

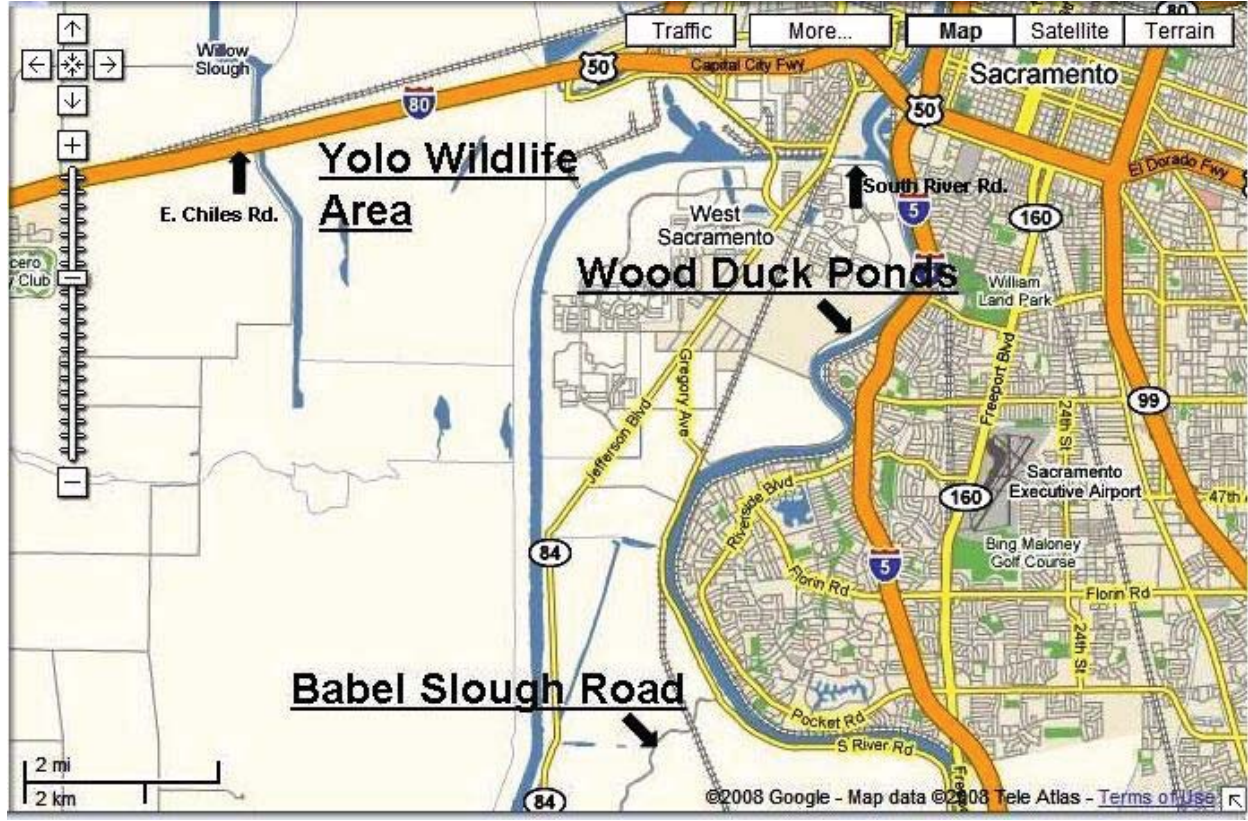
Yolo Wildlife Area (also known as the Vic Fazio Wildlife Area)

This Globally Important Wildlife Area now contains more than 25,000 acres and is just minutes from downtown Sacramento. Both seasonal and permanent wetlands are present as well as riparian woodland and valley grassland, providing habitat for a large variety of birds. Seasonal flooding provides key habitat for countless waterfowl migrating along the Pacific Flyway, one of four major migratory routes in the United States.

The wildlife area is open to the public when the bypass is not flooded. General hours are sunrise to sunset, with the wildlife area closed on Christmas Day. The entrance gate may be closed on holidays if staff are unavailable. During hunting season (September-February), auto and pedestrian access is limited to the auto tour loop. Additional areas are open to autos and pedestrians the rest of the year. You may park along the gravel roads as well as in designated parking areas. A number of foot trails are available from various parking lots. The headquarters, which features exhibits of local birds, is located on Chiles Road (parallel to and south of Interstate 80) west of the entrance to the wildlife area.

Birding the site: Shorebirds and waterfowl are often present in large numbers from fall through spring, depending on water levels. Occasional Tricolored Blackbirds and Yellow-headed Blackbirds are seen from spring through fall. Raptors abound, including nesting Swainson's Hawks and Northern Harriers. American Bitterns, Soras, and Virginia Rails can sometimes be found. River otters are present in the canals and ponds year-round.

Cinnamon Teal are common, and Ruddy Ducks and Gadwalls are present year-round. Green-winged Teal and occasional Blue-winged Teal can be found except during mid-summer months. When the bypass is flooded, diving ducks can be present in large numbers. At times, thousands of Canvasbacks, Ring-necked Ducks, and Lesser Scaup can be seen; when the causeway is flooded, these birds can be scoped from the levee at the entrance gate. This is the most reliable site in the Sacramento area to find Greater Scaup. American White Pelicans utilize the deeper ponds for feeding. Large flocks of Greater Yellowlegs often contain Lesser Yellowlegs. These and large dowitcher flocks may contain an occasional Ruff, and shorebird concentrations can attract a Peregrine Falcon or Merlin. Rarities are possible, with Glossy Ibis, Curlew Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, and American Tree Sparrow seen in recent years.



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In summer, southern migration results in large numbers of swallows, including Tree, Cliff, Barn and occasional Bank. Horned Larks breed in the wildlife area and Savannah Sparrows are recently discovered breeders. Common Yellowthroats and Marsh Wrens are numerous. White-faced Ibis, occasionally numbering in the thousands, may be found flying into and over the area to roost at night and to feed in the surrounding fields during the day.

Directions: Take Interstate 80 west across the Yolo Causeway (about 6.5 miles from Sacramento) and exit at East Chiles Road/Road 32A (exit 78) at the west end of the causeway. Turn right at the stop sign and pass under the freeway. Immediately turn left, drive up onto the levee, then drop down into the wildlife area. The auto loop is posted along the way.

Updated maps & info.: <http://yolobasin.org/about-wildlife-area/>

Maureen Geiger

Wood Duck Ponds and Babel Slough

These two sites just west of the Sacramento River are excellent for migrant songbirds in spring and fall and can be good for sparrows in winter. Large numbers of Swainson's Hawks often gather along the river in late summer and fall before they head south.

Birding the site: Coming from Sacramento, you will reach the Wood Duck Ponds first. Park on the side of South River Road and walk through the riparian tangles on old roads and informal trails. Use caution, as there have been homeless encampments and a lot of trash dumping here. The two ponds can have dozens of Wood Ducks—unfortunately there is usually a greater number of floating tires. When there is a good pulse of migrants, the woods here can be hopping with warblers and other songbirds.

Babel Slough Road heads west from South River Road, 5.6 miles south of the Wood Duck Ponds. You can park along the east side (river side) of South River Road, just north of Babel Slough Road. There is also a good pull-out on Babel Slough Road 0.2 mile west of South River Road. In recent years, Babel Slough has gotten more coverage than the Wood Duck Ponds. It is often very productive. The narrow strip of trees on either side of the road holds a disproportionately large number of birds,

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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