

Gray Eagle Creek Trail

Gray Eagle Creek/Smith Creek Loop

Plumas National Forest
Beckwourth Ranger District



Trail Description

This is a wonderful hike through the riparian zone where hikers can experience an abundance of wildflowers and wildlife. Gray Eagle Creek Trailhead is located at the northeast end of the parking area. The trail gradually descends from the trailhead for 2.1 miles. At 2 miles the Smith-Gray Eagle Connector enters from the left offering access to the Gray Eagle Creek/Smith Creek Loop. Continue on Gray Eagle Creek Trail for .1 mile to a fork. The trail to the left goes 2.3 miles mostly on a road over private property to the town of Graeagle. The .5 mile trail to the right bridges over the creek and ends at Gold Lake Highway.

Those hiking the loop will gradually ascend 1 mile over the ridgeline to meet Smith Creek Trail. Turn left and continue .7 mile to Smith Lake Trail. A left here ascends through the forest before descending along the hillside and back to the parking area.

Riparian Zone

As mentioned previously, one of the primary attractions for this trail is the riparian zone it traverses. Riparian zones are very productive and biologically diverse ecosystems. It is the narrow strip of transitional land between upland habitats and a body of water. In this case Gray Eagle and Smith Creeks are the bodies of water. Overhanging vegetation helps keep the water cool providing habitat for aquatic creatures including the endangered Sierra Nevada Yellow Legged Frog.

Along the way are several fens. Fens are wetlands characterized by flora suited to live in water and peat soils. This soil is high in dissolved minerals and low in plant nutrients. Fens add another dimension to biological diversity found here.

Driving Directions

From Graeagle go south about 1.5 miles on Highway 89. Turn right onto Gold Lake Highway. Drive 4 miles and turn right at Gray Eagle Lodge. Just before the lodge, turn toward Smith Lake Trail. Gray Eagle Creek Trailhead is at the northeast end of the parking area.



Notes

- This trail and Loop are open to foot traffic, mountain biking and horseback riding
- Do not crush brush or block traffic when parking
- Pack out all trash
- A restroom is available at the parking area
- Do not drink from naturally occurring water sources without proper water treatment
- Dogs must be under control at all times
- Three trails originate at the parking area. Make sure to choose the correct trailhead.
- Dress for changing weather conditions

Related Activities

- Explore other areas of Lakes Basin Recreation Area
- Observing wildlife
- Flowers and fall color
- Photography
- Picnic
- Visit Frazier Falls Trail
- Petroglyph Interpretive Trail near Lakes Basin Campground
- Lower elevation usually allows hiking later in the fall and earlier in the spring
- Winter opportunities for snowshoeing and cross country skiing

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and Gray Eagle Creek - Smith Creek Loop

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Trail Elevation - 6080' 5920'

Loop Elevation - 5920' to 6100'

Trail Distance - 2.0 miles

Loop Distance - 4.4 miles

Surface - Dirt and gravel with
some steps

