

Placer and Sutter Counties

Brewer Road Area to the West of Lincoln

This unassuming and unsung area holds some of the greatest raptor concentrations in the region. The rice fields can host immense flocks of Snow Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese, and Tundra Swans. When water conditions are right, the shorebirding can be very good. It has consistently produced longspurs among the Horned Lark flocks. The Lincoln Christmas Bird Count, begun in 2002, is documenting the avian riches. Despite its value to wildlife, much of the area is under heavy development pressure.

Additional information is available at the Birding Hotspots of Placer County Web site (placerbirding.com) by Bruce Webb.

Birding the site: A good place to start is on Brewer Road at the junction of Nicolaus Road. Look for Horned Lark flocks along Brewer Road in the first mile north from the junction. Knowing the longspurs' calls is very helpful. Chestnut-collared, Lapland, and McCown's Longspurs have been found here (late fall through early spring). The first Ruff and Glossy Ibis for Placer County also were reported here.

Heading north on Brewer Road from Nicolaus Road, it is 2.0 miles north to Wise Road, 2.6 miles to Hicks Road, 3.0 miles to Waltz Road, and 4.0 miles to Kempton Road. There is a nice riparian patch at Hicks Road. Wise and Waltz Roads both go east for 4.0 miles to the north/south running Dowd Road. Kempton Road makes its way east to Placer Road, which goes north to both Dalby and Riosa Roads; both of these lead to Dowd Road; all are worth checking for raptors, waterfowl, shorebirds, and sparrows. Pleasant Grove Road, to the west, runs parallel to Brewer Road. It is worth checking, though the traffic is often heavy.

Raptors, including Bald Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks (variable year to year), Prairie Falcons, and Merlins are regularly recorded in winter. Short-eared Owls may be found at dusk—recently a good number were found on Waltz Road (1.5 miles east of Brewer Road, west of the Placer/Sutter County line). Depending on water levels, check promising fields for shorebirds and waterfowl. Careful scrutiny of Tundra Swan flocks might produce Trumpeter Swans or Bewick's Swans. Also, check the sparrow flocks. There can be astonishing numbers of Savannah Sparrows and White-crowned Sparrows, and the occasional Vesper Sparrow. Tricolored Blackbirds are usually among the blackbird flocks in winter.



North of Sacramento

Brewer Road is also productive south of Nicolaus Road (it ends in 10 miles at Base Line Road—heading west, it becomes Riego Road, and meets Highway 99/70). Depending on water levels, the area near the intersection with East Cattlett Road (3.5 miles south of Nicolaus Road) can have thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds. Heading east on East Cattlett can produce Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, and Burrowing Owls have been seen along this stretch.

Bruce Webb suggests checking Moore Road where it crosses Auburn Ravine Creek (1.0 mile east of Dowd Road, or 5.0 miles east of Brewer Road). Moore Road is 2.0 miles south of Nicolaus Road. Least Flycatcher and Blackpoll Warbler have been found there.

The Lincoln Wastewater Treatment Plant can be very good for waterfowl and shorebirds. It is on Fiddlyment Road, just south of Moore Road (1.5 miles east of Dowd Road or 2.8 miles west of Joiner Parkway (see directions below). You need to stop by the office on Fiddlyment Road before driving into treatment plant. The staff has been very accommodating to birders. The plant is open until 3:30 p.m. on weekdays only.

Directions: From Sacramento, take Interstate 5 for seven miles north of Highway 50. Take the Highway 99/Highway 70 exit (exit 525B) toward Marysville/Yuba City. After 10 miles, exit at Howsley Road (exit 316) and turn right. After 3.0 miles, turn left on Pleasant Grove Road. After 5.0 miles, turn right on Marcum Road. It becomes Nicolaus Road in 1.0 mile, and reaches Brewer Road in 0.9 mile (7.5 miles west of Lincoln).

You can also reach Lincoln by taking Highway 65 northwest from Interstate 80 (19 miles east of Interstate 5). It is about 10 miles to Lincoln. To reach Nicolaus Road, turn right on Sterling Parkway 8.8 miles from Interstate 80. Turn left on East Lincoln Parkway, which becomes Joiner Parkway, and then reaches Nicolaus Road in 2.0 miles. From there, it is 7.5 miles west to Brewer Road.

Chris Conard and Scott Hoppe

