

Strawberry Valley Wildlife Viewing Guide



A Guide to Viewing Strawberry's Wildlife

A visit to Strawberry Valley may turn out to be more than you expected. Whether you came to fish, hike, or have a picnic, you can't miss the abundant wildlife that make this valley their home.

Because of Strawberry's diverse habitats, you will find an equally diverse assortment of wildlife. Many species are drawn to Strawberry each summer in search of the perfect summer home. Spring marks the arrival of dramatic numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds that spend their summers on the waters and shoreline of Strawberry Reservoir. Acres of open sagebrush uplands provide grazing habitat for big game, as well as food and cover for small mammals. Birds of prey leave their nests at the forest's edge to soar across open meadows in search of a meal. Rocky outcrops provide hiding places for small mammals and lookouts for predators. Strawberry's wildlife congregates at the river's edge to drink and feed on succulent plants that grow in the riparian corridor.

Each viewing site in the guide highlights different combinations of habitats and the wildlife that depend on those habitats for survival. The following symbols are used throughout the guide to identify different Strawberry Valley habitats at each site.



Reservoir



Shoreline



Uplands



Forest



Rocky Outcrops



Riparian

Using the map at the beginning of the guide, orient yourself to where the best viewing sites are found. But remember, you can see wildlife everywhere!



Viewing Tips

Early morning and late afternoon are typically the best viewing times although some wildlife may be seen throughout the day. However, a wildlife sighting is not the only way to *experience* wildlife. A muddy river bar can offer an abundance of tracks that tell stories of passers-by. A willow stripped of leaves may tell of a moose stopping for a meal. Bark chewed from a tree might suggest a resident rabbit or porcupine. Classic beaver-chewed stumps may lead you to a beaver pond. Keep your eyes open for signs of wildlife and your ears attune to their sounds.

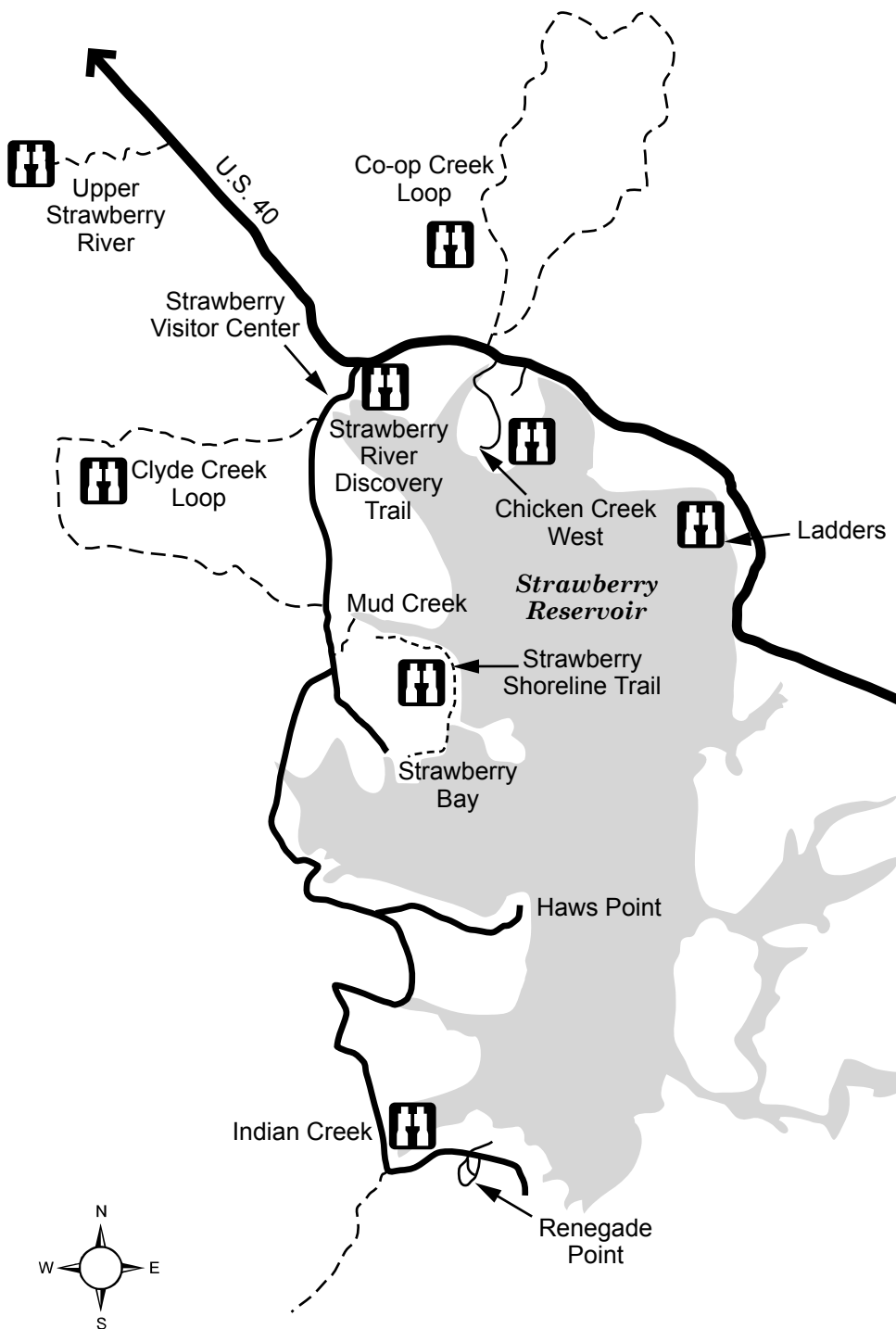
Remember, experiencing wildlife in their natural setting can mean more than just a brief sighting. The ultimate wildlife experience is watching the animals' natural behavior, undisturbed by our presence.

Wildlife are very sensitive to crowding. By practicing the following viewing tips, you can increase your chances of seeing wildlife without interrupting their normal activities.

- View them from a distance with binoculars or a spotting scope.
- Use a telephoto lens for photographs.
- As you travel throughout the valley to different viewing sites, rely on your vehicle as a viewing blind.
- If you are on foot, wear natural colors and walk slowly and quietly.
- Crouch behind boulders or vegetation to hide yourself.
- Resist the urge to throw something or whistle to see the animals react.

With a little patience, you will be rewarded with some spectacular wildlife sightings!

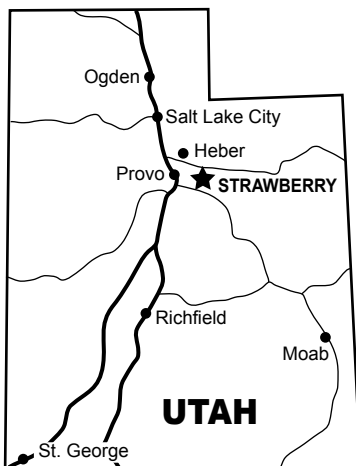
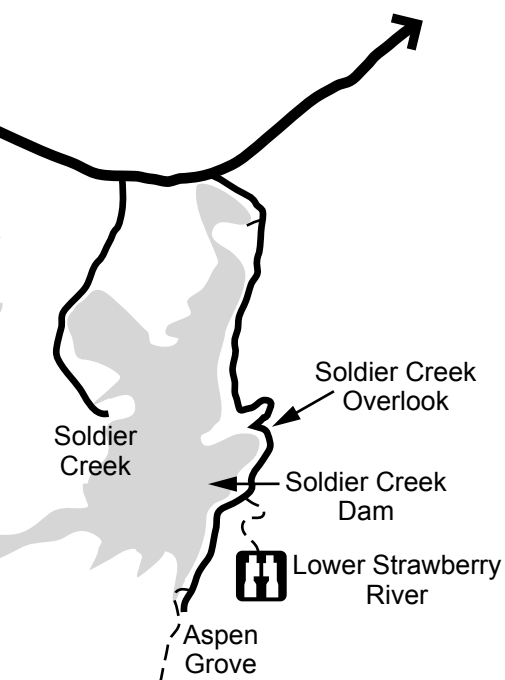




Guide to Viewing Sites



Viewing Sites



Upper Strawberry River



This unique site offers a view of three different habitats! You are standing in a riparian zone along Strawberry River. The terrain around you is all sagebrush uplands. At the hills to the south you can see the forest edge.

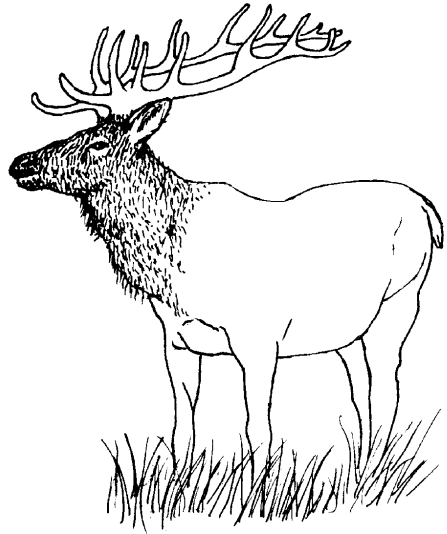
Elk - *Cervus elaphus*

Did You Know?

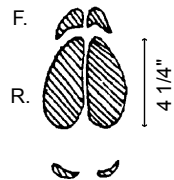
Elk in North America are called “wapiti,” a Shawnee Indian word meaning “white rump.”

Identifying Features:

- A thick, woolly-looking “mane” around the neck, usually darker in color than the rest of their coat, differentiates elk from other members of the deer family.



Watch the forests’ edge to see elk emerge from their shady daytime bedding area. They graze through the grassy uplands to arrive at Strawberry River for a drink and graze on tender riparian plants. Look along the muddy riverbanks for tracks of the herd. Listen for their bugling call during autumn mating season.



Greater Sandhill Crane - *Grus canadensis*

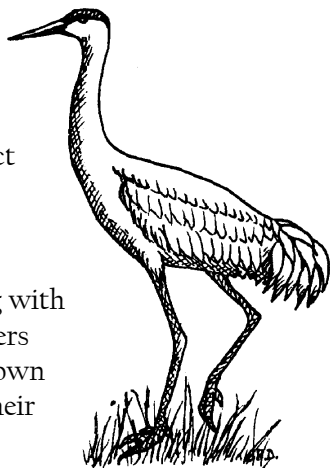
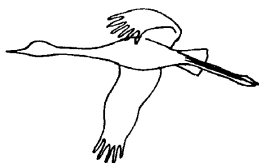
Did You Know?

Young cranes are called colts.

Identifying Features:

- Cranes stand approximately three and one-half feet tall with a six-foot wingspan.
- They have a red cap on their head.
- Cranes fly with their necks outstretched, differentiating them from great blue herons which retract their necks in flight.

Look for cranes along Strawberry River standing in shallow water and preening with mud that is rich in iron-oxide. This covers their natural gray color with a rusty-brown camouflage. Search for them building their nests in tall, dense riparian vegetation where young can easily be hidden from danger. Along the water's edge, notice how they use their long bills to capture insects or the occasional frog. Because of their height, they are easy to spot in the open sagebrush uplands feeding on seeds, roots, lizards and small mammals. Listen for their ancient call to locate them flying overhead.



Also look for:

Red Fox, Red-tailed, Hawk, Turkey Vulture



Strawberry River Discovery Trail



Follow the boardwalk trail at the Visitor Center downstream along Strawberry River to view the incredible diversity of wildlife in this riparian corridor! Signs along the trail tell about the wildlife that are attracted to this habitat. Follow the trail upstream to the fish trap to see trout and salmon spawning during spring and fall.

Muskrat - *Ondatra zibethicus*

Did You Know?

Like a boat rudder, muskrats use their long tail to help guide their swimming.

Identifying Features:

- Muskrats are 10 to 14 inches in length with a long, narrow, hairless tail.
- They are always found in or near water.



Watch the edge of the stream to see a muskrat emerge from the underwater entrance of its den, burrowed deep in the mud of an overhanging bank. This is where muskrats will raise their young, well hidden from predators. Look deep into the water to see muskrats gathering plants, fish, and crayfish to stockpile in the den for the coming winter.

Muskrat tracks may be found along the edge of the river; look for the drag mark of their trail between the tiny footprints.



Cliff Swallow - *Hirundo pyrrhonota*

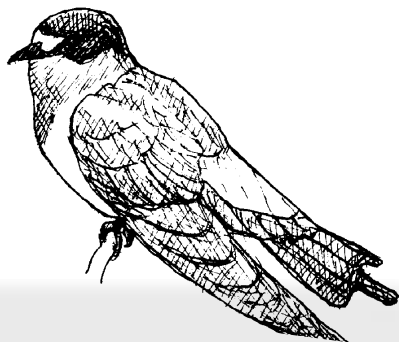
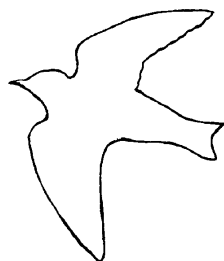
Did You Know?

Cliff swallows nest in huge colonies that may include over 1,000 pairs of birds.

Identifying Features:

- Cliff swallows have a squarish tail, a buff colored rump, and a dark chestnut colored throat.

A flurry of activity around the road bridge makes it easy to locate the swallows. You can see their colony of gourd-shaped nests built on the flat, vertical surfaces of the bridge. Watch the shallow eddies near shore to see them dipping out mud to build their mud-packed nests. Look for them skimming the smooth surface of the stream for a drink of fresh water. Notice their erratic flight patterns just above the river as they catch insects in mid-flight.



Also look for:

Belted Kingfisher, Snowy Egret



Clyde Creek Loop



This 11-mile scenic drive on a gravel road begins in sagebrush uplands and passes through conifer and aspen forests, offering opportunities to view many forest residents. The route also follows Clyde Creek and Mud Creek which are popular with beaver and other riparian inhabitants.

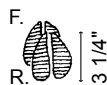
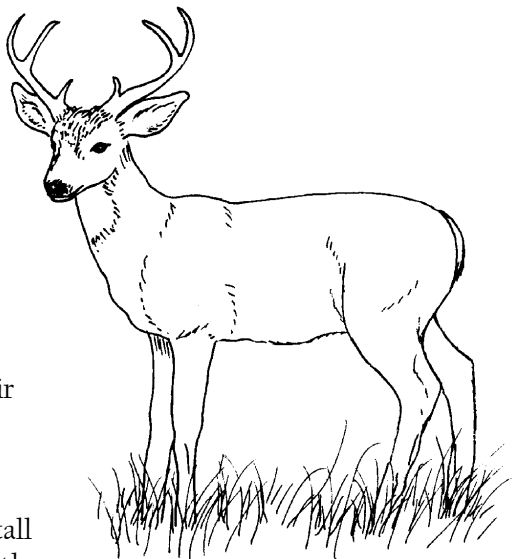
Mule Deer - *Odocoileus hemionus*

Did You Know?

At birth, fawns are spotted and have almost no scent, making it difficult for predators to find them.

Identifying Features:

- The “mule-like” ears of these deer are about two-thirds the size of their head.
- Mule deer have a white chin, throat, and rump.
- Deer are about three feet tall at the shoulder, significantly smaller than elk or moose.



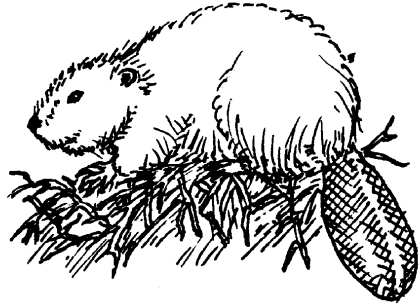
Look for mule deer in open meadows at dawn and dusk when they venture from the forest cover to feed on succulent grasses and shrubs. Logged areas along Clyde Creek road have created meadow habitat where mule deer can often be found. Don't be surprised to see them crossing the road as they approach the stream for a cool drink.



Beaver - *Castor canadensis*

Did You Know?

The beaver is actually a waterproof rodent with transparent membranes over the eyes and watertight vents over the ears and nostrils that can be closed when underwater.



Identifying Features:

- Beaver are fairly large, chunky animals, weighing up to 60 pounds.
- They have furless, scaly, paddle-shaped tails.



Where aspen forests approach the stream, look for evidence of beaver that have created their own habitat. Aspen cuttings and stumps, chewed to a pointed end, may be a first clue. Look for dams of stacked sticks and mud across the stream. This creates a deep pond where beaver can hide underwater from predators or feed on aquatic vegetation. A cone-shaped lodge in the pond suggests a resident family of beaver. You may see them swimming at the surface with a mouthful of vegetation before they dive to the underwater entrance of their home. Inside the lodge, above the waterline, they are storing a cache of food for the long winter ahead.

Also look for:

Porcupine, Striped Skunk, Northern Flicker



Strawberry Shoreline Trail

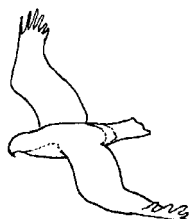


This two-mile trail from Mud Creek Day Use Area to Strawberry Bay Campground follows a sage-covered knoll along the reservoir shoreline. Countless species of waterfowl can be seen in the shallow bays and open waters of the reservoir. Residents of the uplands may be spotted on the knoll.

Northern Harrier - *Circus cyaneus*

Did You Know?

This bird was formerly known as the Marsh Hawk because of its affinity for marshy areas.



Identifying Features:

- The male harrier is grayish-blue on the back and mostly white underneath, with black wing tips.
- The female is brown above and a whitish color underneath.
- Both male and female have a white band on the rump.



Look for northern harriers flying close to the ground, with wings upraised at the tips, in search of a meal. They can usually be seen flying low over the sagebrush hunting for mice and other small mammals, or over marshlands in search of frogs, reptiles, and fish. Since harriers are ground-nesters, you may see them perched on the ground or low objects such as tree stumps and fence posts.



Badger - *Taxidea taxus*

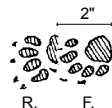
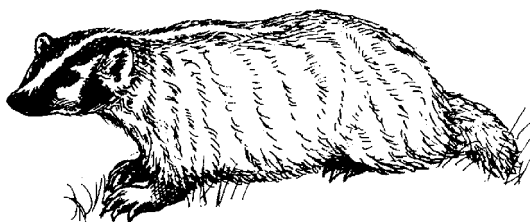
Did You Know?

The badger is a premier digger, reputed to be able to outdig two people with shovels and can dig itself completely out of sight in a very short time.

Identifying

Features:

- Badgers have a stocky, flattened appearance.
- White stripes and cheek “badges” decorate the badger’s face, with one strip continuing down the spine.



Look for large excavated holes in soft soil where badgers have burrowed a den. But keep your distance, since badgers are considered very ferocious, and their nest may only be five feet from the surface. Using their short, powerful front legs and long claws, badgers can be seen digging out small rodents, earthworms, snails, or bee larvae for a meal.

Watch for signs of other wildlife where badgers have abandoned their dens. Burrowing owls, foxes, coyotes and skunks may make their home in an empty badger den.



Shoreline Trail (continued)



Cinnamon Teal - *Anas cyanoptera*

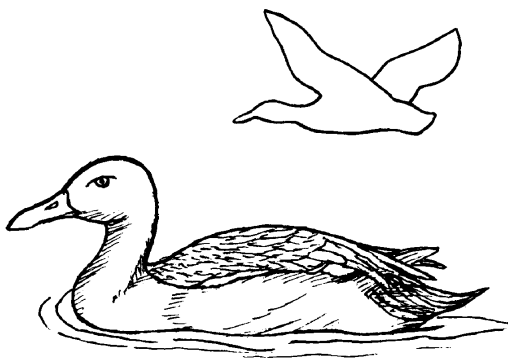
Did You Know?

When danger threatens, cinnamon teal hens will divert attention from their young by faking an injury.

Identifying Features:

- Males are cinnamon colored on the head, neck, and underside and have red-orange eyes.
- The bill on the cinnamon teal is long and spatulate.

Look for cinnamon teals in shallow bays, “tipping up” to feed on bottom vegetation and crustaceans. Watch the muddy banks of the reservoir to see them probing the mud for insects. Scan the grassy shores to spot them “grazing” on sedges, grasses, and rushes. Catch a glimpse of the hen building her nest where she conceals it in tall, dense grasses.



Also look for:

Common Loon, Redhead, Green-winged Teal



Indian Creek



Indian Creek, at the heart of this riparian area, provides some of the best spawning habitat for Strawberry Reservoir fish. Because of its small size and clarity, it is an excellent area to view fish during their upstream spawning runs. Look for the Bear Lake cutthroat trout in the stream during late spring and Kokanee salmon in the fall. Follow the path to the sign overlooking the stream to learn more about these fish.

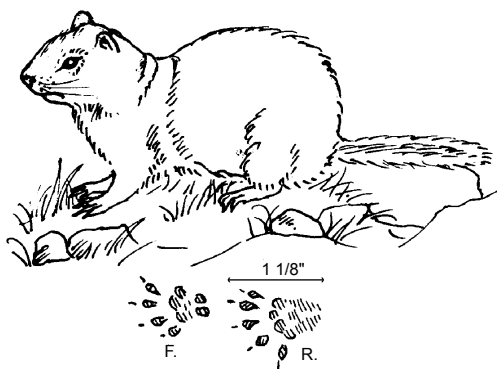
Uinta Ground squirrel - *Spermophilus armatus*

Did You Know?

Locally this squirrel is known as a “pot-gut.”

Identifying Features:

- These squirrels are 8 to 9 inches long with a three-inch tail.
- Their coloring is brown on the back and buffy white underneath.



Listen for their high-pitched chirp.

Look for groupings of many small

burrows, a sure indication of a colony of ground squirrels. Watch quietly to see them emerge from their dens to feed on surrounding vegetation.

Because they are an important prey for many birds and mammals, the first hint of danger will send them quickly scurrying back to the safety of their dens.

Also look for:

Western Meadowlark, Least Chipmunk



Chicken Creek West



The wildlife diversity of Strawberry Valley is due in part to the large 17,000-acre reservoir that attracts numerous waterfowl and shorebirds during migration and breeding seasons.

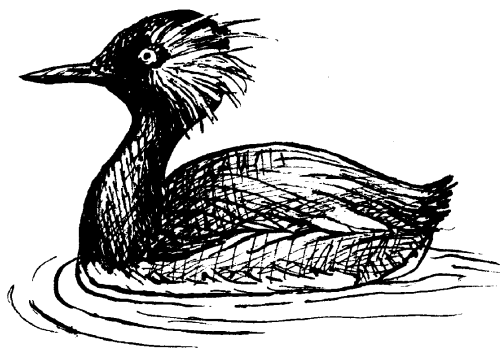
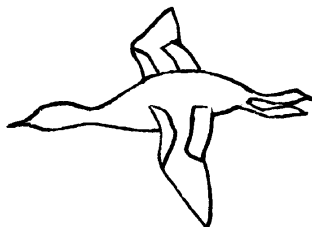
Eared Grebe - *Podiceps nigricollis*

Did You Know?

The eared grebe makes a nest like most birds, but their nest is a little different – if floats!

Identifying Features:

- A shorter neck and bill differentiate the eared grebe from other grebes found at Strawberry.
- During breeding season, this grebe displays golden, fan-like “ear” feathers behind the eyes.



Look for colonies of floating nests, built of marsh vegetation, in shallow bays close to the shoreline. Watch for grebes diving for aquatic insects, amphibians, and fish to suddenly reappear on the surface, seemingly out of nowhere. Scan the reservoir for white rumps when they “tip up” to dabble on insects below the surface.



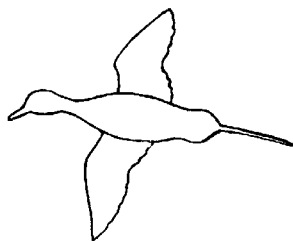
Northern Pintail - *Anas acuta*

Did You Know?

Pintails are the first ducks to migrate north in the spring. They arrive in Strawberry as early as March and concentrate where ice has started to give way to open water.

Identifying Features:

- On males, black central tail feathers extend far beyond the rest of the tail.
- Both males and females have a long neck compared to other ducks.



Northern pintails can be found on the reservoir's shallow bays or on dry land near shore. You can see them feeding in shallow wetlands on grass seeds, worms, insects, and



crustaceans. The female may be seen tending her nest in a hollow on dry ground, partially concealed by grasses and shrubs. Be careful not to crowd her, as she may abandon the nest. Look for males resting on the muddy banks of the reservoir. Watch for them flying overhead on their way to and from nearby ponds.

Also look for:

Western Grebe, Mallard, American Widgeon, Killdeer



Co-op Creek Loop



This 13-mile scenic drive begins in sagebrush uplands, and climbs high into conifer and aspen forests, offering spectacular views of Strawberry Reservoir. Wildlife is abundant in this area, so travel slowly and keep a watchful eye. This route is closed during elk calving season, but each year reopens June 30. High clearance vehicles are recommended on Chicken Creek road.

Swainson's Hawk - *Buteo swainsoni*

Did You Know?

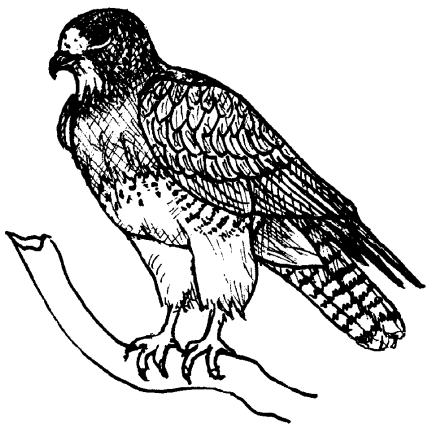
Swainson's hawks nest in tall trees as high as 100 feet above ground.

Identifying Features:

- A dark bib and long, narrow, pointed wings distinguish the Swainson's from other hawks.



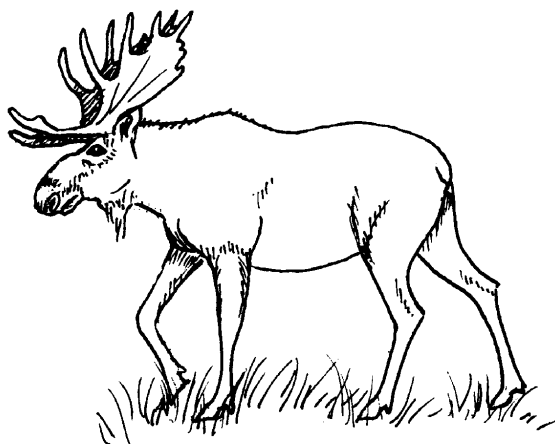
Watch for these hawks soaring high over sagebrush meadows, with uptilted wings in a teetering flight. Notice them perched low on fence posts or stones before they "pounce" on a meal of insects or small mammals. They may also hunt from the banks of Co-op or Chicken Creek for fish and frogs. Look high in tall, isolated trees for their stick nests, where they return year after year to rebuild. If you can locate an abandoned magpie nest, you may see a Swainson's hawk settling in.



Moose - *Alces alces*

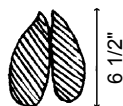
Did You Know?

Although moose appear awkward, they can run over 30 miles per hour and swim as fast as two people can paddle a canoe.



Identifying Features:

- The largest member of the deer family, moose stand over seven feet tall.
- Moose are darker brown than elk or deer.
- Males have palmate antlers.
- Look for the furry “bell” that hangs from their throat.



Moose may be seen among willows or small aspens, stripping leaves from branches, a staple during summer months. Look for ponds where moose can be found, often with their head underwater, feeding on bottom vegetation, their main summer diet. Among the aspens, notice marks of large incisor teeth on trees where moose have been gnawing the bark during winter. In early fall, moose may be spotted rubbing their antlers on aspen saplings, trying to shed the summer's velvet. Remember to keep a safe distance while viewing moose; they can be unpredictable and dangerous.

Also look for:

Downy Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Mountain Bluebird



The Ladders



A tunnel bringing water from Currant Creek Reservoir empties into Strawberry Reservoir at the Ladders. The continuous flow of water at the Ladders and nearby Trout Creek makes this shoreline area popular with waterfowl and shorebirds.

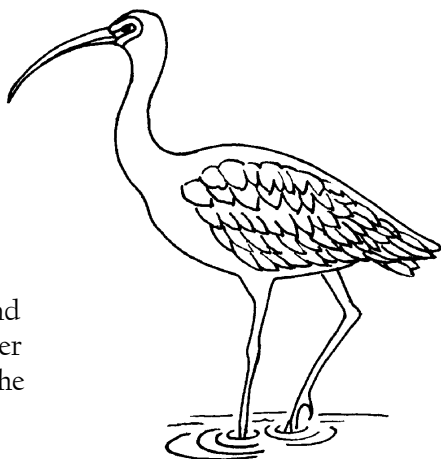
White-faced Ibis - *Plegadis chihi*

Did You Know?

Strawberry's abundant crayfish are a favorite food of the white-faced ibis.

Identifying Features:

- Ibis are a medium-sized wading bird with a long down-curving bill.
- Although they usually look dark at a distance, they are primarily a deep purplish-chestnut color.
- During breeding, ibis have a red bill, red eyes, red legs, and a red face with a white border around the eyes and under the chin.



Look for ibis in marshy areas near the shoreline using their long bills to probe for insects, worms, crayfish, frogs, and fish. Colonies of nests may be sighted in tall aquatic vegetation or low shrubs near the water. Sometimes ibis may even be found nesting in colonies of great blue herons.



Great Blue Heron - *Ardea herodias*

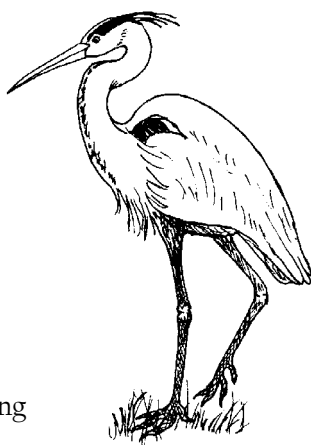
Did You Know?

Great blue herons have been known to live up to 23 years of age, one of the oldest recorded ages of any bird.



Identifying Features:

- Great blue herons are nearly four feet tall and gray-blue in color.
- Herons have a long, yellow bill and a black streak along the leading edge of their neck.
- In flight, the heron's long neck is retracted in an "S" shape.



Hérons can be seen wading in the shallow waters of Trout Creek or the reservoir margins. Notice them standing motionless, waiting for their prey to approach. They suddenly strike deep into the water to bring out a fish or crayfish in their long bill. You may also see them nab frogs and insects along the muddy banks of the reservoir. Look for them stalking small mammals in open sagebrush meadows. Watch overhead to see their massive six-foot wingspan in flight. In areas of tall deciduous trees, look for their colonies of stick platform nests.

Also look for:

Canada Goose, Lesser Yellowlegs, White Pelican, Spotted Sandpiper



Lower Strawberry River



The landscape of Strawberry River canyon, below Soldier Creek Dam is unique from any other viewing site in the valley. The steep canyon walls and rocky outcrops form habitat that attracts wildlife rarely found in other parts of Strawberry Valley.

Yellow-bellied Marmot - *Marmota flaviventris*

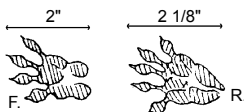
Did You Know?

Marmots hibernate for nearly eight months of the year, beginning as early as September and not emerging until April.



Identifying Features:

- Marmots are medium-sized, stocky rodents.
- A yellow belly, white patch between the eyes, and buffy patches on each side of the neck distinguish the yellow-bellied from other marmots.



Look among the rocks to see marmots playing or sunning themselves on a warm afternoon. Watch them feeding on grasses that have sprouted up between boulders. A single marmot may be seen perched on a large boulder as a lookout. Listen for a series of high-pitched chirps that warns the others of potential danger. When danger is present, they scurry to the safety of their dens protected underneath the rocks.



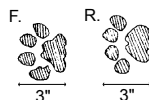
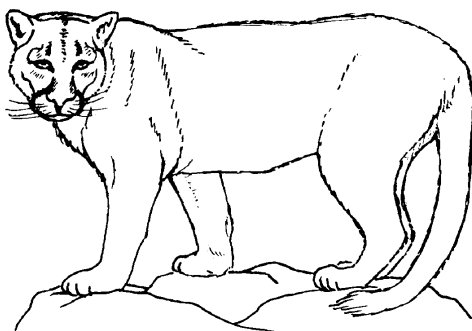
Mountain Lion (Cougar) - *Felis concolor*

Did You Know?

Mountain lions are loners and stay primarily in their own range.

Identifying Features:

- The mountain lion is the largest species of wild cats, weighing up to 200 pounds!
- Mountain lions have a long tail, opposed to the bobbed tails of lynx and bobcats.



Look for tracks of the elusive mountain lion. Because it is nocturnal and secretive, this cat is seldom seen. Tracks of wild cats rarely show claw marks because claws are usually retracted. Cat tracks appear round, or wider than that are long. Tracks may be seen emerging from the cougar's day-time den, concealed in the thick forest. Notice tracks leading to the river where the cougar may have quenched its thirst. Look for a pattern of cougar tracks combined with those of deer, rabbits, or grouse that tell a story of the large carnivore stalking its prey.

Remember that mountain lions are dangerous. If you do see a mountain lion, view it from the safety of your vehicle. If a lion does approach you, slowly back away. Never run, make direct eye contact or turn your back.

Also look for:

Osprey, Black Bear, Clark's Nutcracker



*Please send any comments and suggestions about
the guide or viewing sites to:*

Heber Ranger District
P.O. Box 190
Heber, Utah 84032
Attention: Information/Education

Or visit us at one of our offices:

Heber Ranger District
2460 South Highway 40
Heber, Utah

or

Strawberry Visitor Center
Strawberry Valley

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