

Trail 5: Pinhorn/Onefour

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Because of its remoteness the Pinhorn Grazing Reserve is very much under-birded and a good list of bird species is not available. The southern banks of the Milk River are particularly scenic, exhibiting badland topography that is home to Prairie Falcon and Golden Eagles. The undeveloped nature of the reserve means the native grasses abound with prairie passerines, which may be rare in other areas. Such species as Grasshopper and Baird's Sparrow, Sprague's Pipit, McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspur are likely here. On a Grasslands Naturalists outing a Mountain Plover was seen.

The Greater Sage Grouse is protected by an Emergency Protection Order (EPO). The main portion of this order applying to birders is: "Avoid driving vehicles within 3.2km of a Greater Sage Grouse lek between 1 ½ hours before sunset and 1 ½ after sunrise in all of April and May." The pertinent link for the complete EPO is: <http://www.registrelp-sararegistry.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=B3B27B60-1>.

This trail area is divided into five sub-sections: the Pinhorn Grazing Reserve south of Milk River (**B**), the Pinhorn Grazing Reserve north of the Milk River (**A**), the Silver Sage (**D**) and Escape Coulee (**C**) conservation sites and the Onefour (**E**) area.

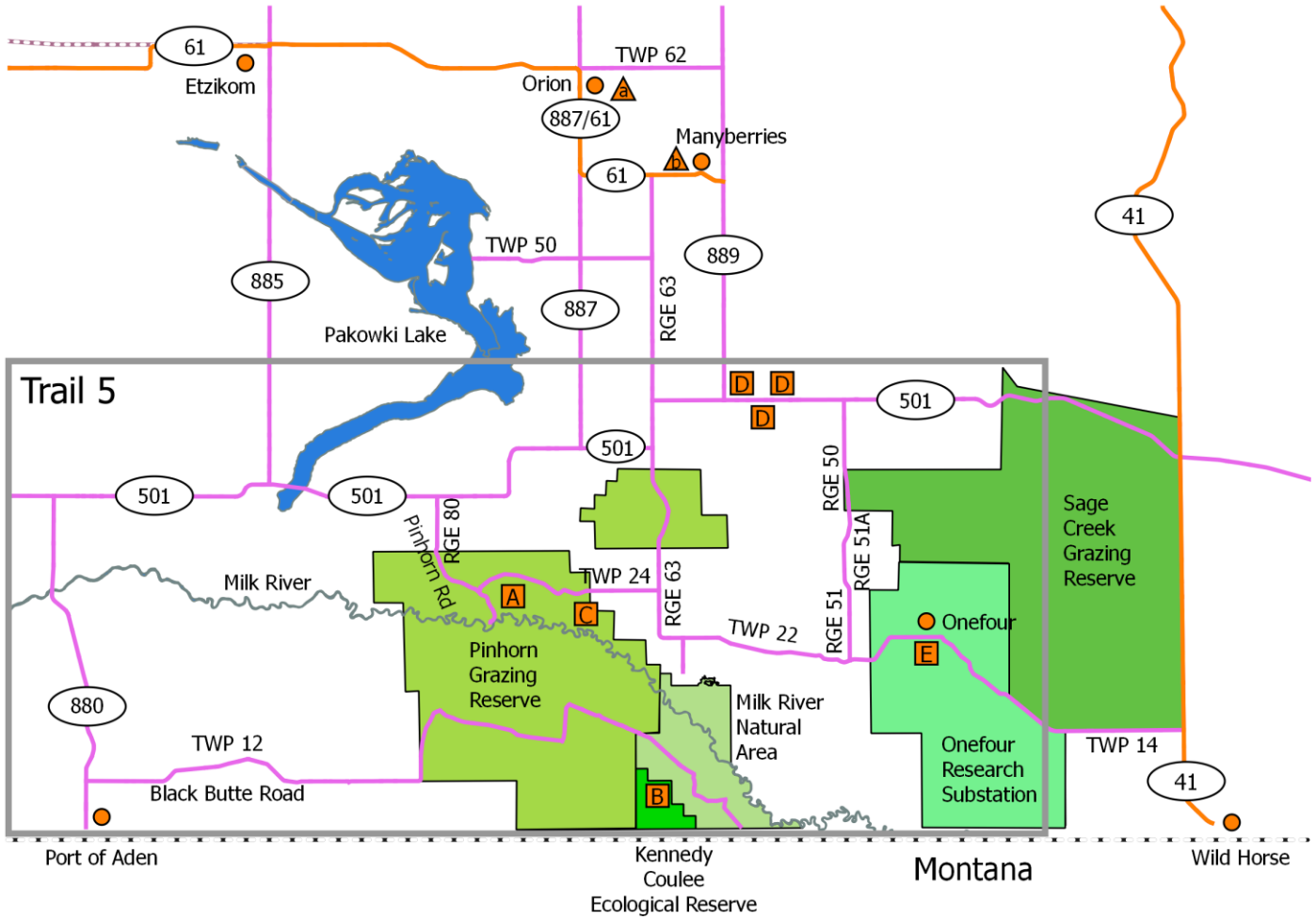
To access the southern portion of the Pinhorn Grazing Reserve (**B**) one must proceed south on Hwy 880, then east on TWP RD 12 (also known as Black Butte Road) into the Reserve. Caution! This area is very undeveloped and when wet, roads are impassable and help, if one is stuck, is very far away! Once into the reserve ensure that you remain on a developed trail. The main trail heads eastward into the Milk River Natural Area with spectacular views of the Milk River canyon. Kennedy Coulee Provincial Ecological Reserve is found to the south of the trail (near the eastern extremity) but one must be prepared to walk to the reserve itself. Remember, if birding this area, to have a full gas tank and supplies, as the nearest town is Foremost more than 100 kms away. These badlands are also rife with fossils. At the end of the trail one will get to the Rooster Comb, a unique volcanic intrusion.

The northern portion of the Pinhorn Grazing Reserve (**A**) is the easiest to access and can be combined with a trip to Pakowki Lake and/or to the Manyberries area. Take RGE RD 80 south from Hwy 501 and follow it down to the Milk River. There is a residence at the end of this road and one should check in here to tell them what you are up to. The main road is good gravel but side roads are mostly dirt trails and caution must be used. As one proceeds down into the valley listen for Rock Wren and at the bottom watch for Loggerhead Shrike

The Silver Sage Conservation Area (**D**) lies along Hwy 501 east of Hwy 889. This 2051 acre site has been purchased by the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) with other conservation groups. This site is clearly signed. Cropland is being restored to native grasses, and is already showing increased bird usage. Sixty-five species have been observed within this site.

The Escape Coulee Conservation Area (**C**) abuts the Pinhorn Grazing Reserve. Access is from Hwy 501, proceeding south along RGE RD 63 and then west along TWP RD 22. The south side of this site overlooks the extraordinary Milk River valley with the Montana Sweetgrass Hills as a backdrop. The westward extension of TWP RD 22 is poorly maintained and should only be attempted when dry.

The fifth site within this Trail is Onefour (formerly an Agricultural Research Centre) (**E**). Onefour can be accessed by turning south from Hwy 501 onto RGE RD 51 following this to TWP RD 22 and then heading east along this road. The former research station is well treed with a number of buildings and corrals. However this Centre has been shut down and its future is unknown; it is currently uninhabited. While the site is open it is a good place to see Common Nighthawk. They are quite abundant during the late spring and early summer. The trees and bushes are also rife with a variety of flycatchers, sparrows and Baltimore Oriole. Bullock's Oriole has also been seen here. By continuing east along the Onefour access trail (TWP RD 22) one eventually reaches Hwy 41 just north of Wild Horse. Birding the Wild Horse area (Trail 6) may be combined with the Onefour area but again be prepared for a very long day. (Medicine Hat to Manyberries about 1 hour; Medicine Hat to Wild Horse approximately 90 minutes; Manyberries to Kennedy Coulee about 2 hours)



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- Observation Points
- A Pinhorn Grazing Reserve (North of Milk River)
- B Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve
- C Escape Coulee ACA
- D Silver Sage ACA
- E Onefour

- Amenities
- a Orion: fuel and some supplies
- b Manyberries: cafe (sometimes)

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