Wildlife

Where there is water, there is wildlife to watch. Waterfowl, river otter, and great blue heron are species commonly seen by the passive passerby, while eagles, gull, crane, and beaver are most often viewed by those hiking in the field. In an area where streams and springs are rare, the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River fills a very important role.

A diversity of wildlife species are found in the river, riparian area along the edge of the river, and in the juniper, shrub-steppe, and grasslands along the river corridor. The dramatic cliffs throughout the canyon offer nesting habitat for a variety of birds, including golden eagles, prairie falcons, and owls. At least 13 species of waterfowl have been observed within the river areas, covering diverse, chukar, and California quail often can be seen and heard in the upland areas.

Other wildlife that depend on the river corridor include coyote, porcupine, skunk, mallard, and Canada goose. Other wildlife species that depend on the river corridor include mountain whitefish. Wherever there is water, there is wildlife to watch. Waterfowl, fishing, and driving, or bicycling on the Crooked River Backcountry Byway.

Camping

The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River offers many recreation opportunities, including camping, fishing, hiking, and driving, or bicycling on the Crooked River Backcountry Byway.

Trails

The 2.6 mile round trip hike to Chimney Rock involves a moderate climb up a side drainage, some switchbacks, and ends with expansive views of the Crooked River Canyon and Cascade in the distance. The trailhead is located on the east side of State Highway 27, opposite Chimney Rock Campground.

Fishing

The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River is a classic tail-water fishery located at the approach about an hour’s drive from Bend, Oregon. The river is open all year for fly-fishing. The best time is to start fishing at early spring, continuing on through late fall. The river offers great dry-fly and nymph fishing for the hard-fighting rainbows and is a perfect fishery for the beginning fly-fishing enthusiast. One of the attractions of the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River is the constant water temperature that maintains an optimum river quality for year around fishing. Before you go fishing be sure to check the current spot fishing regulations with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Cultural Resources

Prehistory

Imagine traveling through this area as Native American people have done. For thousands of years, Native American groups from the Columbia Plateau and the Willamette Valley gathered plant materials throughout this region. The Lower Crooked River corridor is within the ceded lands of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Under the Treaty of 1855, the Tribes are guaranteed certain traditional rights such as hunting, fishing, gathering, and grazing on ceded lands.

Recreation

The Chimney Rock segment of the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River is becoming increasingly popular for all kinds of recreation. Thousands of people visit each year to enjoy the incredible fishing, hiking, and scenic views. The area provides for many types of recreation activities including camping, fishing, hiking, and driving, or bicycling on the Crooked River Backcountry Byway.

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Camping

The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River offers many developed camping opportunities. There are nine developed campgrounds on the east side of the river, ranging in size from 6 to 30 campsites. The maximum length of stay is 14 days. All campgrounds have restrooms, drinking water, and garbage cans. Grey water systems are provided for waste water disposal (dish water). There are no RV dump stations on the river corridor, although sumps are provided for waste water disposal (dish water).

Pioneer Settlers

Peter Skene Ogden, who trapped beaver for the Hudson Bay Company in the mid-1820s, was the first experimenter to leave written accounts of his journey to this region. Other explorers to the area near the Crooked River range, including Whitman, who passed through the area in 1842, and Lookout Trail southerners and soldiers on military expeditions, all looking for better routes west. From the 1860s on, settlers increased in central Oregon. Unavailable farmland in the Willamette Valley encouraged settlers to stay on the unclaimed lands of central Oregon. Stockmen supplying beef and grain to miners because of the discovery of gold in the John Day River area in 1862, and the development of transportation routes connecting the desert country with the more populated western Oregon, caused continued growth. Today cattle and sheep ranching and agricultural production are still major industries in this region.

Directions to the Site

The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River is a 12-mile drive south from Prineville, Oregon, and a 46-mile drive from Bend, Oregon.

District Contact Information

Prineville District

Bureau of Land Management 3050 Northeast Main Street Prineville, OR 97754 (541) 416-6700 www.or.blm.gov/prineville

BLM/OW/CA/11-0833+1122.32
Welcome to the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River, which was designated a Federal Wild and Scenic River in 1988. Located along the Crooked River National Back Country Byway, the 8-mile Chimney Rock segment boasts diverse scenery and wildlife and provides access to year-round recreational activities.

The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River has 2,300 acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management and approximately 220 acres managed by the Bureau of Reclamation. The river meanders through a rugged canyon that includes towering basalt cliffs up to 600 feet high.

Know Before You Go
The Chimney Rock segment of the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River has nine developed sites for camping, two day-use areas, and one trailhead. The majority of campgrounds have single family campsites that accommodate up to eight people and one vehicle, with room for one additional vehicle.

Two campgrounds (Lone Pine and Big Bend) have group or multi-family campgrounds. The group sites are single campsites that accommodate up to 16 people with two primary vehicles and up to two extra vehicles.

- Campsites and day-use sites are currently available on a first-come – first-served basis, and are open year-round.
- These are fee sites, so be sure to check with the local Bureau of Land Management Office for current fee information.
- Potable water is only available at Chimney Rock Campground. The water tap is located adjacent to campsite number k.
- The Chimney Rock Trailhead is located 16.4 miles south of Prineville on State Highway 27. The trailhead for this 2.6-mile round-trip hike is located on the east side of the highway opposite Chimney Rock Campground.
- All campgrounds are accessible to standard passenger vehicles. Trailers are not advised at Poison Butte Campground. Campgrounds are not recommended for larger recreational vehicles.

Practice Leave-No-Trace Ethics
Don’t wash cookware or use soap in the river. Use designated grey water sumps. Wash at least 50 feet from the river and campsite. Please use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Strain dishwater and throw away garbage. Put all garbage in the garbage cans provided at campgrounds and day-use sites. Do not bury garbage – including fish guts and grease.

Use fire responsibly – For cooking, a stove is much safer and more efficient than a campfire. Fires may be built or charcoal burned in the designated fire pits. Additional fire rings (built with rocks or any other material) are not allowed. Bring your own wood and kindling. Do not cut branches from live or dead vegetation. Wildlife depends on this wood for shelter and food. Respect private property — camp only on Federal lands where camping is allowed. Lands downstream from mile marker 12 are predominantly privately owned. Permission is required to access private lands.

Keep your noise to a minimum — Operating generators, amplified music, and other excessive or loud noise is prohibited between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Do not discharge firearms at any time within the campground or day-use areas.

Geology
The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River has cut a gorge into a massive basalt flow, exposing cliffs and sheer basalt walls up to 600 feet high. The canyon walls exhibit irregular patterns and different layers of rust to dark brown basalt. The basalt formations include postpiles, talus slopes, and narrow tributary canyons.