

Location: North on NM 15 north then right on NM 35 to Lake Roberts. You can also take US 180 east, left on NM 152, then left on NM 35. Mile marker 25.

Travel time one way: 1 hour 15 minutes.

Facilities: Vault toilets, picnic tables.

Habitat: Aquatic, ponderosa pine, pinyon-juniper forest.

Birding East of Silver City

10. Ft. Bayard Wildlife Refuge

Historic Ft. Bayard was a frontier cavalry fort in the late 1800's. A National Cemetery is located here. National Recreation Trails in the refuge offer pleasant hiking and opportunities to see elk.

Location: East on US 180, turn left at light to Ft. Bayard then follow the signs for forest road 536. The road dead ends in 3 miles and you can pull off at several locations along the way to bird.

Travel time one way: 15 minutes.

Facilities: None.

Habitat: Riparian woods, ponderosa pine and pinyon-juniper forest.

11. Black Range

The Black Range offers a beautiful variety of mountain scenery from desert foothills to mixed conifer and aspen forests. Convenient places to park and bird are at the primitive National Forest campgrounds along NM 152. These are Lower Gallinas and Upper Gallinas Campgrounds, Rail Road Campground and Iron Creek Campground.

Location: East on US 180 then left on NM 152.

Travel time one way: 1 hour.

Facilities: Vault toilets, picnic tables.

Habitat: Riparian woods, ponderosa pine, pinyon-juniper forest.

Birding West of Silver City

12. Redrock Road

This dirt road winds through the forested foothills of the Burro Mountains. It goes into the Gila National Forest but there is some private property within the forest boundary and you shouldn't enter private land. There are many side roads and pull offs where you can park. Birding is good in the forest and the many small, brushy washes.

Location: West on US 180 about 13 miles, then

left on Mangas Valley Road, go about five miles then right on Forest Road 851 (Redrock Road).

Travel time one way: 45 minutes.

Facilities: None.

Habitat: Ponderosa pine and pinyon-juniper forest.

13. Mangas Springs

This small marsh along the highway is an oasis in the surrounding arid hills. It attracts many birds and is a great place to stop on your way to the Gila River Bird Habitat Management Unit.

Location: West on US 180 about 17.5 miles. Between mile posts 96 and 95 turn left onto McMillen Road. This half mile section of road parallels the highway. The marsh is on private property that borders the road. Before the road rejoins the highway there is a trash barrel and a pull off where you can park and walk along the fence to bird.

Travel time one way: 20 minutes.

Facilities: None.

Habitat: Marsh and riparian woods.

14. Bill Evans Lake

This small fishing reservoir can be visited in conjunction with the Gila River Bird Habitat Management Unit.

Location: West on US 180 then left at the Bill Evens Lake turnoff, mile marker 87.

Travel time one way: 45 minutes.

Facilities: Vault toilet.

Habitat: Aquatic.

15. Gila River Bird Habitat Management Unit

This stretch of the Gila River is managed for bird habitat and a great variety of species can be seen.

Location: West on US 180 then left at the Bill Evens Lake turnoff, mile marker 87. In about three and a half miles, and before ascending the hill to the lake, proceed straight on a gravel road that goes south. Continue on the gravel road for about five miles to River Vista. There are paths through the woods along the river. You can also drive another mile and a half down river to Billings Vista. A trail goes down river to lush riparian woodlands. Use caution if you ford the river and don't cross at all if the river is high and you can't see the bottom.

Travel time one way: 1 hour.

Facilities: Vault toilet at River Vista.

Habitat: Riparian woods.

16. Mogollon Creek & the Gila River

Location: West on US 180 to Cliff, mile marker 84, right on NM 211. When NM 211 curves right, go

straight on NM 293. It's about seven miles from Hwy 180 to the end of the road where there is a primitive National Forest campground. You can park in the campground and bird along the creek and the Gila River.

There is

dense vegeta-

tion along the banks of the creek and river. So you'll be birding mostly in the cottonwoods.

Travel time one way: 45 minutes.

Facilities: Vault toilet.

Habitat: Riparian woods, grass lands, desert scrub.

17. Catwalk of Whitewater Canyon

The Catwalk National Recreation Trail is made up of metal walkways through scenic canyon narrows. This is a unique birding excursion. Call the Glenwood Ranger Station in Glenwood at 575-539-2481 to get information about the Catwalk.

Location: West on US 180 to Glenwood, mile marker 50, then turn right on NM 174.

Travel time one way: 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Facilities: Vault toilets and picnic area. Fee area.

Habitat: Riparian woods, pinyon-juniper forest.

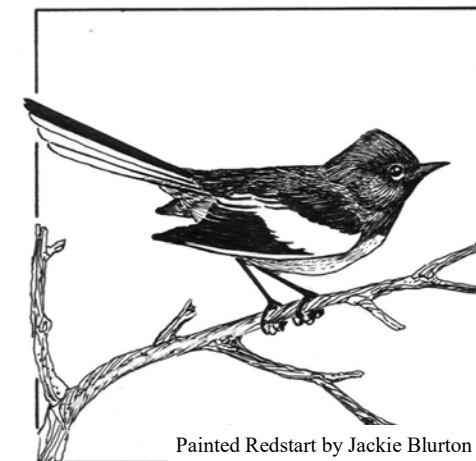


Black Hawk
by Jackie Blurton

Silver City, New Mexico SW New Mexico Birder's Guide

A guide to birding opportunities in Silver City and Grant County

By Jackie Blurton



Painted Redstart by Jackie Blurton

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Diversity

This guide as your introduction to birding locations in Grant County. Approximately 65% of the bird species in New Mexico have been seen in Grant County. The lush riparian habitat of the river valleys, the scenic mountains of the Gila National Forest, and surrounding grasslands offer many opportunities to see a variety of species throughout the year.

Maps: Area maps are available at the Visitor Center at 201 N. Hudson in Silver City.

Gila National Forest maps are available at the Gila National Forest office, 3005 E. Camino Del Bosque, Silver City, NM 88061, and at District Ranger Stations.

Reference guides: *Birds of the Gila National Forest Check List* is available at all Gila National Forest offices and the Visitor Center.

Directions: Directions and approximate travel times in the following descriptions are from Silver City. All birding locations are easy to drive to. The locations are on public lands and right-of-ways but there are some areas where roads are adjacent to private property. In such cases you can bird from the roads but don't cross onto private property without permission. Most roads are paved but there are a few dirt roads and forest campgrounds that can be muddy if there has been recent precipitation. At certain times of year weather conditions can change quickly. Always carry adequate clothing and water.

Birding in & near Silver City

1. The Big Ditch Park in Silver City

Once the main street of Silver City in the late 1800's this unique park was created by a series of floods in the early 1900's. San Vicente Creek flows through the Big Ditch and provides habitat for a number of species. Stone walkways along the creek are a pleasant place to bird. Take some time to also enjoy the historic downtown.

Location: Near the Murray Ryan Visitor Center where you can park and get directions to the Big Ditch entrance and information about Silver City and the area.

Facilities: Restrooms at the Visitor Center.

Habitat: Riparian woods.

2. San Vicente Creek.

San Vicente Creek flows through the Big Ditch Park and continues down the valley south of Silver City. The trail follows the creek for about a 1.5 miles. The creek is on city property but private property borders the creek in some places so be aware of signage. This is a great location for year-around birding and is very convenient to downtown.

Location: In Silver City go south on Bullard St. Turn left onto San Vicente St. and park at the trail head beneath the Hwy 90 bridge.

Facilities: None

Habitat: Riparian woods with desert scrub on the hills along the creek.

3. Little Walnut Picnic Area

A short, easy drive north from Silver City.

Location: North on Little Walnut Road. Little Walnut Picnic Area is on the left about a half mile after you cross into the Gila National Forest.

Travel time one way: 15 minutes.

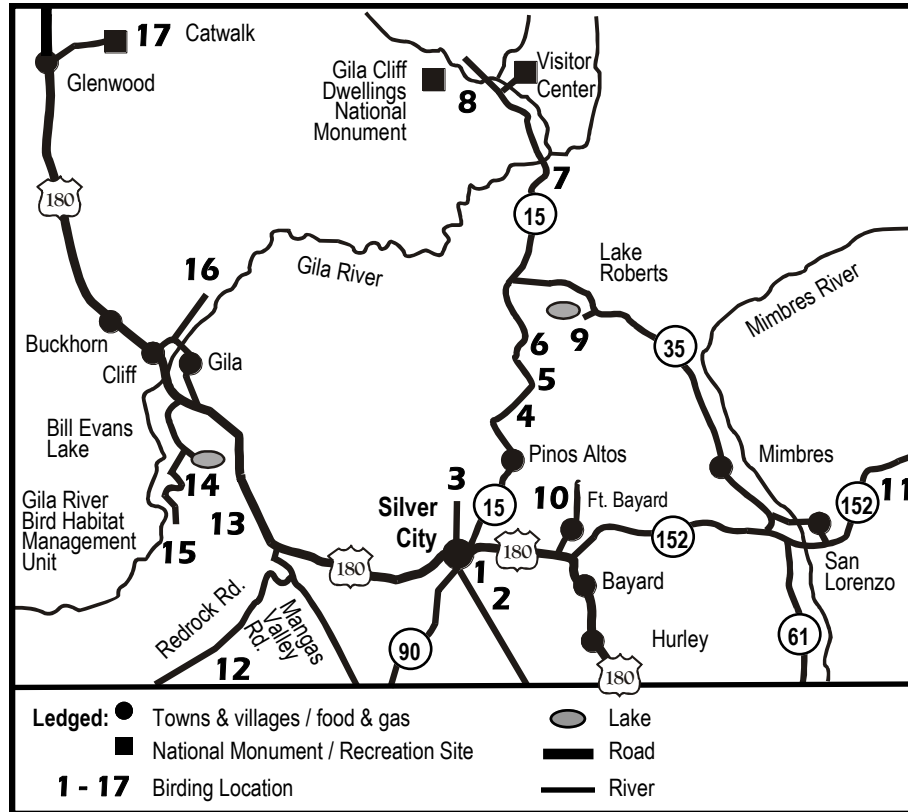
Facilities: Toilets, picnic tables.

Habitat: Ponderosa pine and juniper forest.

Birding North of Silver City

NM 15, NM 35, and NM 152 make a scenic loop drive north of Silver City into the Gila National Forest and to the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. Forests, lakes, and river valleys offer a variety of habitats for great birding. There are also numerous hiking trails. Look for trail signs.

4. Cherry Creek & McMillan Campgrounds



This beautiful canyon offers excellent birding for forest and riparian species. Birding is good all along Cherry Creek. There are two National Forest campgrounds; Cherry Creek CG and McMillan CG, as well as several pull offs along the way where you can park to bird. An added bonus are the spring and summer wildflowers, fall colors, and interesting rock formations.

Location: North on NM 15, milepost 11.5 & 12.5.

Travel time one way: 30 minutes.

Facilities: Vault toilets and picnic tables.

Habitat: Riparian woods, mixed conifer forest.

5. Signal Peak, Forest Road 154

This dirt road ascends the forested north slope of Signal Peak. After a few miles the road enters the burn area from a recent fire. At this writing there is a locked gate to prevent people from driving into the burn while the trees are being harvested. You can park at the gate and walk the road. There are patches

of pine and aspen which make a mixed ecosystem good for birding. Birding along the road up to the gate is also good for forest species and there are plenty of pull offs.

Location: North on NM 15 to the upper end of Cherry Creek, turn right on Forest Road 154.

Travel time one way: 30 minutes.

Facilities: Vault toilets at the campgrounds.

Habitat: Mixed conifer, oak, and aspen forest.

6. Pine Flats

A good place for forest species on your way to the Gila Cliff Dwellings or Lake Roberts. Open flat areas and gentle slopes make walking easy.

Location: North on NM 15, mile marker 18.

Travel time one way: 45 minutes.

Facilities: None

Habitat: Mixed conifer and oak forest.

7. Grapevine & Forks Campgrounds

Parking at either of these campgrounds gives you access to birding along the Gila River.

Location: North on NM 15, mile marker 39.

Travel time one way: 1 hour 30 minutes.

Facilities: Vault toilets.

Habitat: Riparian woods, mixed conifer forest.

8. The Gila Cliff Dwellings

National Monument.

The trails from the Monument entrance and Visitor Center provide good access for birding along the Gila River. The half mile walk to the Cliff Dwellings is very nice and also good birding. Look for Golden Columbine here in the summer. The Visitor Center has a great selection of Native American, southwest and nature books.

Location: North on NM 15, mile marker 46.

Travel time one way: 1 hour 45 minutes.

Facilities: Toilets at the Visitor Center, Cliff Dwellings Entry Station, and picnic areas. There is an entry fee for Gila Cliff Dwelling National Monument trail.

Habitat: Riparian woods, ponderosa pine, pinyon-juniper, and oak forest.

9. Lake Roberts

This is the areas most beautiful mountain lake and offers excellent birding in marshes and on the ponderosa pine and oak hillsides.