

REEDSPORT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT AREAS: DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGY

Version 22DEC2015

Ocean Boat

If seas are suitable, a charter will take us out to this sector. Priority birds to locate are tubenoses, kittiwake, alcids, and rare seaducks, but even some gulls may be missed by land-based teams, so diligently record all species. Do some chumming, using beef fat, popcorn, and oil.

Estuary Boat

A charter (or private) boat with one or more birders will count the birds in the otherwise mostly inaccessible portion of the river between Salmon Harbor and Gardiner. Birds on mudflats and adjacent forested areas and marshes will also be counted.

South Jetty

Note that parking permits are required in some areas and not others. No permit needed to park out near Coast Guard tower (but park 100 ft or more back from the fenced enclosure under the tower). Need county permit if parking near Half Moon Bay or in 1st beach access parking area. Need USFS or other federal permit (e.g. NW Forest Pass) to park at 2nd and 3rd parking areas. Seawatch and scan triangle from foredune just W of Coast Guard tower. On and near the jetties look for Black Turnstone, Surfbird, Ruddy Turnstone, Rock Sandpiper, Black Oystercatcher, Harlequin Duck, Long-tailed Duck. Scrutinize all gulls and cormorants etc on the black barrels in the triangle; search for Herring, Thayer's, Heerman's, Glaucous Gulls, and Black-legged Kittiwake. Scan/scope ocean for shearwaters, fulmar, jaeger, kittiwake, alcids. Scan/scope river; try to find all loon, grebe, and cormorant species. Only count S half of river unless N Spit team can't make it to river. Note any rare species on N side of river. Walk loop and/or trails in coastal scrub south of inland jetty and east of triangle. Seawatch at platform at 2nd beach access. Note, no vehicles are allowed on the beach from the jetties south, so it must be walked. Walk wrack line of beach (total 2 miles from S Jetty triangle to S end of circle), looking for Snowy Plover, Mountain Plover, Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, Burrowing Owl, pipits, etc. Scan ocean and beach. Go into foredunes to count Marsh Wrens and find a surprise Short-eared Owl or Snowy Owl. Stop several places along Salmon Harbor Drive (N-S road that leads to beach access parking), especially where there are low-lying sumps and puddles, and spish and toot up songbirds. There is a nice willow patch at the north end of the southernmost (3rd) parking area. Check out Discovery Point Resort (ATVs), and road up to and including Umpqua Lighthouse. Also walk up Sunset Dr. and Glen Dee Ln. Walk around Lighthouse area grounds, scan dunes from viewpoint. Visit Lake Marie and campground (maybe Gray Jays?).

Ideas/options for beach wrack line coverage:

(1) Walk separately and leap-frog with car--If two people have keys to a car, you can drop a person off at one access, drive to the next, get out and walk the next stretch, while the previous person ends up at the car location and drives to the next spot or the end (where you both meet

up). (2) Walk loops together--You could walk a loop from one access to another and back along the road. (3) The pouring rain option--just go out a little from each access.

North Spit

This includes the North Jetty, adjacent river and seas, beach north to but not including the mouth of Threemile Creek (but take a look and note composition of any flocks there, please), and the north spit proper all the way to, but not including, the flats and river (except at jetties, where you count to middle of river). The beach can be driven (suitable vehicle or ATV). Keep eyes on wrack line for Snowy Plover, Mountain Plover, Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, Burrowing Owl, pipits, etc. Sift through shorebird flocks on beach. Do short seawatches from beach or foredune every half mile or so; search for shearwaters, alcids, kittiwake, jaeger. Spit accessed via the clam bed road (43.733553, -124.186280, <https://goo.gl/maps/RsjMSE3e1sn>, requires good sand vehicle or ATV or by foot). There is a road going upriver at the base of the N Jetty, but it doesn't go very far. Thick brush and/or water make it nearly impossible to just hike in east to the center of the spit. The deflation plain of the spit often has some significant water which has in the past housed wintering Tundra Swans. Farther toward the E and the river, the sand is less vegetated and some very large dunes are present. The sparsely vegetated area in between might be a good area for Snowy Owl, Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, etc. On and near the jetties look for Black Turnstone, Surf-bird, Ruddy Turnstone, Rock Sandpiper, Black Oystercatcher, Harlequin Duck, Long-tailed Duck. Count to middle of river only. Note any rare species on S side of river on back of tally sheet.

Sparrow Park Rd

Includes all of Sparrow Park Road and any accessible land adjacent. Stop every half mile or so in different looking habitats: clearcuts, young forest, older forest, riparian woods, marshy area.

Cover all ocean, beach, and dune habitat from the mouth of Threemile Creek north to, but not including, the mouth of Tahkenitch Creek (but please sift and count any flocks there and note on back of tally sheet).

Includes only the south half of Threemile Lake, as there is a trail coming in from the south from near the end of Sparrow Park Rd.

Winchester Bay

Walk the entire boat basin from all sides. Be sure to walk near edges and look down at the rock and mud edges for turnstones, other shorebirds, pipits, etc. Scan the water for all forms of waterfowl. Scan the docks as well for gulls and other interesting things that may be perched there. Scope the river from the north end parking area. Also at this parking area is often a flock of gulls. This area is one of the best for gulls, so thoroughly check the gulls. Perhaps surprisingly, Ring-billed Gull can be hard to find here, so look specifically for that species. Also search hard for Thayer's and Herring. Certainly search for Glaucous, but they are easier to notice when they are present! Check the brushy hillside next to the Coast Guard parking lot. Walk all through Orc Rock County Park. Walk all the residential streets in Winchester Bay, including up

the hill to the east on Appian Way. Just north of town, walk in and ask to walk to the back of the RV camp area. Walk a loop around the Winchester Bay RV Resort (west side of Salmon Harbor). Walk the grassy/sandy area north of the big berm at the north end of the Winchester Bay RV Resort (sometimes has Wilson's Snipe, Western Meadowlark, and Savannah Sparrow). Also scope the river from the north end and look along the river edge at the rocks. Try to find all loon, grebe, and cormorant species. Walk the several Windy Cove parks on the S side of the Salmon Harbor Road. Walk out the long elevated crab dock and scan all sides of the spur jetty that comes off the same parking area. Repeatedly scan and scope the bays as birds move in and out all the time, and some are underwater for a substantial amount of time.

Smith River S

Entrance to this section is at the S Smith River Rd bridge off Lower Smith River Rd. Areas to cover include the river at this bridge, Dawson-Stowe Marsh (directly S of the bridge on W side) and adjacent areas (walk much of road south of bridge); Swamp Sparrows have been found on the east side just south of the thick willow patch. You can bird out Dawson Section Rd to the W, to the point of gated No Trespassing (no permission yet). Along S Smith River Rd, there are not many great pulloff areas; stop where you can and walk to get views of good habitat.

Butler Creek Road (195) winds south from S Smith River Rd, up and over a ridge and down the other side. The road is pretty good, gravel some places, paved others. At the ridge, less used roads head E and W; these are probably best walked, if covered at all; use your discretion. Along Butler Creek Rd look for Ruffed Grouse, Sooty Grouse, Gray Jay, Mountain Quail, Hutton's Vireo, Varied Thrush. Public access to Butler Creek Road ends on the south side well before reaching the river. We have permission from the manager of Butler Creek Farms to bird the area along the north side of the Umpqua River (ask compiler for contact info).

At 2059 S Smith River Rd., we have permission to enter the property (via driveway) and count birds. The owner is Elizabeth Baumgartner (ask Matt for phone number).

Just to the E is Otter Slough Rd on the right, which winds generally ESE. At just over a half mile in, public access ends on Otter Slough Rd (I am requesting permission to bird farther out Otter Slough Rd.).

However, NF-41, a medium-quality gravel road takes off to the S, crosses Otter Slough, winds S up the hill, then continues E along the ridge and eventually out of the circle. Up on the ridge there are several spots with deep potholes, etc.; use your own discretion. In Nov 2015, Ruffed Grouse was observed on the lower portion winding S, and Gray Jays were pygmy-owl-whistled in when first reaching the top.

Forest roads coming off Otter Slough Rd and S Smith River Rd are gated and/or no trespassing.

Continuing to wind roughly NE on S Smith River Rd., stop wherever you can and walk to get good vantage points where necessary.

Smith River N

Currently includes only Lower Smith River Rd and the lower portion of Kingfisher Lane and Blue Heron Lane which goes up to the Cozy Cattail vacation rental.

On Lower Smith River Rd, again there are not many good pullouts, so use what is there and walk to get more vantage points. Target Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Cattle Egret and count everything else; ducks, hawks, songbirds, etc. Count anything you see in the river.

We have permission from Sharon Mast (Myrtlewood Gallery, ask compiler for contact info) to count birds around the Cozy Cattail vacation rental, so count birds on Kingfisher Lane and then Blue Heron Lane on the way up, both private drives.

Longwood Dr Forest

[Currently not accessible]

Estuary Point Forest

Robin Wachs owns 250 acres at the north tip of this area and can provide access to her property. Stay on roads. Look for songbirds, quail, grouse, raptors. (Ask Matt for Robin's phone number and/or email.)

Reedsport West

Drive or walk many of the streets in west Reedsport, looking for concentrations of birds and feeders. Get out and walk the more promising and/or birdy areas.

NORTH OF HWY101: Cruise streets and walk areas that look best. Go to the north ends of 18th (residential), 19th (Assembly of God Church), and 20th streets (vacant lots?). Wild Turkeys have been seen off Westwood Court, off Ranch Road. Walk the path in the Bicentennial Park, accessed off Forest Hills Road just 2 ½ blocks north of Hwy 101. Take a scan at the golf course. Drive out Ranch Road to the end (near corrals and loading chute), where there should be good views of waterfowl. We have permission to walk out roads off the end of Ranch Rd. (but need to coordinate with Owner Mark Holliday close to time of count, ask compiler for contact info). Stop several places in the Ranch Road lowlands, or walk most of that. Keep an eye/ear out for Swamp Sparrow, Tropical Kingbird, Say's Phoebe, Cattle Egret, wintering warblers, etc.

SOUTH OF HWY 101: In December 2006 Hooded Orioles were located at 2611 Bowman Rd., homeowner Tim Gannon. May be able to walk up into the hills a bit south from S 22nd St., near the High School. One of my favorite feeder locations in years past is at the NE corner of S 20th and Alder. There are lots of good areas here, just cruise slowly and/or walk areas that look best.

[Still no access to Decker Point Rd.]

Reedsport East

Walk most all the streets in east Reedsport. Look for concentrations of birds and feeders. Walk the dike that goes from Champion Park (just north from the intersection of Hwy 101 and Hwy 38), west then south then east along Scholfield Creek. Check out the small pond next to the dike just S of Hwy 101. If you have a canoe or kayak, paddle up Scholfield Creek. There is also a "trail" and dike that you can walk from where Port Dock Rd goes under Hwy 101; the trail and dike go E then SE along a slough that should be birded well. The dike meets up with a different dike near a railroad at the SE end; here you can walk NNE on the dike all the way to the river, then wind your way on Port Dock Rd industrial area back to where you started. You can scope the river from near the Umpqua Discovery Center and Rainbow Plaza off Riverfront Way (there are several docks and boat ramps in the area, as well as a restroom). Also make your way up Crestview Access Rd, and check out the neighborhood up Crestview Drive, stopping now and then, and go as far as you can east on Crestview Drive (there is a yellow gate, where you can walk on to city property). See if you can get any views down to Scholfield Creek. Look hard for Palm Warbler, other warblers, sparrows, flycatchers, mockingbird.

Smith Confluence

Stables Road is often a good place for shorebirds, waders, songbirds along the road in the brush, waterfowl in the water, and rails in the marsh. You can slowly drive and stop on Stable Rd (down to the only driveway), or park near the weigh station on Smith River Rd and walk down Stables Rd. Walk Bolon Island trail. Walk all over the area at the Bolon Island boat ramp area (including the cabled off gravel area), just NE of the intersection of Lower Smith River Rd and Hwy 101. Drive and stop several places up Lower Smith River Rd., looking at river, pastures, and forest. From Hwy 101 north of Bolon Island, scan/scope back at mudflats and line of trees.

Tahkenitch Boat

This section is accessed exclusively by boat except for the area directly adjacent to Hwy101. Take a boat up into every arm, looking mostly for waterfowl, but also stop here and there along the shore, spishing for landbirds, watching for raptors and waders as well. Call for rails and bittern in marshy areas. Look for Swamp Sparrows in wet grassy/shrubby areas. Probably need a launch permit (?).

Scholfield Rd

Going south on Scholfield Rd. stop as often as you can along the lowland marsh and pastures. Look for Swamp Sparrow, other sparrows, Common Yellowthroat, rails, waterfowl. Drive the entirety of Scholfield Rd, which eventually leaves the creek to go up and over some forested hills and down the other side. Stop at any interesting looking habitat, especially areas of larger trees (which are not common), and stop at some uninteresting looking habitat as well just to see what is there. Go out any side roads that look publicly accessible. I have not investigated enough to know which ones are okay to go out or how far. I did go out what google maps calls Thornton Oar Ln, about a half-mile or less to a gate, pretty neat habitat along the way. At Walker Creek Rd., I just went in about 100 yards; you could probably just walk that. Scholfield Ridge Rd goes quite a ways and looks really interesting; I would suggest going up it until you run into a no

trespassing sign. J.D. Lane did not have no trespassing signs at the bottom, but is not very long. Throughout, especially in forested area, keep a lookout for Ruffed Grouse and Gray Jay. Look in any reasonable creeks for American Dipper.

Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area

[Note, we have escorted BLM access to the Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area, which will allow walking on the central dike and roads toward the back; the following deals mainly with publicly accessible coverage. Our escort is Umpqua BLM Wildlife Biologist Jeanne Standley, ask compiler for contact info.] From publicly accessible points, glass and scope the pastures for different species of geese, kites and other raptors, shorebirds, a late kingbird. Walk along the road in the Dean Creek Elk Viewing area, spishing and looking and listening for Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Palm Warbler, call for Va Rail and Sora, etc. At dawn or dusk, scan the area for Short-eared Owl and Barn Owl. At the east end, on the north side of the road is the O.H. Hinsdale Rhododendron Garden, on what is called Spruce Reach Island. Park on the S side of Hwy38 and walk across the hwy N into the rhody garden. There are good trails wandering around in there. Walk all of them. There is good willow and blackberry habitat there. Search it well for songbird flocks. Also from the rhody garden scan the river counting waterfowl and waders.

Tahkenitch Cr/Dunes

Probably need a federal trail pass/forest pass (?). Walk the Tahkenitch Creek Trail and/or Tahkenitch Dunes Loop Trail. In the dunes, look for a variety of songbirds, and watch the grassy areas for Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Snowy Owl, and Marsh Wren. This area only has a little bit of beach near the mouth of Tahkenitch Creek. The Oregon Dunes Loop Trail team will cover the beach north of the Creek. This is because of the uncertainty of getting across the creek or back, with variable water flows and tides. On the beach near the mouth, check out the upper wrack line, keeping an eye out for Snowy Plover, Mountain Plover, Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, Burrowing Owl, pipits, etc. Sift through shorebird flocks on beach. Do short seawatches from beach or foredune.

Oregon Dunes Loop Trail

Probably need a federal trail pass/forest pass (?). Walk the Oregon Dunes Loop Trail. Also walk down and back to the mouth of Tahkenitch Creek. In the dunes, get off the trail now and then and look for a variety of songbirds, and watch the grassy areas for Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Snowy Owl, and Marsh Wren. Along the beach, walk the upper wrack line, keeping an eye out for Snowy Plover, Mountain Plover, Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, Burrowing Owl, pipits, etc. Thoroughly cover the large sandy area cleared for snowy plover nesting. These can be good for Snow Bunting and the others already mentioned. Sift through shorebird flocks on beach. Do short seawatches from beach or foredune every quarter mile or so.

Gardiner

Walk pretty much every street in town, looking especially for anyone with feeders, but for any groups of birds.

Scope the river from near the boat ramp for waterfowl, egrets, herons. The island(s) across the river often has a White-tailed Kite, and sometimes Northern Shrike. At dawn/dusk, scope the island to see if you can catch a Short-eared Owl swooping around!

Contact the International Mill site manager for permission to bird the area (ask compiler for contact info). Plan 2-3 hours for this site.

We have permission from the STEP people to walk (?) up the road to the reservoir (ask compiler for contact info).

Fivemile Road

Stop roughly every half mile or so, counting birds. Stop every ¼ mile or so when right next to the lake and any wetland/marsh habitat. Search and call for Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, rails, bittern, and of course scan for all species of waterfowl. Call for Pygmy-Owls. Pygmy-Owl calls and spishing are very effective in the roadside shrub/forest habitat in this area. Keep your eye out for Ruffed Grouse, Sooty Grouse, and Mountain Quail. Check out all open roads.

Booth Road

Public access only goes about a quarter mile. At this time we don't have permission to go farther. Nevertheless, it is worth a short drive out to look and listen. This is mostly forest habitat, but note when you see changes in the type of forest, such as larger trees, more deciduous trees, and such. Again, watch for Ruffed Grouse, Sooty Grouse, and Mountain Quail. Call for Pygmy-Owl.

Elbow Lake/101

May ignore.

Clear Lake

Mostly inaccessible at this time.