

Folsom Lake Area

Folsom Lake Peninsula

The peninsula between the north and south arm of Folsom Lake is the most remote portion of the recreation area. There are extensive stands of chaparral along Rattlesnake Bar Road before reaching the entrance station. Nearer the lake, there is nice oak woodland habitat mixed with pines and good opportunities for hiking and for scanning the lake for waterbirds. Bald Eagles are often found here in winter. A campground offers the chance to spend the night and really explore this interesting and under-birded area. For details on camping, check with California State Parks (contact information listed at the beginning of the Folsom Lake section).

Birding the site: On the drive in, before reaching the state parks' property, there are extensive stands of chaparral. A check of these areas early in the morning could yield California Thrashers, and, possibly, Sage Sparrows. Lewis's Woodpeckers have also been found along this road and in the recreation area. The trees at the entrance station have proven to be very reliable for Phainopeplas.

The road between the entrance station and the campground often produces many sparrows (including Rufous-crowned Sparrows) in the brushy areas and riparian blackberry thickets. Continue to the campground, swing left, and park near the south end. A nature trail begins between campsites 87 and 89. In recent years, numbered trail markers have not been maintained. Take the trail south, and it will lead you to several trail options to the south and east that all provide a good mix of foothill oak savannah and grassland birds, as well as views of the lake. When the lake is low, the rocky exposed areas host many Rock Wrens. In some winters, Lewis's Woodpeckers and Varied Thrushes can be found, while in others, they are absent.

Keep an eye out for Bald Eagles. They are usually here in winter. Burrowing Owls have been found sheltering among the rocks on a few occasions, and a Northern Shrike was found near the very tip of the peninsula on the Folsom Christmas Bird Count in 2004. On the drive out, take the road (left) to the picnic area before you come back to the entrance station. This provides additional views of the lake, and the trees in this area often have Red-breasted Sapsuckers in winter.

Directions: From Sacramento, take Interstate 80 east (32 miles from Interstate 5) to Auburn. Take the Highway 49 exit and turn right, toward Placerville. Continue on Highway 49 for 10 miles, through the American

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River canyon, and turn right on Rattlesnake Bar Road. It is about 9 miles to the state parks' property, but look for good areas to stop and check the chaparral on the way in.

Alternately, take the El Dorado Hills Boulevard 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 12 miles to Rattlesnake Bar Road. Turn left and follow the directions above.

This is an update of the original version by Brennan Davis, with suggestions from Ed Pandolfino.



