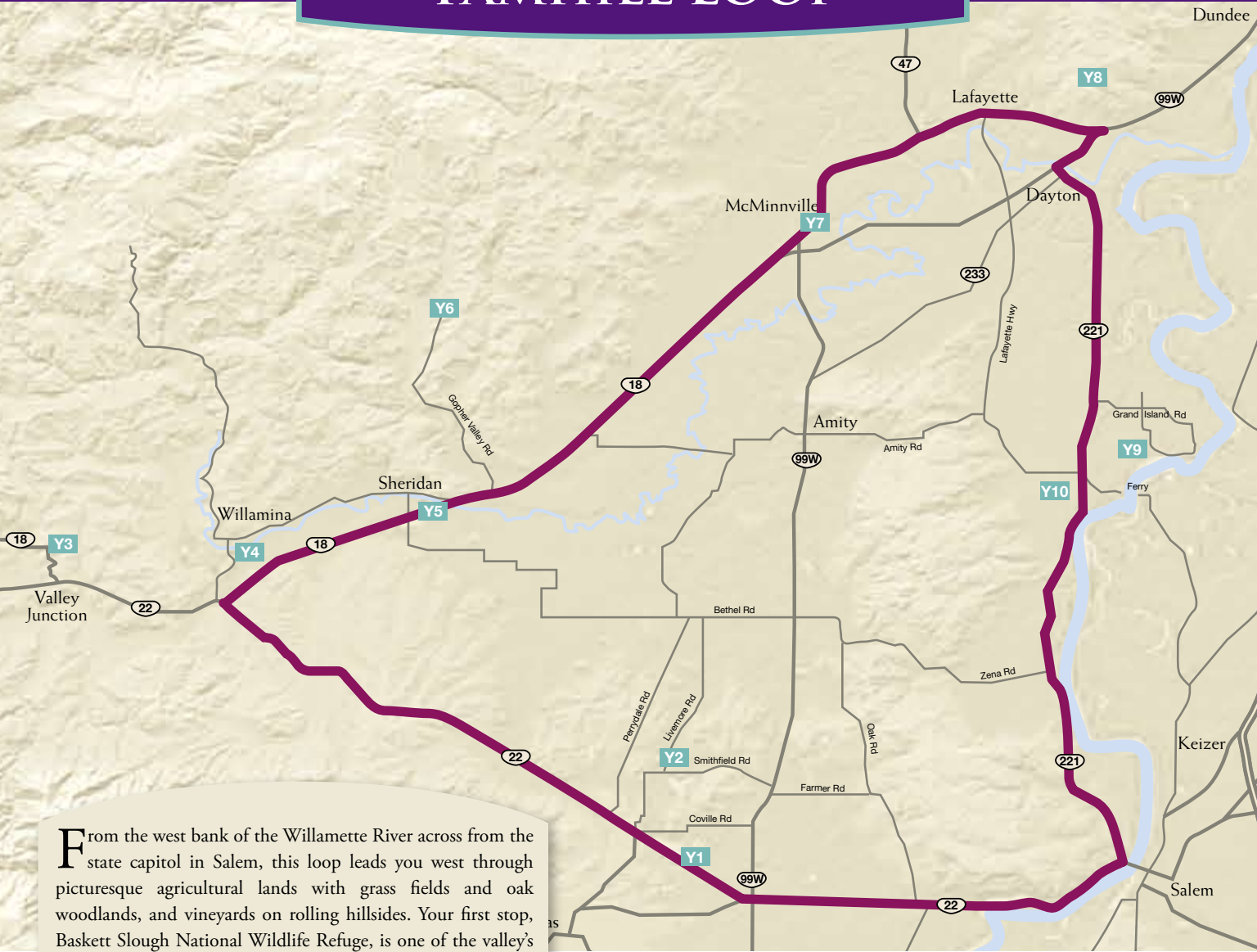


# YAMHILL LOOP



From the west bank of the Willamette River across from the state capitol in Salem, this loop leads you west through picturesque agricultural lands with grass fields and oak woodlands, and vineyards on rolling hillsides. Your first stop, Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge, is one of the valley's premier birding areas, and includes some of the best remaining examples of native upland prairie. Continuing west to Fort Yamhill, you'll learn about the native people who shaped the unique Willamette Valley ecosystem over thousands of years, and continue in this area. From here, the Oregon Coast Birding Trail is just 25 miles through the Coast Range, but you'll want to return on the northern leg of the loop, which passes through the renowned Yamhill wine-growing district. Turning south, you'll return to the bottomlands along the Willamette River, where you can close the loop by returning to West Salem, or use the charming Wheatland Ferry to cross to the Heritage Loop.

Loop sponsorship available

## Y1. Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge

From Salem go W on Hwy 22 for 12 mi to signed overlook with viewing kiosk on N side of Hwy (GPS 44° 57.127' N, 123° 16.157' W). **Coville Rd and Baskett access:** From overlook continue W on Hwy 22 for 1 mi. Turn R on Smithfield Rd and immediately turn R again, onto Coville Rd. View wetlands from pullouts along Coville Rd or continue E for 1 mi to Baskett Butte trailhead. **Morgan Lake access:** From overlook continue W on Hwy 22 for 1 mi. Turn R on Smithfield Rd, which

zigzags N & E for 1 mi, then turns N for 1.2 mi before turning E. Continue E 0.5 mi to gravel parking lot on S side of intersection with Livermore Rd.

Created for Dusky Canada Geese, this refuge has expansive wetlands, fields, and oak savanna and woodland. Trails, pullouts, observation platforms and overlooks provide excellent wildlife viewing opportunities. Along with Dusky Canada Goose, other subspecies of Canada Goose and Cackling Goose graze the fields as large flocks in winter, when Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, and Rough-legged Hawk hunt



PHOTO BY: KEVIN SMITH

Lincoln's Sparrow

over the fields. The fields are among the best places in the Willamette Valley to see Streaked Horned Lark, as well as American Pipit and (rarely) Lapland Longspur. Wetlands host wintering waterfowl, swans, Great Egret, Bald Eagle, and Peregrine Falcon, with Gyrfalcon and Golden Eagle in some winters. In spring look for Cinnamon Teal, Gadwall, Wilson's Phalarope and American White Pelican. The north end of the refuge has become a reliable place to see White-tailed Kite and Northern Shrike. The Morgan Lake access (intersection of Smithfield & Livermore Rds) is a good spring and late-summer shorebird spot. The oak woodland and savanna of Baskett Butte hosts Western Wood-Pewee, Hutton's Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, Black-throated Gray and Orange-crowned Warblers, and Lazuli Bunting. Baskett Butte holds the largest remaining population of the endangered Fender's blue butterfly and its host plant, the Kincaid's lupine, as well as other rare upland prairie flowers. Interior roads and wetland areas are closed from Oct 1 thru March 31. Baskett Butte trail and several viewing areas are open year round. Restroom facilities are provided at Baskett Butte trailhead.



**Sponsor:** U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Willamette Valley Refuge Complex

## Y2. Livermore Road

Follow directions for Morgan Lake access, Baskett Slough NWR (Site Y1). Park here to walk S part of road, or bird your way N for 4.2 mi N to intersection with Bethel Rd just E of the small community of Perrydale. **For a loop from N end of Livermore Rd back through Baskett Slough NWR:** Go E on Bethel Rd 1.9 mi to Hwy 99W, then S 6 mi to Coville Rd.

The southern part of this rural gravel road has brush lines and pastures that support wrens, sparrows and warblers, with numerous wetlands that harbor ducks, geese, and swans, especially in winter. The northern end is open grass fields. In winter look for accipiters, Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk, White-tailed Kite, and Northern Shrike. 1.7 mi N of Smithfield Rd, an open area reliably hosts Western Meadowlark, Streaked Horned Lark, and wintering American Pipit. Also watch for Prairie Falcon, Burrowing Owl, and Short-eared Owl at dusk. Marshes along the S half of the road have nesting Yellow-headed Blackbird. For a very pleasant birding experience in good weather, park at the Morgan Lake access for BSNWR, and walk or bike along the southernmost mile or two. The wetland restorations on both sides of the road are mainly private but can be viewed from the road. Whether you bird on foot, by bicycle, or car, keep to the side of the road while viewing so that farm traffic can pass.



**Sponsor:** Salem Audubon Society

## Y3. Fort Yamhill State Heritage Area

From Hwy 18, go N at Valley Junction on Hwy 22 (Hebo Rd) 1 mi, to the Fort Yamhill State Park sign. Turn E and follow for 0.6 mi, through the Grand



Golden-crowned Sparrow

PHOTO BY: KEVIN SMITH

Ronde Tribal Pow Wow grounds, to the parking lot.

Fort Yamhill was built in the mid-1800's to regulate the eastern border of the Grand Ronde Agency Coastal Reservation, and represents a difficult time for the people of the region. Besides birding interest, a visit offers a glimpse into life in the 1850s and 1860s. A 0.5 mi hiking trail winds through Douglas-fir forest edge and open, hilly meadow. Be on lookout for a variety of birds, depending on the season, including Black-throated Gray, Orange-crowned, and Wilson's Warblers, Bewick's and Winter Wrens, Bushtit, Black-capped and Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Violet-green and Tree Swallows, Steller's and Western Scrub-Jays, Warbling, Hutton's and Cassin's Vireos, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, and Swainson's Thrush.



**Sponsorship available**

## Y4. Willamina Fishing Pond

From Hwy 18 Business Route (Main St) in Willamina, turn S on E St. Go about 1 block and turn L on Yamhill. Follow Yamhill into the parking area for the park/pond. GPS 45° 4.72' N, 123° 29.15' W.

This pond is maintained primarily for trout fishing. Its quality as a birding location depends on the amount of fishing activity. The pond is bordered by riparian woods along the adjacent Yamhill River and Willamina Creek. The pond builds up concentrations of fall waterfowl from September through December, and has hosted numerous unusual species, including Surf and White-winged Scoters, Horned Grebe, and Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes. Wading birds may also be present. Be sure to scan the nearby woods for swallow and other songbirds; occasionally Black Phoebe is seen here. From late winter through summer, the site frequently has enough fishermen to keep waterfowl away, but riparian songbirds stay in the area year-round.



**Sponsorship available**



California Quail

PHOTO BY: STEVE DOWLAN

## Y5. Sheridan Wetlands Park

The Sheridan Wetlands Park is on the S side of Hwy 18, between the Sheridan Federal Correctional Facility and Hwy 18 at Sheridan, just east of the Ballston Rd overpass. Follow a short gravel drive off the paved road (Bridge St) to reach the wetlands. GPS 45° 06' N, 123° 23.3' W.

This park is one of the best known waterfowl and shorebird spots in Yamhill County. Comprising a small pond on the L as you drive in, a large wastewater treatment pond in front of the parking area, and two huge ponds to the L (N) of the dike, the area can host waterfowl year-round. In the fall, scan for dabbling and diving ducks, geese and shorebirds. In summer, Osprey regularly hunt the ponds. Access to the ponds is limited, both because it is a wastewater treatment facility, and because it is next to a federal prison. While the main pond is also visible from the shoulder of Hwy 18, stopping there is not advised as this creates a situation of concern for law enforcement.



**Sponsorship available**



Western Sandpiper

PHOTO BY: BRUCE CRAIG



Western Bluebird  
PHOTO BY:  
JIM LEONARD

## Y6. Deer Creek County Park

From Hwy 18 between MP 34 and MP 35 (2 mi NE of Sheridan), turn N at the Dairy Queen onto Gopher Valley Rd. Follow Gopher Valley Rd for 5.5 mi and watch for green signs on the L for the park. Turn L onto a signed gravel road that leads 0.25 mi over a wood-plank bridge to the parking area. GPS 45° 10' N, 123° 23' W.

A 13-ac prairie restoration in this 30-ac park is one of the largest wet prairie remnants in the northern Willamette Valley. Visit May – June to see the peak bloom of native wildflowers (view from the edges of the restoration only). Any time of year is good for birding the accessible portion of the park, which includes riparian ash forest, a creek, and plenty of brush for sparrows. In winter look for Lincoln's Sparrow and Sooty Fox Sparrow, and watch for White-tailed Kite and Northern Harrier

hunting over the prairie. Spring and summer bring Green Heron, Willow and Pacific-slope Flycatchers, Marsh Wren, Swainson's Thrush, and other riparian species. Conifers on the edges of the Gopher Valley are close enough that you may hear Northern Pygmy-Owl, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak.



**Sponsor:** Oregon Field Ornithologists

## Y7. McMinnville Rotary Park

Take Hwy 99 Business through McMinnville to the light at Baker Creek Rd. Turn W, then N on Baker St and travel 0.25 mi to the park on the L. GPS 45° 13' N, 123° 11' W.

This 33-ac wooded park on the edge of McMinnville has 1.5 mi of gravel trails, with wooden bridges over Baker Creek. Warblers and other migrants abound in spring, and remarkably, Northern Waterthrush has been seen here twice in recent years. Virginia Rail and Green Heron are present around the three ponds, along with Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers and Red-breasted Sapsucker. Also watch for Steller's Jay, Cedar Waxwing, Black-capped and Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Bush-tit, Evening and Black-headed Grosbeaks.



**Sponsorship available**



Peregrine Falcon

PHOTO BY: KEVIN SMITH

## Y8. Winter's Hill Vineyard

From Hwy 99W about 3 mi E of Lafayette, turn N on McDougall Rd, which bends E. After 0.2 mi turn L (N) on Breyman Orchards Rd and follow signs to Winter's Hill (2.6 mi).

This vineyard just north of McMinnville is owned by an environmentally conscious family who has created paths specifically for birdwatchers through their oak savanna and oak-fir forest. The owners ask visitors to check in at the tasting room and gift shop before hiking the trails. Nest boxes for Western Bluebird line the 0.5 mi road up to the vineyard. A spectacular view of the Coast mountain range is visible from the gravel parking lot with picnic tables nestled under oak trees. Acorn Woodpeckers are resident in oaks nearby; look for their "granary trees" where they store acorns, and you will soon see the woodpeckers. The nearby vineyards for Sokol Blosser Winery, 0.8 miles along Breyman Orchards Rd from Hwy 99W, also have many bluebird houses along the 0.5 mi drive to the tasting room, used by Violet-green and Tree Swallows as well as bluebirds. Mt. Hood looms on the drive back down to the highway.



**Sponsor:** Salem Audubon Society

## Y9. Grand Island Greenway

From the Hwy 18 Bypass in Dayton go S on Hwy 221 (Wallace Rd) for 5.8 mi. Turn E on onto Grand Island Rd. After 1.2 mi, turn R (S) onto Upper Island Rd. After another 1.2 mi, stop at the small parking spot on the R side of the road, next to a white gate. From here, a trail enters the forest on the S side of the road, and proceeds through the forest for 0.5 mi to a channel of the Willamette River. GPS 45° 07' N, 123° 01' W

This greenway preserves a remnant of the gallery forests of high-arching cottonwood, maple and ash trees that once shaded much of the Willamette River bottomlands. In summer, the songs of Swainson's Thrush and Black-headed Grosbeak fill the forest, and Yellow Warbler sings from riverside willows. Scan for Spotted Sandpiper and Killdeer on gravel bars, and Bald Eagle overhead. Red-eyed Vireo is sometimes heard along the trail. Do



Yellow-headed Blackbird

PHOTO BY: JIM NORTON

note, the trail can be quite overgrown with nettles at times. This greenway is officially part of the Willamette Mission State Park (Site H4 on Heritage Loop) across the river. Nearby corn fields on Grand Island have regularly hosted huge flocks of roosting Barn Swallows in late summer/early fall – at least 250,000 in some years. Nearest facilities are at Site Y10, which is 1.2 mi S of the turn from Hwy 221 onto Grand Island Rd.



**Sponsorship available**

## Y10. Maud Williamson State Recreation Site

**From the Hwy 18 Bypass in Dayton:** Go S on Hwy 221 (Wallace Rd/Salem-Dayton Hwy) for 7 mi. Park entrance is on R near intersection with Wheatland Rd. **From Willamette Mission Park (Site H4):** Take Wheatland Ferry across Willamette River, and continue 1 mi to park entrance. Note that the ferry is closed during periods of high water in winter. GPS 45° 05.50' N, 123° 04' W.

This small park with a stand of second-growth Douglas-fir amid flat, cultivated farmland offers a picnic stop with restrooms at the end of the Yamhill Loop. Birds here include Western Wood-Pewee and Violet-green Swallow in summer and Red-breasted Nuthatch, Chestnut-backed and Black-capped Chickadees, and Brown Creeper year-round. Look and listen for Savannah Sparrow from edges of adjoining field. To return to start of loop, continue S for 12 mi on Hwy 221 to Hwy 22 in West Salem.



**Sponsorship available**