

1. To your left, you see the oxbow that was created by the Truckee River. You may see fish, tadpoles, frogs, turtles, or snakes in the oxbow!

2. After you cross the footbridge, be on the look out for the Russian olive tree and the wild rose. Also, watch for these birds: mourning dove, Steller's jay, and red-winged blackbird.

3. This oxbow along the Truckee River formed as silt and debris were deposited during high spring runoff. When the Truckee River water level is high enough, water flows along its former path into the oxbow channel.

4. The sand you are standing on was brought to the Oxbow Nature Study Area during the 1997 flood. The granite boulders you see across the river began their journey at the peaks of Sierra Nevada. During the flood, these boulders knocked into each other, causing the granite to break into fine particles of sand. The raging water carried the boulders and sand down river, but as the Truckee turned at this low point, the floodwater slowed. The large granite boulders were deposited on the outer bank of the Truckee and five feet of sand was deposited throughout the nature park.

5. This brush pile was created during the flood clean up efforts and is now home to some California quail.

6. As you continue along the nature trail, be on the look out for the following wildlife and their tracks: mule deer, skunk, coyote, raccoons, mallards, Canada geese and California quail are often seen here.

7. The remains of cottonwood trees lie before you. The trees were uprooted during the spring 1999 windstorms. The sediment deposited during the 1997 flood weakened the root system of the trees. When the winds gusted at 60 mph, the trees fell over and splintered into wood chips! This habitat is now home to the cottontail rabbit, California ground squirrel, downy woodpecker, and Steller's jay.

Bird Watching Tip

Birds build their nests and homes in out of sight places! Look on the backside of a tree or on the underside of a branch for a woodpecker home. Look at the fork of a branch to find a well-hidden bird nest.

Observation Deck

You are seeing a bird's eye view of the Oxbow Nature Study Area. As you look below, notice the Truckee River to your left. The island near the river is Doyle Island. This land returned to its island state during the January 1997 flood. Water flowing to the west of Doyle Island is called the oxbow. An oxbow is a channel where the river once flowed.

Welcome to the Oxbow Nature Study Area

The Oxbow Nature Study Area is a treasure along the Truckee River, as it is home to a diverse population of wildlife and natural vegetation. As you enjoy the sights and sounds of nature in the park, try to imagine a time when the corridor was teeming with wildlife.

The Pond

The pond is a diverse habitat that is home to beavers, muskrats, raccoons, skunks, turtles, fishes, birds, frogs and snakes. Mallards, Canada geese, and red-winged blackbirds are some birds that nest in and around the coyote willows and cattails.

8. The Fremont cottonwood and black cottonwood trees in this thicket are home to many species of wildlife. Look for yellow and black swallowtail butterflies, and orange and black monarch butterflies fluttering through the thicket.

9. As you continue your hike, look high up into the cottonwood tree and see if you can spot a bird nest.

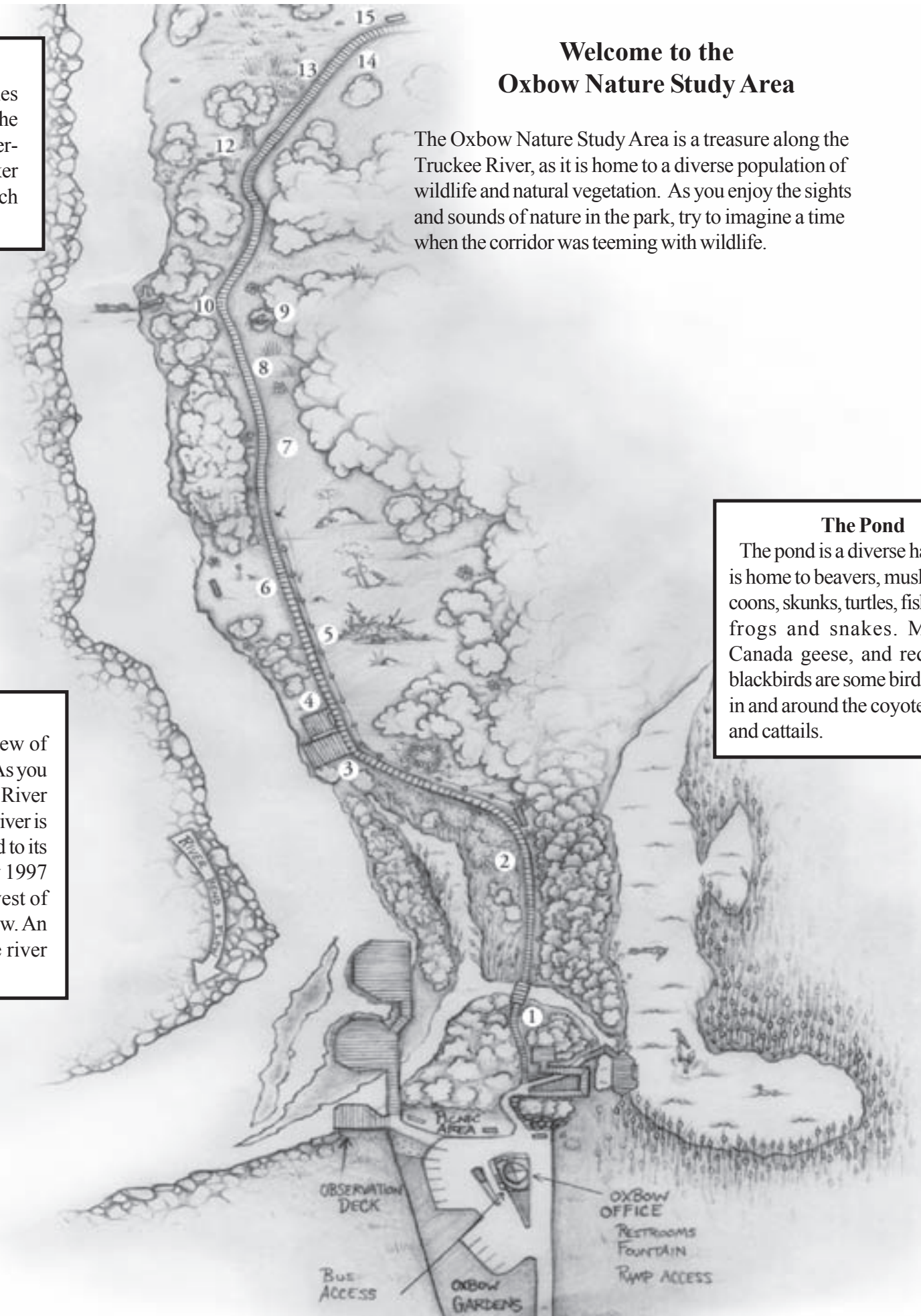
10. Beavers use tree wood to build their two-story lodge along the river bank. Volunteers at the Oxbow Nature Study Area wrap chicken wire around the cottonwood trees to prevent the beavers from eating the trees. At dusk or dawn, watch for the beavers in the oxbow or on the Truckee River.

11. Bird watching is a favorite activity at the Oxbow Nature Study Area. Common birds found along this trail are the California quail, American goldfinch, evening grosbeak, and house sparrow.

12. Woodpeckers "peck" holes, or cavities, into dead wood to build their homes. Look around for cavities in tree trunks and in the tree branches. You may see a downy woodpecker, northern flicker, or European starling fly out of its home!

13. This tall green plant growing alongside the trail is called horsetail. Sometimes called pull-apart grass, or scouring rush, this prehistoric plant has a hollow stem and joints rather than leaves. It has been on Earth since before T-Rex, the dinosaur! The pioneers gathered bunches of horsetail and used the rough silica edges to clean and scour the pots and pans used for campfire cooking along their westward journey.

14. Look up into the great Nevada sky! Soaring golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, cormorants, and western gulls often fly overhead. Enjoy your view of the Sierra Nevada to the west, and listen once again to the sounds of nature around you.



Oxbow Flora and Fauna

The Oxbow Nature Study Area is home to beavers, muskrats, raccoons, skunks, turtles, birds, frogs, snakes, insects, and fish. Oxbow has two types of habitats - riparian and pond. The pond includes areas of standing or slow moving water with an abundance of water loving plants. The riparian habitat includes all of the green vegetation along the edge of the water.

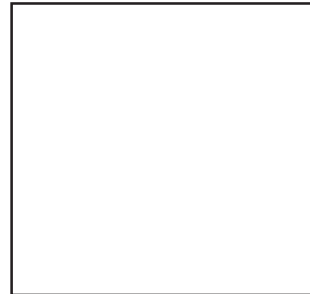
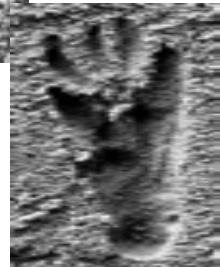
Check off the plants and animals you see along the trail. Each set of footprints shows a front print on top and a hind print below.



Muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus*)

Muskrats live all over this area. To find them, look for lodges made of mud and cattail leaves along the edge of the oxbow. Muskrats often use soft cattail seeds to warm their home.

Do you see a muskrat or its home? Make a sketch of your discovery.



Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*)

Though these animals won't be up and about during the day (they are nocturnal) you can find them curled up in a hollow tree or burrow. Raccoons usually live on a diet of frogs, crayfish, nuts, and fruits.

FYI: Raccoons clean their food in water before eating it.



They live along the banks of the Truckee River and at the Oxbow pond.



Mink (*Mustela vison*)

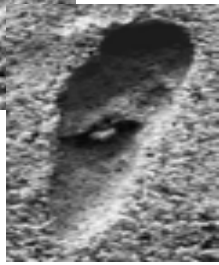
Mink are also nocturnal animals. They look like ferrets and hunt on land for fish, rabbits, birds, and rodents. A brown, female mink lives under the river deck at the park.

Sketch something a mink would like to eat.



Striped Skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*)

Skunks are night animals, so to find them during the day you have to look in burrows throughout the park. They often use dens left behind by other animals as shelter. These animals live on a diet of mice, gophers, rodents, beetles, crickets, and other insects.



Careful! Do not try to pet or feed any wildlife. Some wildlife carry rabies.



Cattails (*Typha latifolia*)

You can find cattails all along the water's edge. Cattails are aquatic plants that serve as food and shelter for many animals living in Oxbow. They are one of the many important plants in the pond habitat.



Beaver (*Castor canadensis*)

Beavers are native to Nevada, but are not native to the Truckee River. These animals have two layers of fur; the top layer repels water while the bottom layer traps heat. Their four front incisors continue to grow throughout their life. Beavers must gnaw on wood to control the size of their teeth. Cottonwood trees at Oxbow are protected from beavers by chicken wire.

Black Cottonwood

(*Populus trichocarpa*)



Standing over eighty feet tall, this famous Nevada deciduous tree often grows in moist areas. Its heart-shaped, toothed leaves average six inches long. Birds such as American robins and red-tailed hawks nest in this tree.



Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)

Mule deer families come through Oxbow Nature Study Area during all seasons. They sound like humans walking through the brush and blend in with their surroundings easily. If you see the deer, stand quietly to observe them. Sudden movements and loud noises will alert the deer to run for cover!

FYI: Mule deer can live up to 10 years.



Macroinvertebrates

Macroinvertebrates are small animals that live under rocks. They are called "macroinvertebrates" because they can be seen without microscope and they do not have a backbone.

Check off the macroinvertebrates that you find either from the pond or in the river. If you find something that is not listed below, draw it and write its name in the space provided.



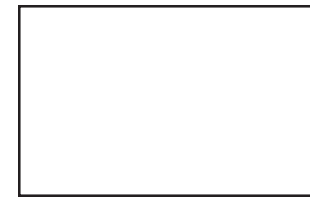
Mayfly



Planarian



Stonefly



What is an Oxbow?

An Oxbow is a u-shaped curve in a river. This u-shape has standing water in it, but is no longer connected to the river itself. This nature study area is named Oxbow because the Truckee river creates an oxbow at this site.

For Volunteer Opportunities, contact:

Nevada Department of Wildlife
 Regional Wildlife Education Coordinator
 1100 Valley Road
 Reno, Nevada 89512
 (775) 334-3808
 Wildlife-Ed@ndow.org
 www.ndow.org

All photographs provided by Tim Stach

Volunteers Make It Happen!



WILDLIFE EDUCATION FIELD GUIDE

Location:

The entrance to the Oxbow Nature Study Area is located at 3100 Dickerson Road, at the Truckee River.

Directions:

I-80 exit Keystone Avenue. Travel south on Keystone Avenue. Turn right at West 2nd Street. Follow West 2nd Street until it becomes Dickerson Road, follow Dickerson Road to the park entrance.

Name: _____



Experience Nevada's Wildlife,
 It's Worth It!

OXBOW NATURE STUDY AREA