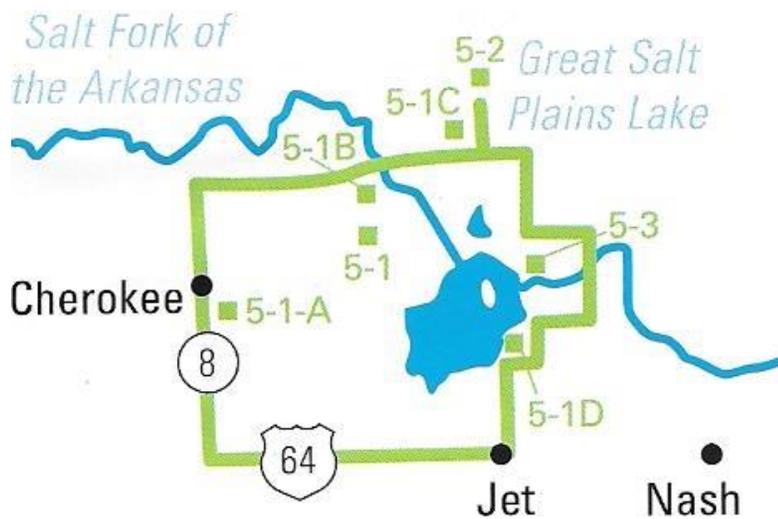


## Loop 5 – Salt Plains Loop



**Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge (5-1) 580.626.4794;**

[www.fws.gov/refuge/salt\\_plains/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/salt_plains/) *Directions: From the junction of State Highways 11 and 38, go south 2 miles on Highway 38, then 1 mile west to headquarters.*

**What to Expect:** As the traveler approaches this Loop, a view of the horizon shows sand dunes with what surely must be the white sands of a beach out beyond the dunes. Has a wrong turn been made? Actually the traveler is on track to visit one of the most highly specialized habitat types in the Great Plains – the Salt Plains, the heart of this Loop. The Salt Plains, a geologic wonder, consists of thin deposits of evaporated salt over mud interrupted by channels and pools of shallow water. Historically these salt deposits were used by Indian tribes and early pioneers but it wasn't just the salt that brought people to the salt plains – thousands of shorebirds and tens of thousands of geese and waterfowl are dependent on these salty wetlands as a critical stop-over during seasonal migrations. In addition to salt flats, this Loop area is comprised of marshes, wooded areas, creeks, mixed-grass prairies and cropland. For the bird watcher this Loop offers a rich diversity of bird species. For more detailed information about this area visit [www.greatsaltplains.com](http://www.greatsaltplains.com).

**Lodging: Cherokee:** Cherokee Inn, 580.596.2828; Great Salt Plains State Park – cabins, camping, RV, [www.travelok.com/listings/view.profile/id.3204](http://www.travelok.com/listings/view.profile/id.3204) 580.626.4731; Cherokee RV Park 580.596.3326. **Jet:** Jet Set RV Park, 580.626.4546.

**Special Note:** Gas stations are available in Cherokee and Jet; grocery store in Cherokee.

**Birding Route:** This route includes a mixture of “hot spots”, an auto route, and short walking trails. Start by enjoying sunrise at the [Shorebird Trail \(5-1-B\)](#) which is 7 miles east of the junction of Hwy 11 and 64 or 4 miles west of the junction at Hwy 11 and 38. Next, go 3 miles east on Hwy 11, turn north (left) and go to parking area for [Sand Creek Trail \(5-1-C\)](#). The old road serves as a trail and follows Sand Creek for ~ 2 miles for some excellent birding opportunities. This trail does not loop back so you might consider walking halfway or leave another vehicle at the trail exit. (Note: this trail is open from April 1 to Oct. 15). Next, return to Hwy 11 go east (left) to Refuge sign and turn south (right) onto gravel road to [Salt Plains NWR \(5-1\)](#) headquarters for a restroom break and excellent visitor’s center (call in advance to determine if Center is open as it is run by volunteers). Walk [Eagle Roost Trail](#) (just below headquarters), a 1 ¼ mile walk which includes Sand Creek Bay overlook. Next, drive the [Harold Miller Auto Route](#) with excellent views of marshes. This route exits onto Hwy 11. Turn east (right) onto Hwy 11 drive to Byron Hatchery sign and turn north (left) and follow signs to [Byron Hatchery Watchable Wildlife Area \(5-2\)](#) and walk the ½ mile interpretive trail through marsh, swamp, and mixed-grass prairie. Return to Hwy 11, cross Hwy 11 and take Hwy 38 south to [Great Salt Plains State Park \(5-3\)](#) which has restrooms, picnic areas, and trails through a variety of habitats. Next, go south on Hwy 38 to [Jet Recreation Area \(5-1-D\)](#) open from April 1 to Oct 15. Next, take a break in Jet at Jet Lion’s Park. From Jet go west and north onto Hwy 8 toward Cherokee and turn east (right) onto drive that will take you to the [Observation Platform at the Crystal Digging Area \(5-1-A\)](#). Return to Hwy 8 and follow the signs to Cherokee. Enjoy dinner in Cherokee!