

Yolo County

and the viewing conditions are usually very good, since the strip is narrow enough to keep the birds close to you. This area is excellent for *Empidonax* flycatchers and has produced rarities including Chestnut-sided Warbler, Ovenbird, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. There is simply no better place to be during migration. Walk the road, looking and listening for birds, but also beware of the infrequent cars.

If you are going to spend a good deal of time walking along Babel Slough Road, it is best to park on South River Road and walk west. Local landowners are sometimes hostile to people parking along Babel Slough Road, probably because they are wary of people dumping trash there. The road runs for over three miles between Jefferson Boulevard and South River Road, but most of the birder coverage has been in the first half-mile west from South River Road.

Directions: From Sacramento, at Interstate 5 and Highway 50/Capital City Freeway, head west on Highway 50/Capital City Freeway. Cross the Sacramento River and exit at Jefferson Boulevard in West Sacramento. After winding under the freeway, head south on Jefferson Boulevard for 1.2 miles. Turn left on South River Road, and go 2.7 miles to the Wood Duck Ponds (0.6 mile south of Linden Road) and park.

Babel Slough Road is another 5.6 miles south on South River Road. To go there directly from Sacramento, follow the directions to the Jefferson Boulevard exit (above), then head south for 3.6 miles on Jefferson Boulevard, and turn left at Gregory Avenue. After 1.2 miles, turn right on South River Road, and you will reach Babel Slough Road in 2.7 miles.

Davis City Limits

Davis provides several excellent sites for birders. Davis residents can reach them on foot, by bike, or very short drives. A dedicated corps of Yolo Audubon birders covers these sites very well, and rarities are often reported. A small sample of the available birding opportunities follows. Additional sites are detailed in *Birding in Yolo County, CA* (geocities.com/RainForest/Canopy/6181/yolo.html) by Steve Hampton.

The University of California, Davis Arboretum, in addition to other large trees on the U.C. campus, has produced excellent rarities (notably Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Red Crossbills) and often provides good birding. There are nice remnant oaks on the highly altered remains of the Putah Creek channel that runs through campus, in addition to plants representing many different regions. Conifers on campus often harbor Red-breasted Nuthatches (fall through early spring). Chestnut-backed

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Chickadees (winter) are sometimes found in the pines and oaks along the arboretum trails. There has been a rookery of Black-crowned Night-Herons, Snowy Egrets, and Cattle Egrets at the western portion of the arboretum. The arboretum setting is very nice, but is somewhat marred by the loud roar of traffic.

From Interstate 80, about 14 miles west of Sacramento, take the U.C. Davis exit (exit 71) and turn right. It currently costs \$6 to park in the lots along Old Davis Road and elsewhere on campus. From Old Davis Road, walk north to the trails that parallel the old creek channel. You may be able to find parking along the street at the western end of the arboretum. From Old Davis Road, turn left at California Avenue, and left at La Rue Road. After 0.4 mile, turn left on Garrod Drive and park near the gazebo.

Putah Creek Riparian Preserve is west of the main U.C. Davis campus and provides access to additional riparian habitat. It is usually more peaceful than the arboretum. Take Highway 113 north from Interstate 80 (about 14.5 miles west of Sacramento). Exit on Hutchinson Drive after 1.2 miles. Turn left, and go 1.3 miles on Hutchinson Drive before turning left on Hopkins Road. At the end of Hopkins Road in one mile, head left and park at the picnic grounds. Another access is from Pedrick Rd. Exit Interstate 80 at Pedrick Rd (17.5 miles west of Sacramento), go north for 2.6 miles and turn left into gravel lot after crossing Putah Creek. Walk under the bridge and continue downstream were many migrants and rarities have been found.

Slide Hill Park has produced numerous interesting finds, including Mountain Chickadee, Cassin's Finch, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak. Take the Mace Boulevard exit from Interstate 80 (ten miles west of Sacramento). Head north on Mace Boulevard (which will become East Covell Boulevard) for 1.8 miles and turn left on Monarch Lane. Turn right on Temple Drive in 0.1 mile and park in the lot or along the street. The trees in the surrounding neighborhood can be just as productive as those in the park.

North Pond is a small area of wetlands and trees that can be covered fairly quickly. There is a boardwalk that provides access to different views of the wetlands. When conditions are right, shorebirds can allow very close study. It is a good place to look for Short-billed Dowitchers among the common Long-billed Dowitchers and Lesser Yellowlegs among the Greater Yellowlegs. A Ruff was once found here among the dowitchers. Take the Mace Boulevard exit from Interstate 80 (10 miles

west of Sacramento). Head north on Mace Boulevard (which will become East Covell Boulevard), and in 3.5 miles, turn right on F Street. In 0.9 mile, turn left on Anderson Road and left into the parking lot.



North Davis Farms is another very productive site. It can be excellent in migration. Take the Mace Boulevard exit from Interstate 80 (ten miles west of Sacramento). Head north on Mace Boulevard (which will become East Covell Boulevard), and in 4.2 miles, turn right on Anderson Road. In 0.6 mile, turn left on Falcon Avenue, then turn right on Goshawk Street and left on Kestrel Place. Park and walk past the end of the street, and cross the channel on the foot bridge. There are a lot of good trees to check, but you shouldn't miss those along the pond to your right. Also walk west along North Davis Farms Road to check the other pond. You can turn right on Northfield Court and walk to the end. Currently, birders check the trees on the north side of the vacant lot, but access there may change.

Wildhorse Golf Course and Agricultural Buffer is THE place to go to see Burrowing Owls at close range. Take the Mace Boulevard exit from Interstate 80 (ten miles west of Sacramento). Head north on Mace Boulevard (which will become East Covell Boulevard), and in 2.0 miles, turn right on Wright Boulevard. At the traffic circle, turn right onto Moore Boulevard. After 0.4 mile, turn right on Rockwell Drive. Park at the end of the street and walk to the trail. Head north (left). After crossing the small creek, you will see the constructed Burrowing Owl burrows on the left. The owls will be at these burrows as well as at natural burrows created by California ground squirrels. The path bends to the left, and if you walk a quarter-mile beyond the creek, you should see plenty of owls (in a recent visit, 24 owls were seen). They are habituated to people, and are often very close to the trail. They can be outside their burrows all day, but are the least visible in the middle of the day. If you wait until dusk, they become more active and vocal, and you may even see them hovering over the fields.

Willowbank Ditch is another small park gem that often provides excellent birding, especially in migration. Take the Mace Boulevard exit from Interstate 80 (ten miles west of Sacramento). Turn left over the freeway, and head south for 1.0 mile on Mace Boulevard. Turn right onto Montgomery Avenue, then, in 0.2 mile, turn right on Rosario Street. Park near the end of Rosario Street, and walk the bridge across the channel. A Winter Wren is sometimes here in winter. The trail goes in both directions along the nice stand of trees, but is generally more productive to the west.

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