



Globally Important Bird Areas



Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, ID ARNG Orchard Training Area, Idaho

Ornithological Highlight: One of the densest populations of nesting raptors in North America.

Location: 81 miles of the Snake River in Ada and Owyhee Counties

- *Great Basin* (NABCI Bird Conservation Region #9)
- *Columbia Plateau* (PIF Physiographic Area #89)

Size: Snake River Bird of Prey National Conservation Area is 485,832 acres, which includes the 138,430-acre Orchard Training Area

Ownership: U.S. Bureau of Land Management

Habitats: Canyon walls ranging up to 600 feet high; shrub-grass steppe; cottonwood gallery forest

Site description: The cliffs along the Snake River provide ledges, cracks and crevices for nesting raptors while the adjacent shrub-grass steppe north of the river supports dense populations of small mammal prey, in particular Townsend's ground squirrel and black-tailed jackrabbit but including also pocket gophers, kangaroo rats and deer mice. This unusual combination of ideal nesting habitat close by areas with abundant prey has created a unique situation to benefit raptors. The Idaho Army National Guard Orchard Training Area is contained entirely within the National Conservation Area.

Birds: Up to 800 pairs of raptors of 15 species nest here, including over 200 pairs of Prairie Falcon, a significant proportion of the species' entire population. Among the other raptors common here are Swainson's, Ferruginous (recent counts indicate 55 occupied nests) and Red-tailed hawks, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, and several species of owls. In winter Rough-legged Hawk is also found here. Sage and Brewer's sparrows nest in the area. The Snake River is a major migratory route not only for hawks but for waterfowl and landbirds.

Conservation issues: The ecosystem has been fragmented and degraded by dams, irrigation diversions, levees, rip rap, resort development, subdivisions, agricultural development, noxious weed invasion, overgrazing by livestock, and increasing recreational use.

Visitor information: Best time to visit is March through June, when raptors are nesting.

References:

- Gossett, D.N. and S.L. Gossett. 1999. 1999 Snake River and Malad Resource Area Ferruginous Hawk and raptor monitoring. Final report.
- Schueck, L.S., J.M. Marzluff, and K. Steenhof. 2001. Influence of military activities on raptor abundance and behavior. *Condor* 103:606-615.