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HOTSPOTS NEAR YOU

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179. Black Butte Ranch, Sisters, Oregon

A private resort in Deschutes National Forest where visiting birders can look for ducks, shorebirds, tanagers, chickadees, and 11 species of woodpecker.

By Laretta Young | Published: 12/17/2013

It is fortunate that the owners of the original cattle ranch at Black Butte could not figure out how to drain its central wetlands. As a result, the property was not valuable as a cattle operation. Today, the large swampy meadow is vital to migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, some of which stay for winter.

I've been visiting the ranch for almost 30 years and often lead birding trips there. Eleven woodpecker species are present, including the majestic Pileated. My favorite is White-headed, which is abundant and easy to see on even a short walk through ponderosa woods.

I found my first Barrow's Goldeneye on a large lake in the middle of the wetlands area. Wilson's Phalaropes love the appropriately named Phalarope Lake. Their habit of twirling around in the water to stir up prey got one of my young sons interested in watching birds. Western songbirds that have been recorded include Steller's Jay and MacGillivray's Warbler.

You can bird the ranch for a few hours or a day, or you can rent a vacation home, condo, cabin, or lodge room and explore the ranch more thoroughly. Most properties have a deck, where you can do a big sit. — Laretta Young

Laretta Young is a retired physician and a bird-tour leader (www.portlandbirdwatching.com). She also wrote about [Tualatin River NWR](#), Sherwood, Oregon, Hotspot Near You No. 91, and [Fernhill Wetlands](#), Forest Grove, Oregon, No. 99.

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<http://t.co/03Zw dma9Sr>
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7 of this year's class of Whooping Cranes have died. 15 remain. Here's an update. #birds
<http://t.co/UdIKPfmw 9G>
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Update: w here the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership's 15 remaining birds are now.
<http://t.co/MzFqKFXhNK>
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Directions

Black Butte Ranch is a 1,000-acre private resort in the shadow of 6,436-foot Black Butte in Deschutes National Forest in central Oregon. From the town of Sisters, drive seven miles northwest on Hwy. 20 and turn left at the entrance on Hawks Beard. Park at one of the golf-course or restaurant parking lots and then walk the trails.



black butte ranch

sisters, oregon

44°22'30.80"N 121°38'31.57"W



DOWNLOADABLE FILES

 [Black Butte Ranch map](#)

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**AT A GLANCE**

Click on the coordinates below to view location:

[44°22'30.80"N 121°38'31.57"W](#)**Habitat**

Wetlands, meadows, ponderosa and alder old-growth forests, riparian areas, landscaped yards with bird feeders.

Terrain

Flat. Paved and smooth asphalt paths. Wheelchair-accessible.

Birds

More than 250 species. Greater White-fronted, Canada, and Cackling Geese, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead, Common and Barrow's Goldeneye, Pied-billed and Western Grebes, Wilson's Phalarope, Spotted Sandpiper, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Sora, Wilson's Snipe, Common Nighthawk, Belted Kingfisher, Lewis's, White-headed, Hairy, Downy, American Three-toed, and Pileated Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Williamson's, Red-breasted, and Red-naped Sapsuckers, Western Bluebird, Cassin's and Warbling Vireos, Steller's Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Chestnut-backed, Mountain, and Black-capped Chickadees, Western Meadowlark, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Cassin's Finch, American Dipper, Red Crossbill, Brewer's Blackbird, Brown Creeper, Pygmy Nuthatch, Pine Siskin. Rarities: Black-backed Woodpecker, Band-tailed Pigeon.

When to go

Year-round.

Amenities

Eighteen miles of trails, several restaurants, and coffee carts, welcome center, restrooms. Bikes available for rent. Maps posted on signs along trails. Downloadable map on website.

Access

Private resort but open to the public. Please respect private property.

Tips

Watch for bicycles on the paths. Many trails lead to additional birding areas in the surrounding national forest lands.

For more info

[Black Butte Ranch](#), (855) 257-8435
[East Cascades Audubon Society](#)

Sites nearby

[Metolius Preserve](#)
8 miles west of ranch in Camp Sherman. Hotspot Near You No. 146. An extensive woodland. Songbirds and 10 woodpecker species.

[Hatfield Lakes](#)
36 miles southeast of ranch in Bend. Hotspot Near You No. 155. Wastewater-treatment facility that is a magnet for waterfowl and shorebirds.

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WHAT'S THIS?

Reddish Egret

1 comment • a month ago

 Alan C — Big Red! Probably the most photographed bird at Fort DeSoto. Always a pleasure another great shot.

Photo of the week: Mallard

1 comment • 12 days ago

 fgwilliams — Gorgeous. Love the blue theme throughout and the mallard's interesting pose.

Rough-legged Hawk

1 comment • 5 days ago

 Paul O'Toole — Great look at the under markings.

Blue Jay

1 comment • 2 months ago

 Nancy Eddy — My 21 mo. old grandson recognizes Blue Jays, Cardinals and Goldfinches; he will love your photo. ...

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