



## 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.