

Where Do They Go from Here????

Below are several short descriptions for several high profile species of waterfowl that occur here in great numbers during spring migration. There is an attached map that shows general migration routes for several species. For these species and many more, the Harney Basin is a refueling stop on the route to breeding grounds in the north.

Snow geese: The majority of the snow geese seen in the Harney Basin during spring migration winter in the Central Valley of California and breed on Banks Island, Canada. However, a small number of the snow geese that use the Harney Basin are part of the Wrangell Island population of eastern Siberia. From here they fly north/northeast through northern Idaho, western Montana into central Canada.

Ross' geese: The Ross' geese that migrate through the Harney Basin winter primarily in the Central Valley of California and breed at Queen Maude Gulf, Canada. From here they fly north/northeast through northern Idaho, western Montana and into central Canada.

Lesser Sandhill Crane: The lesser sandhill crane population that migrates through the Harney Basin winters in the Central Valley of California and breeds in southern Alaska (Bristol Bay, Cook Inlet, Copper River Delta). From here they fly north through the Okanogan Valley of Washington and British Columbia then move over to the coast of SE Alaska before arriving on their breeding grounds.

White-fronted geese: There are two populations of white-fronted geese (also called speckle bellies) that migrate through the Harney Basin during the spring. The Pacific white-fronted geese winters in the Central Valley of California and breeds in western Alaska (Yukon Delta NWR). The Tule white-fronted, a larger and darker colored subspecies, also winters in the Central Valley of California but breeds in southern Alaska (Copper River Delta and Cook Inlet). From here these geese migrate towards the coast of Oregon and Washington and fly across the Gulf of Alaska to reach their breeding grounds.

Northern pintail: The majority of the pintails that arrive in the Harney Basin during spring migration winter in the Central Valley of California and breed in western Alaska. Some birds cross the Bering Sea and breed in eastern Siberia while others may breed in central Canada. Several hundred pairs of pintails stay in the Harney Basin to breed. From here pintails migrate northeast through Idaho, Montana, western North Dakota and then north/northwest through central Canada and on into Alaska.

