

Black Swan Trail

Completed in the summer of 2014, the trail is located in far Western Nevada County on BYLT's Black Swan Preserve near the town of Smartsville. The trail weaves through blue oak and gray pine woodlands. On a hydraulic cliff escarpment, hikers will catch spectacular views of the Black Swan Pond.

Place:	Near the town of Smartsville
Season:	Year around
Land:	Part of the Black Swan Preserve owned by Bear Yuba Land Trust
Trail signs:	Bear Yuba Land Trust signs and way finder arrows.
Length:	2 mile loop trail
Altitude change:	200 feet
Difficulty:	Easy
Trail surface:	Predominately native soil. Gravel and rock along the road.
Environment:	Pristine oak woodlands, grey pine, ponds and wetland habitat.
Rules:	Foot and bike only. Dogs on leash. No motorized vehicles.

Trailhead: From the intersection of Highway 49 and Highway 20 in Grass Valley, drive 13 miles toward Smartsville, turn right onto Mooney Flat Road. Drive approximately ¼ mile. Turn left into the small, unmarked parking area. The trailhead is located on the left side of the dirt road (before the gate). Head down the two track ranch road toward the gate and you will find the trail leaving the parking lot on your left.

From the Yuba City/ Marysville area, head East on Highway 20. Soon after you enter Nevada County, turn left onto Mooney Flat Road. Drive approximately ¼ mile. Turn left into the small, unmarked parking area. The trailhead is located on the left side of the dirt road (before the gate). Head down the two track ranch road toward the gate and you will find the trail leaving the parking lot on your left.

Trail tips: There is a road that is part of the trail. If you head downhill from the parking lot on the road you will get to a gate. That gate is to keep cattle in and vehicles out. This area is open to public access and you will need to climb through the gate to continue along the road. There is also a gate near the parking lot heading in the other direction. Once you leave the parking lot and head up the hill into the woods you will come to it very shortly. This is also a gate to keep cattle in. Please keep this gate closed.

This is a short, beautiful two-mile loop with nice views of a pond and the rolling hills that make up much of western Nevada County. Once a large 1800s era ranch, curious visitors who know where to look will find relics of that earlier time: a home site, lichen-covered stone walls and a date orchard.

Black Swan's grassland pastures, rolling hills and meadows provide habitat for bears, bald eagles, mountain lions and deer. Endangered, threatened and rare and/ or declining species in the area include: Valley elderberry, longhorn beetle, Western burrowing owl and black rail.

Black Swan Trail tells the story of the Gold Rush. Once a noisy hydraulic mining site, both sides of the ridge the trail now sits on was altered by high powered water cannons in the search for gold. Without the 1884 Sawyer Decision, the ridge that the trail sits on would be gone.

Today, the Black Swan Trail is ideal for observing wildflowers and birds. There is an intact wetland that is a critical habitat for the Western pond turtle, as well as bass, an array of waterfowl including the American Dipper and Belted Kingfisher. This landscape holds riparian habitat, blue oak woodland, wetlands, and great groundwater-fed ponds.