

turn left at an unsigned gravel road and continue north just under 1 mile to the lake.

**Migrate Yourself:** Look for additional bird species along Mazourka Canyon Road such as LeConte's Thrasher, Loggerhead Shrike, Greater Roadrunner, and occasionally Sage Thrasher. You might also spot Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, or Turkey Vulture.

### 10 Diaz Lake

**Location:** 36°33'44.4"N 118°03'21.6"W  
36.562324, -118.055992

**Land Manager:** Inyo County Department of Parks & Recreation

**Description:** The area's habitat is dominated by an open water lake encompassed by cottonwood, willow, marsh vegetation and pastureland. Diaz Lake is a geologic sag pond formed by the 1872 Lone Pine Earthquake which released an underground reservoir of water through spring outlets which feed this lake. The lake itself is about 80 acres. The area is a local recreation area and contains a campground, picnic tables, and bathrooms. About 227 bird species have been recorded throughout the year. A range of 61-159 species have been recorded from November to May. The area hosts Ruddy Duck, Mallard, Ring-necked Duck, Great Blue Heron, and Eared Grebe. Check the trees on the south side of the lake and around the campground for Yellow-rumped Warbler, California Quail, Northern Flicker, and flycatchers. The pasture just south of the lake has hosted Solitary Sandpiper and is a great place to study low-flying swallows. The lake is located just west of US Highway 395 and south of State Highway 136.



Great Blue Heron. Photo Courtesy of Ron & Barbara Orti.

**Migrate Yourself:** Take a few moments to experience the **Alabama Hills National Scenic Area** just west of Lone Pine. Pick up a map at the **Lone Pine Museum of Western Film History** where you can learn about hundreds of movies produced in the Hills.

### 11 Owens Lake

**Location:** 36°31'07.4"N 117°55'10.2"W  
36.518707, -117.919500

**Land Manager:** Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

**Description:** Owens Lake has been partially rewatered by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power over the last two decades to abate airborne dust emissions originating from this former playa. As a result of creating islands of water to improve dust control, migratory birds use the area's large habitat on a grand scale. There are several birding hotspots on this very large lakebed which is about 110 square miles.

In spring and fall, tens of thousands of shorebirds, waterfowl, and other migratory bird species stop over to rest and feed on abundant brine flies, brine shrimp, and other invertebrates in the shallow flooded dust control areas and natural springs around the



Owens Lake Plover Wing Plaza. Photo Courtesy of Joe Pollini.

lake. Over 100 bird species have been observed at Owens Lake. In a single day, some 75,000 birds can be observed using Owens Lake. Some common species include Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, California Gull, Western and Least Sandpipers, and the occasional Peregrine Falcon and Northern Harrier.



American White Pelicans. Photo Courtesy of Santiago M. Escueria.

One of the best ways to experience the lake is by attending the Owens Lake Bird Festival in late April each year. Check out the website at [www.friendsoftheinyo.org](http://www.friendsoftheinyo.org). Also, be sure to pick up an *Owens Lake Trails* Booklet from the **Bishop Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau** to identify access and other birding hotspot locations.

The most accessible location of Owens Lake is the Plover Wing Plaza Trailhead. Proceed east on State Highway 136 from the junction of US Highway 395 for 10.4 miles. Turn west or right and proceed 0.75 miles where you will bear sharply to your left on a hairpin turn at a road junction. Then proceed about 0.66 miles on the main road to the parking area on your right. Park here and look for a road heading north that is lined with boulders on both sides. Walk north on the road for about 0.5 miles to the Plover Wing Plaza featuring artistic features, interpretive panels, and various bird species.

**Migrate Yourself:** Check out the **Eastern Sierra Visitor Center** at the junction of US Highway 395 and State Highway 136. This facility is a treasure trove of local natural history.

### 12 Cartago State Wildlife Area

**Location:** 36°19'24.2"N 118°00'59.0"W  
36.323389, -118.016381

**Land Manager:** California Department of Fish & Wildlife

**Description:** Cartago State Wildlife Area consists of 218 acres of freshwater wetland habitat that is one of the few remaining spring and wetland areas on the shore of Owens Lake. The topography of the area is generally flat and at an elevation of 3,600 feet. The California Fish & Game Commission designated this wildlife area in 2007 to protect existing wetland and aquatic habitats found onsite.

Owens Lake has been designated a **Nationally Significant Important Bird Area** by the National Audubon Society and American Bird Conservancy, and 165 bird species have been documented on the wildlife area.

The area supports waterfowl, wading birds and shorebirds including Snowy Plover, White-faced Ibis, California Quail, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, and rails.

To find this location, take Highway 395 north from the junction of State Highway 190 for just over three miles to Cartago. Turn east or right on Whitney Street. Proceed for about 1/4 mile then walk easterly past the cattle gate a short distance toward the wetland complex. Look for historic ruins of an old soda ash processing plant on the southwest side of the wildlife area. Old dikes 3 to 4 feet high, originally used as soda evaporators, extend onto the lakebed and encircle the ponds.

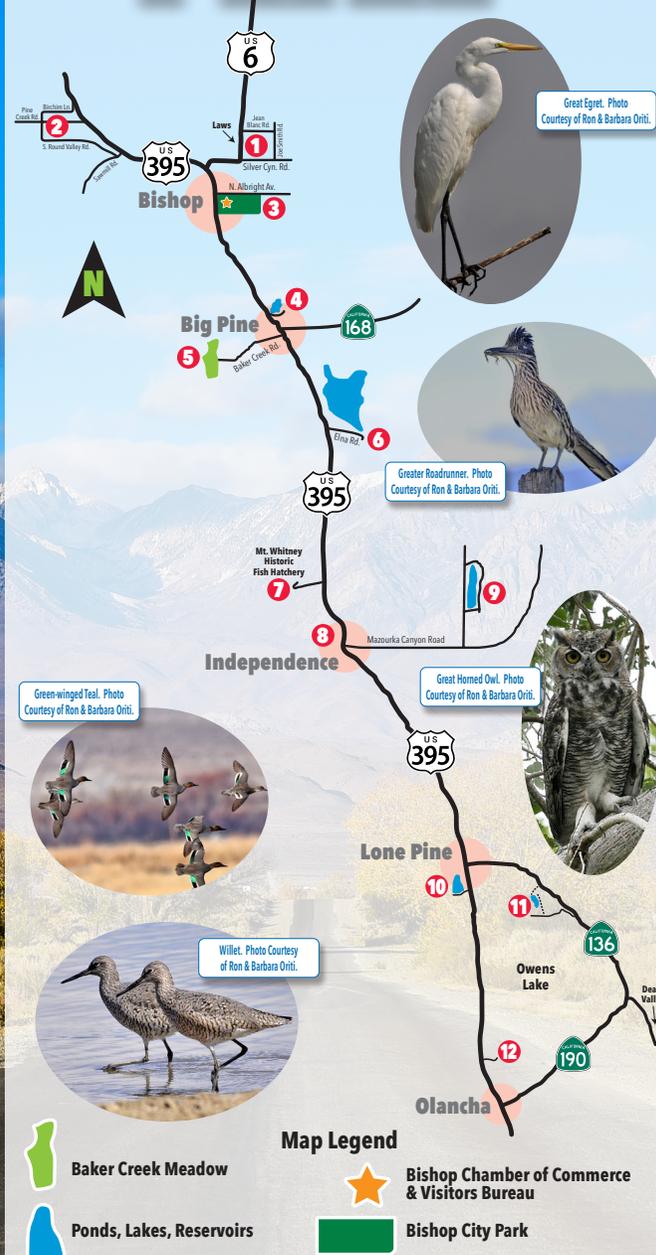
**Migrate Yourself:** Dabble a bit in Owens Valley pioneer history and check out the **Cottonwood Charcoal Kilns** about 11.5 miles south of State Highway 136 along along U.S. Highway 395. Look for signs before you turn east onto the county graded dirt road. The road is about one mile to the kilns.

The beehive shaped kilns produced charcoal from nearby cottonwood, Jeffrey pine and pinyon pine trees to fire up furnaces at Cerro Gordo during its silver mining operations in the late 1870s. During the silver mines' heyday, Owens Lake was filled with water. Steamships sailed across its waters transporting charcoal across the lake to Swansea where it was freighted by mule team and wagon to the Cerro Gordo mining camp in the nearby Inyo Mountains.

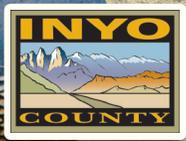
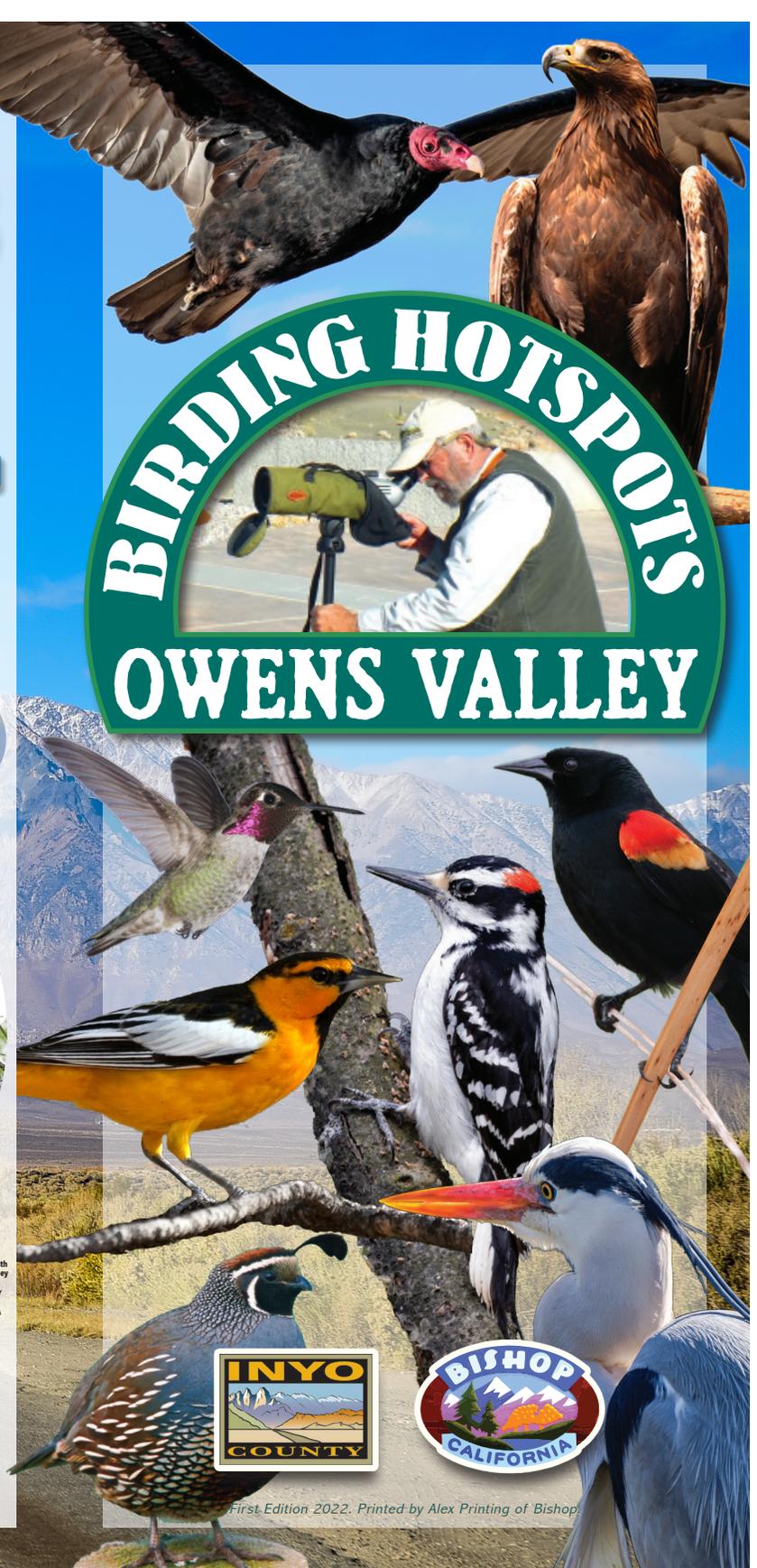


Long-billed Curlew. Photo Courtesy of Mike Prather.

# BIRDING HOTSPOTS MAP



## BIRDING HOTSPOTS OWENS VALLEY



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## Winter & Spring Owens Valley Birding Hotspots

**Introduction:** The Owens Valley region supports some 100 or so birding locations where birders can spend a lifetime exploring, discovering, and studying various birds and their habitat. The Owens Valley's wide-open landscapes provide an environment that supports hundreds of bird species.

This brochure presents several notable hotspots between Bishop and Olancho emphasizing a November through May season focusing on wintering species and spring migrants. It's also a time when the weather is milder and fewer guests visit the region. The information presented herein comes from two primary sources: the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society's *Eastern Sierra Birding Trail Map* ([www.esaudubon.org](http://www.esaudubon.org)) and the world-renowned eBird database and hotspot explorer tool ([www.ebird.org/hotspots](http://www.ebird.org/hotspots)). Most of the information describing hotspots and recorded species originated from eBird's 2020 records of bird distribution and abundance. For additional and updated information about bird species, sightings updates, checklists, photos, and details, please check both aforementioned websites.

Each hotspot's number is shown within a circle on a simple line map on the brochure's last page.

For additional information, contact the **Bishop Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau** at 760.873.8405 or email [info@bishopvisitor.com](mailto:info@bishopvisitor.com).

**Environmental Considerations:** Responsible birders, like yourself, minimize their outdoor impacts and understand the importance of protecting habitat to perpetuate biological flora and fauna. Act as effective stewards of the environment, leave no trace of your presence and camp only in designated campgrounds to reduce site impacts and wildfire risk. As good stewards and role models, carry a trash bag and remove any debris left by others. Commit to leave the environment in better condition than you find it. Respect all private property signs, fences and gates. Lastly, commit to the Bishop Chamber of Commerce's Pledge to

- **Protect** our public lands like those who came before us;
- **Preserve** our public lands for those who will come after us;
- **Participate** in taking good care of our public lands for all of us to enjoy right now; and
- **Perpetuate** these benefits by committing yourself to these stewardship behaviors.

## Birding Hotspot Locations

### 1 Laws

**Location:** 37°25'09.1"N 118°20'43.0"W  
37.419207, -118.345272

**Land Manager:** Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

**Description:** The area comprises open agricultural fields, scrub and nearby water habitat, and is an excellent location to see birds of prey and sparrows. About 150 bird species have been recorded throughout the year. A range of 35-80 species have been recorded from November to May.



Ferruginous Hawk (Juvenile). Photo Courtesy of Ron & Barbara Oriti.

Typical raptor species include Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, American Kestrel, Prairie Falcon, Short-eared Owl and more. Other species you might find are Great Blue Heron, California Quail, Horned Lark, Belted Kingfisher, Greater Roadrunner, Northern Flicker, and a variety of sparrows, warblers, and blackbirds.

**Migrate Yourself:** Check out the premiere **Laws Railroad Museum and Historical Site**

only a few minutes away from this hotspot location. Spend a few hours immersing yourself in Owens Valley frontier history on this 11-acre 1883 village depicting the region's Wild West culture. The trees around the museum attract nesting Bullock's Orioles in late April and May.

### 2 Round Valley

**Location:** 37°25'16.2"N 118°34'39.0"W  
37.421167, -118.577500

**Land Manager:** Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, Private Land / Ranches

**Description:** This area consists of grassland, irrigated pastures, cottonwood and willow habitat. About 180 species have been recorded throughout the year. A range of 50-100 species have been recorded from November to May.

This is a good location for wintering raptors including Rough-legged, Ferruginous, and Red-tailed Hawks. Be sure to check the fields and trees for both Golden and Bald Eagles, which occur in small numbers each winter, as part of the potential fifteen species of diurnal raptors. Long-eared Owls have nested in the old magpie nests in trees along North Round Valley Road. Other species you might find are Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, California Quail, Horned Lark, American Robin, and a variety of sparrows, bluebirds, finches, and blackbirds.

Take Pine Creek Road several miles north of Bishop westerly and then branch off onto nearby roads including Birchim Lane and Round Valley Road.

**Migrate Yourself:** Extend your journey and drive the Round Valley Loop to experience additional vast scenery, history, and wildlife on this stretch of Old Highway 395. Find the descriptive route itinerary at the **Bishop Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau** located in Bishop.

### 3 Bishop City Park

**Location:** 37°22'01.5"N 118°23'28.0"W  
37.367088, -118.391118

**Land Manager:** City of Bishop Parks & Recreation Department

**Description:** Bishop's iconic jewel and landmark, this local park encompasses about 50 acres and includes Bishop Creek and an associated pond that attracts waterfowl and gulls that are usually tame enough to allow close inspection and photography. About 200 species have been recorded throughout the year and a range of 75-105 species have been recorded from November to May. The park is located in the center of town along US Highway 395.



Mallard Drake. Photo Courtesy of Ron & Barbara Oriti.

Check the pond for Mallard, American Wigeon, American Coot, California Gull, Canada Goose, and sometimes Ross's Goose or Snow Goose. Red-shouldered Hawk can often be heard in the tall cottonwoods and warblers are numerous starting in April. This lush island of water, shelter and food sources also supports various woodpeckers, sparrows, both Black and Say's Phoebe, and Western Bluebirds.

**Migrate Yourself:** Saunter on over to the **Bishop Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau** at the front of the Park to obtain local information spanning an endless range of regional outdoor recreation and historic opportunities. Guests enjoy feeding the park ducks, and scratch grain is the best food supplement for them. Get duck food from the Chamber for a small donation. Additionally, for you dendrophiles, pick up the **Bishop Park Arboretum** brochure at the Chamber identifying noteworthy trees within the park.

### 4 Klondike Lake

**Location:** 37°12'21.6"N 118°18'16.4"W  
37.205996, -118.304558

**Land Manager:** Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

**Description:** The area consists of open water surrounded by saltbush scrub desert, alkali meadows, and grassland habitat. Klondike Lake is about 180 acres and is an overflow lake originating from the Owens River. It is one of the best waterbird areas in the Eastern Sierra. About 160 species have been recorded throughout the year. A range of 48-96 species have been recorded from November to May.

Both dabbling and diving ducks use the lake, often in large numbers. Regularly occurring ducks include Mallard, Gadwall, Ring-necked



Cinnamon Teal in Flight. Photo Courtesy of Ron & Barbara Oriti.



Osprey. Photo Courtesy of Ron & Barbara Oriti.

Duck, and Northern Shoveler. Cinnamon Teal can be expected here starting in late January, the males already in stunning breeding plumage. Clark's Grebe regularly breeds here. Check the sandy margins for shorebirds such as Spotted Sandpiper. Also keep an eye and ear out for American Bittern which breed in the reeds. Other regulars include American White Pelican, California and Ring-billed Gulls, Canada Goose, and Northern Harrier. The best viewing is primarily along the south and east sides of the lake. A spotting scope can be helpful here.

**Migrate Yourself:** Trek south for several miles on US Highway 395 to the north edge of Big Pine where State Highway 168 and US Highway 395 intersect. Proceed east on State Highway 168 for a hundred feet or so then turn right. Glacier View Campground will appear to your left. Park at the **Big Pine Recreation Area** facilities on the right next to the local information signs and take in views of the Palisade Glacier to the west.

### 5 Baker Creek Meadow

**Location:** 37°09'48.3"N 118°19'01.5"W  
37.163408, -118.317089

**Land Manager:** Los Angeles Department of Water & Power



Northern Harrier. Photo Courtesy of Ron & Barbara Oriti.

the facilities. You are welcome to take photographs for personal use only. Commercial use requires prior permission from Cal Tech.

### 6 Tinemaha Reservoir

**Location:** 37°03'36.4"N 118°13'40.8"W  
37.060109, -118.227997

**Land Manager:** Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

**Description:** This habitat encompasses a large expanse of open water flanked by cottonwood, willow, saltbush scrub, and mudflat. This important water body has hosted about 231 bird species throughout the year. A range of 78-136 species have been recorded from November to May. Look for Canada, Cackling, and Ross's Goose, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, and other waterfowl. It's a great place to see flocks of migrating American White Pelican, as well as Double-crested Cormorant. Look for Bald Eagle and Tundra Swan in winter. Inland rarities such as Long-tailed Duck, Parasitic Jaeger, Iceland and Sabine's Gulls, and Arctic Tern have been observed. The water level fluctuates potentially attracting such rarities as shorebird migrants including Ruddy Turnstone, Mountain Plover, Red Knot, Sanderling and Stilt Sandpiper to the mudflats.

Access the area by turning east on Elna Road from US Highway 395 south of Big Pine. Shortly after, turn right immediately in front of the residence and pass it, then park in the fishing area along the Owens River just below the dam outlet. Walk north of the parking area, through a pedestrian gate to a metal bridge crossing the river. Worn paths traverse the willows but if the water level is high some areas may be difficult to access.

**Migrate Yourself:** For a majestic view of Tinemaha Reservoir, Sierra Nevada, Inyo Mountains, and the Big Pine Volcanic Field, watch for the wildlife viewpoint sign shortly after turning onto Elna Road from US Highway 395. Turn left by the sign on the graded dirt road. Proceed uphill about 0.75 miles to the parking lot. Walk a few hundred feet on the cobble walkway to the information signs describing the area's features.



Tundra Swan. Photo Courtesy of Ron & Barbara Oriti.

### 7 Mt. Whitney Historic Fish Hatchery

**Location:** 36°49'49.5"N 118°14'36.3"W  
36.830413, -118.243403

**Land Manager:** California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife

**Description:** This exquisite area consists of an open pond fed by Oak Creek and is surrounded by deciduous trees forming a shaded island oasis amidst a high desert environment. The hatchery was built in 1917 to raise trout for the waters of Inyo County. It has morphed into an educational facility in recent years due to fire and flood damage. About 134 bird species have been recorded throughout the year. A range of 19-87 species have been recorded from November to May. Look for Acorn Woodpecker, a rarity on the eastern slope of the Sierra. This can be a good location to see warblers during migration. California Scrub-Jay and Stellar's Jay can be found here year round along with Wood Duck. Sometimes you can spot Belted Kingfisher, Lewis' Woodpecker, and Red-tailed Hawk here as well. Be sure to check the mulberry trees for Western Tanager and Black-headed Grosbeak, which are common in spring. The hotspot is located a few miles north of Independence, west of US Highway 395.



Belted Kingfisher. Photo Courtesy of Ron & Barbara Oriti.

**Migrate Yourself:** Drive over to nearby Independence and marvel at the **Inyo County Courthouse**. Built in 1921, it depicts a unique Classical Revival architectural style symbolizing Inyo County's peak of local autonomy. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

### 8 Mary DeDecker Native Plant Garden

**Location:** 36°48'06.4"N 118°12'16.8"W  
36.801777, -118.204662

**Land Manager:** Inyo County & Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

**Description:** The native plant garden lies along a nature trail adjoining the **Eastern California Museum** located on 155 N. Grant Street in Independence. The garden was designed and planted by the local chapter of the California Native Plant Society to provide an aesthetically pleasing and educational showcase of Eastern California's vibrant flora. It is a lasting tribute to the Owens Valley's own distinguished botanist, Mary DeDecker.

This area sits on the valley floor and is composed of riparian, lower montane, and alluvial habitat.

This is an excellent place to see resident and migratory species, such as Anna's Hummingbird, White-crowned Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, and California Scrub-Jay.

**Migrate Yourself:** Spend some time at the **Eastern California Museum**, Inyo County's first and oldest. This window to the past showcases venerated mining artifacts, rustic pioneer buildings, preeminent Paiute basketry, and other unique displays. Then take a short walk on the trail beginning at the adjoining Mary DeDecker Native Plant Garden to Dehy Park, less than a mile away. Ask for a *Discover Independence Walking Guide* at the museum before your stroll to uncover historic architecture throughout the town.

### 9 Billy Lake

**Location:** 36°48'42.0"N 118°08'41.2"W  
36.811656, -118.144784

**Land Manager:** Los Angeles Dept of Water & Power

**Description:** The Billy Lake area is a saltbush scrub, riparian, and open water complex. This small lake is about 10 acres and attracts various birds to its fresh water, cattail, and nearby riparian habitats. You may see anglers fishing its waters. Please respect their activity and avoid disturbing nearby fish. About 109 bird species have been recorded throughout the year. A range of 4-65 species have been recorded from November to May. Typical species include California Quail, Killdeer, American Coot, Great Blue Heron, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Mallard, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Bittern, and Northern Harrier. Access the lake by heading east on Mazourka Canyon Road from Independence for about 3.2 miles (you will cross the Los Angeles Aqueduct bridge). Then



Yellow-rumped Warbler. Photo Courtesy of Ron & Barbara Oriti.