

Loop 12– Quartz Mountain Loop

What to Expect: The landscape in this Loop exhibits an intricate pattern of mixed-grass plains and shinnery oak grassland intermingled with the dominant mesquite grassland plains. Here within the open canopy of the short and extremely thorny mesquite trees can be found the **verdin**, the only bird restricted to mesquite grasslands. The seed pods of this important shrub are consumed by many species of wildlife including **thirteen-lined ground squirrel, kangaroo rat, scaled quail** and **ladder-backed woodpecker**. This area in southwest Oklahoma is drained by the Red River and its tributaries which have such high salinity content that only two species of fish are present: Red River pupfish and plains killifish. Most of the landscape appears as gently rolling plains but in the northeast part of the Loop, the western arm of the Wichita Mountains rises spectacularly above the plain in what appears to be squared boulders stacked upon one another. These mountains may be considered short (300 to 800 feet above the plain) but they are 250 million years old which makes this mountain range one of the oldest in the United States – not to mention extremely fun to explore!

Lodging: [Altus Lodging](#); **Erick:** [Days Inn](#); **Resort Lodge & Cabins:** [Quartz Mountain Resort](#) **Camping:** [Great Plains State Park](#); [Quartz Mountain Nature Park](#).

One-Day Outings: Fill up your gas tank and pack a picnic lunch (grocery stores in Altus, Mangum, Erick, Quartz Mountain [seasonal] and Great Plains State Park [seasonal]).

Start your day at [Quartz Mountain Nature Park \(12-1\)](#) with a visit to the Nature Park office for trail maps. With at least 13 different trails with diverse challenge levels there are many opportunities to explore this ancient mountain. Take a picnic lunch with you or eat at the Lodge's Sundance Café.

[Great Plains State Park \(12-3\)](#) offers an opportunity to hike the 1 ½ mile Granite Trail System through granite boulder fields of this rugged and beautiful area. Hike in the morning and picnic within the Park. In the afternoon enjoy the Camp Radziminski Nature Trail that provides an overlook to Old Snyder Lake. Enjoy the fishing and boating opportunities.

Birding Route: Start your early morning stop at the beginning of any of the [trails at Quartz Mountain Nature Park \(12-1\)](#) (listen for the echoing song of the **Canyon Wren**). Next, leisurely drive the **Altus-Lugert Northshore Road (12-2)** to Hwy 9. To start, take State Hwy 44A back to State Hwy 44 and turn left (north) onto State Hwy 44. Travel almost 4 ½ mile and then turn left (west) onto E1440 Rd. (Northshore Rd.) There are several roads off Northshore Rd. down to shore of Lake Altus-Lugert. Northshore Rd. ends at the intersection of State Hwy 9. Turn left (west) and travel to the intersection of State Hwy 6 and turn right (north) onto State Hwy 6 (Windle St.) in the town of Granite. Travel ½ mile north then turn right onto Mountain Ave. Turn left at the next road (Willis

St.) and follow the road to the parking lot of [Headquarters Mountain Hiking Trail and Butterfly Garden \(12-4\)](#). At the base of Headquarters Mountain, enjoy the wildflower and butterfly garden. The site has interpretive signage for the butterfly garden and for the two trails that provide a wonderful vista of the mountains. Next, return to State Hwy 6 and travel south 7 miles to State Hwy 283, then turn right (west) to Mangum (almost 8 miles) for a restroom break and snack. Pack a picnic lunch in Mangum and then follow State Hwy 34 to the junction of State Hwy 9 and turn left (west) and travel west 11 miles on State Hwy 9, and then turn right (north) onto N1840 Rd. Travel north 6 miles on N1840 Rd. and turn west on county road E1400 Rd. Follow this dirt road (travel in good weather only) through the southern area of [Sandy Sanders WMA \(12-5\)](#). Be sure to stop at Doc Hollis Lake to see what birds are in the trees and on the water. At the intersection of State Hwy 30, turn left (south) and travel 12 ½ miles to E1500 Rd. (first road to right after crossing the Salt Fork of Red River bridge). Travel ½ mile then turn left (south) onto N1705 Rd. and travel just over ½ mile to the entrance of [Lake Hall \(12-6\)](#) and take the well-maintained gravel roads around the east side of the Lake looking for birds in the plum thickets, wooded areas and on the Lake. Return to N1705 Rd., turn right (south) and then turn right (west) onto E1510 Rd. and then in ½ mile turn left (south) onto N1700 Rd. Enjoy this 10 mile drive south to intersection of State Hwy 62. Stop occasionally and look for Black-crested Titmouse and Golden-fronted Woodpecker in the trees along creeks and the road. Turn left (east) and travel into the town of Hollis for a restroom and snack break. Continue east on State Hwy 62 to Altus (32 miles), and at the junction of State Hwy 6 (N Main St.) turn left (north). At 7 miles turn right (east) onto Falcon Dr. and follow the signs to [Altus City Reservoir \(12-7\)](#). There is a walking trail around the reservoir but be sure to look for birds on the lake. Return to intersection of State Hwy 6 and turn right (north). Drive north 9 miles to the town of Blair and turn right (east) onto State Hwy 19. Travel just over 22 miles to the intersection of State Hwy 183 at the town of Roosevelt. Turn right (south) onto State Hwy 183 and travel south about 4 miles to E1530 Rd. Turn right (west) and follow E1530 Rd. to [Mountain Park WMA \(12-8\)](#). This is a great place to look for the **ladder-backed** and **golden-fronted woodpeckers** and the **verdin** in the mesquite woodlands. Return to State Hwy 183 and turn right and continue about 8 miles to the entrance of [Great Plains State Park \(12-3\)](#).

Off the Beaten Trail: To really experience the Great Plains consider spending the day at [Sandy Sanders WMA \(12-5\)](#). **Note:** High clearance vehicle is necessary and 4-wheel drive is strongly recommended. A map of the area can be printed off of the OK Dept. of Wildlife Conservation's website linked above. From rolling plains to rugged terrain, spring-fed creeks to constructed ponds this area is a remarkable example of the diversity of the Great Plains. To experience the mesquite grassland, drive [Mountain Park WMA \(12-8\)](#) on the north side of Tom Steed Lake. A map can be printed off from ODWC's website linked above.