

The Site Guide

Honey and Eagle Lakes, California

Location Lassen County, northeastern California

Description Two large lakes in the region where the Great Basin meets the northern Sierra Nevadas and the southern Cascades. Eagle Lake is at an elevation of 5115 feet and Honey Lake is at 3949 feet. Transition zone coniferous forest, with yellow pine, douglas fir and white fir dominant, is present south of Eagle L. and west of Susanville. Junipers and yellow pine mix with sagebrush in hilly country east and north of Eagle L. as around the Chico State Univ. Field Station. The larger valleys have been agriculturalized, with some cattail-tule marshland still present at the north end of Honey Lake (best visited at the two units, Fleming and Dakin, of the Honey Lake State Wildlife Area). The rest of the area is dominated by sage-covered flats and rocky hills. Elevations in the region range from about 8000-4000 feet. Winters are

cold, usually with little snow except at higher elevations, and summers are hot and dry.

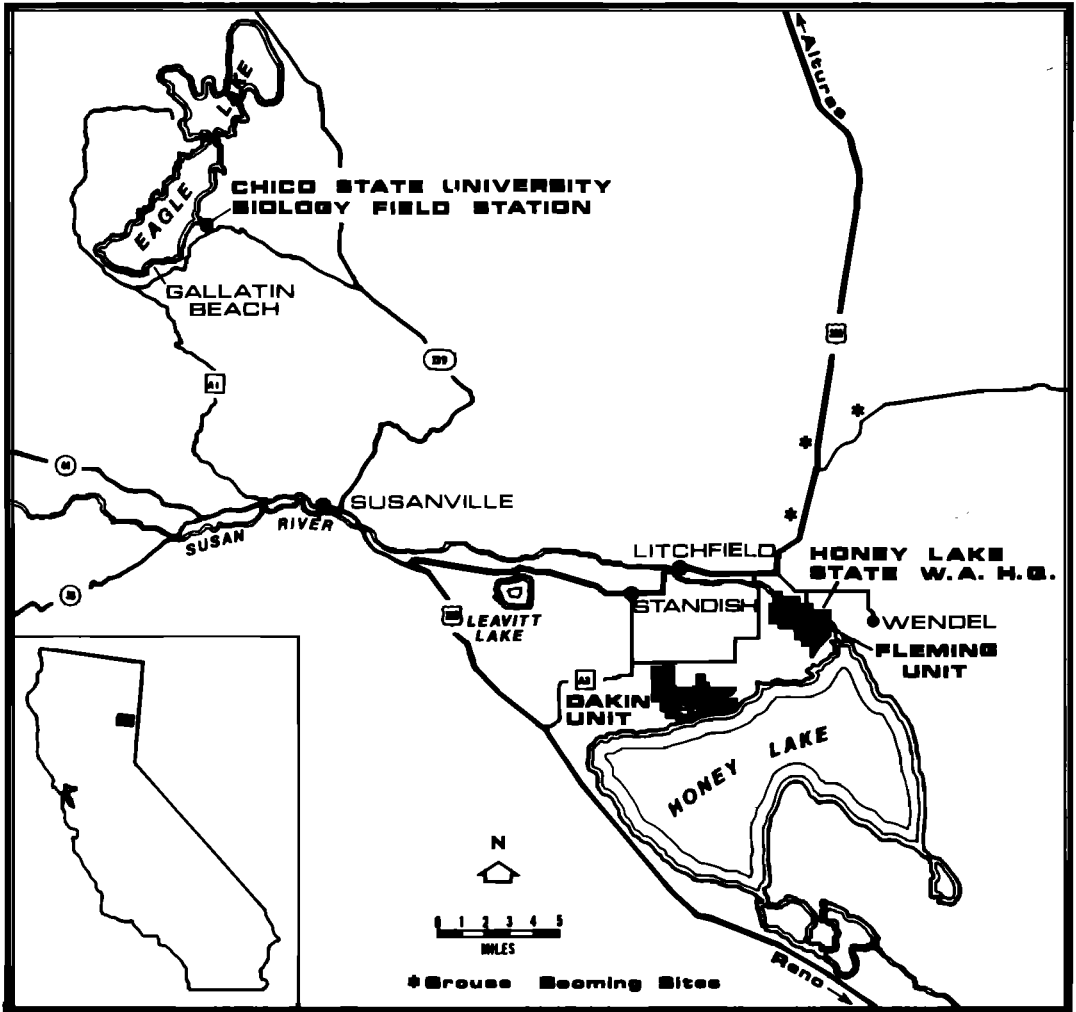
Access Nearest major airport at Reno, 86 miles south of Susanville on U.S. 395. From Susanville, Lassen Nat'l Park is 65 miles west on State 36 and Chico is 105 miles west on State 36 and 32. U.S. 395 open all year.

Accommodations Hotels, motels and restaurants at Susanville, one motel at Litchfield; groceries and gas at Litchfield, Janesville, Standish, Milford and Doyle. Fee campgrounds around south end on Eagle Lake; free camping at Honey Lake State W.A. and roadside rest near Janesville (all camping with facilities).

Birdwatching Typical western coniferous forest residents found around the south end of Eagle L. and in the Janesville area include: Goshawk, Mountain Quail, Pygmy Owl, White-headed Woodpecker, Steller's Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird, Cassin's Finch and Evening Grosbeak. Bohemian Waxwing and Varied Thrush are occasionally found in winter flocks of Cedar Waxwing and American Robin in the juniper woodland. Local



Honey Lake from Highway 395.



resident populations of Lewis' and Acorn Woodpeckers exist in the pine-oak woods around Susanville and Janesville. Cañon and Rock Wrens and Chukar are residents of rocky areas. The impressive winter population of raptors in the Honey Lake Valley includes Golden Eagle and Prairie Falcon (common residents in the area) and good numbers of Bald Eagle, Red-tailed, Rough-legged and Marsh Hawks, and lesser numbers of Ferruginous Hawk, Short-eared Owl, and rarely, Harlan's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and Pigeon Hawk. Long-eared Owls are resident in the thick willows along the Susan River, and nesting birds can occasionally be observed on the Fleming unit (inquire at Headquarters there). Wintering landbirds include Northern Shrike, Tree and Harris' Sparrows in flocks of "Oregon"

Junco and White-crowned, Golden-crowned and Song Sparrows, and usually a flock of Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs in stubble fields on the Fleming unit, with an occasional Chestnut-collared or McCown's Longspur present.

Birds in spring and summer at Eagle Lake include nesting Bald Eagles, Western and Eared Grebes and a number of duck species. White Pelicans summer and formerly bred. The Lassen Nat'l Forest Service has initiated a remarkably successful program of erecting artificial nest sites (Cedar logs topped with wooden platforms) for Ospreys along the west shore of Eagle L. Gray, Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers breed in appropriate habitat around the lake.

During migration periods, flocks of Sandhill Cranes, Whistling Swans, geese (includ-



Osprey at artificial nest.

ing a fair number of Ross' Goose) and many species of ducks and shorebirds visit Honey Lake, and to a lesser extent, other lakes in the area. Nesting birds in the Honey L. marshes include: White-faced Ibis and Least Bittern (rare, Fleming unit), Sandhill Crane, Long-billed Curlew, Willet, Wilson's Phalarope, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, California and Ring-billed Gulls, Forster's, Black and Caspian Terns, a variety of ducks and Canada Goose, Black-crowned Night Heron, Common and Snowy Egrets, Yellow-headed and, locally, Tricolored Blackbirds. Burrowing Owls nest along U.S. 395 just north of the Fleming unit. The only nesting of Eastern Kingbird in California has been at the Fleming unit H.Q. Among the common breeding species north and east

of Honey L. are Sage Thrasher, Lark, Sage, Black-throated and Brewer's Sparrows. Sage Grouse booming grounds are at the following locations: a corral along U.S. 395 just south of a state historical marker; 1.8 miles east along Smokey Creek Ranch Rd. (dirt, unmarked) from U.S. 395; and approx. ¼ mile north of the Smokey Creek Ranch Road turn just off of U.S. 395 (along dirt road to west). Booming is best observed between Feb. and March at dawn.

Rating Fall ★★★★★ (Sept. - Nov.), Winter ★★★ (Dec. - Feb.), Spring ★★★ (Mar. - May), Summer ★★ (June - Aug.).
—Tim Manolis, Grad House West, West LaFayette, Ind. 47906.



Sage Grouse booming near Honey Lake.



Field Trip to Eagle Lake, showing habitat around lake. Photos / Tim Manolis.