the Monte Vista Trail (it is 3.5 miles to New York Creek). You can also walk or drive down the nicely forested steep road for 0.4 mile to a parking area (\$3 fee). If the water is low, there are good views of the Old Salmon Falls Bridge in the lake. With two cars, you could do a very long shuttle hike between here and Brown's Ravine (12 miles).

There is still legal parking (no fee) at Sweetwater Creek. From Brown's Ravine, continue east on Green Valley Road for 0.7 mile. Turn left on Salmon Falls Road and go 3.8 miles (0.9 mile beyond Falcon Crest Lane). Immediately after crossing the creek, park in the dirt lot on the left side of the road. The upstream portion of the riparian is private property and is conspicuously signed. From the parking area (be careful of the traffic), listen for singing California Thrashers and Yellow-breasted Chats. Mountain Quail may be heard on the chaparral slopes above. You can walk the park land on the north side of Salmon Falls Road down to Folsom Lake. The vegetation here is a mix of oak woodland and chaparral, with a thin band of riparian along Sweetwater Creek. It is best here in early morning. Continue another 0.2 mile east on Salmon Falls Road (4.0 miles from Green Valley Road) to one of the few places where you can pull off the road. It is worth a quick stop to listen for more chaparral species. Unfortunately, enormous houses are carving up swaths of the habitat here.

Continuing 1.8 miles on Salmon Falls Road from Sweetwater Creek (5.6 miles from Green Valley Road) will lead to a sharp left turn to the large parking area for the Sweetwater Trail (\$3 fee). It is a nice walk through oak woodland, high above the upper reaches of Folsom Lake.

Directions: To reach Folsom Point, from Highway 50, take the Folsom Boulevard exit (exit 23)—18.5 miles east of Interstate 5). Go north for 1.5 miles and turn right on Blue Ravine Road. Go 4.6 miles to East Natoma Street. Turn left and go 0.5 mile. Turn right to reach the Folsom Point access.

If you go straight at the intersection of Blue Ravine Road and East Natoma Street, the road becomes Green Valley Road. From this point, it

Folsom Lake Area

is 0.8 mile to the Mormon Island Preserve, 1.0 mile to Shawdowfax Lane, 1.2 miles to the Mormon Island lake access opposite Sophia Parkway, and 2.2 miles to Brown's Ravine.

To reach the Sweetwater Creek area directly, take the El Dorado Hills Boulevard exit (exit 30B) from Highway 50 (29 miles east of Interstate 5). Go north on El Dorado Hills Boulevard for 4.5 miles to Green Valley Road. Continuing straight, the road becomes Salmon Falls Road. From Green Valley Road, it is 2.9 miles to Falcon Crest Lane, 3.8 miles to Sweetwater Creek, and 5.6 miles to the Sweetwater Trail.

Beals Point

Beals Point is probably the single best location for viewing large numbers of gulls and water birds on Folsom Lake. From late October through March, this is usually the best spot to watch thousands of gulls flying in to roost on the lake. Bruce Webb reports that the show usually begins around 3 p.m. and lasts until dusk. Large groups will often stop along the shore, giving you a chance to identify them, before heading out onto the lake to spend the night. As many as 14 Common Loons have been recorded just from this site. Depending on the water levels, you can scan the lake from near the parking area, or you will want to walk up to a quarter-mile down to the waterline. A spotting scope is very helpful. Rock Wrens and Rufous-crowned Sparrows are often seen. The campground area is also worth checking. More information is available at Birding Hotspots of Placer County (placerbirding.com) by Bruce Webb.

Directions: From Sacramento, take Interstate 80 east for 17 miles from Interstate 5 to East Douglas Boulevard (exit 103A). Head east on Douglas for 5.2 miles, and turn right on Auburn Folsom Road. After 1.8 miles, turn left at the Beals Point access.

Alternately, from Highway 50, go east from Interstate 5 in Sacramento for 18.5 miles to the Folsom Boulevard exit (exit 23). Go north for 3.6 miles. At Greenback Avenue the road becomes Folsom Auburn Road. Continue 2.6 miles to the Beals Point access. Note that the road name changes to Auburn Folsom Road once it crosses from Sacramento to Placer County.

Granite Bay Entrance

To reach Beek's Bight, you will go through the Granite Bay entrance (see below). Along the way, you will encounter oak woodland habitat that can