

# **Chama's "Sister Sites"**

## **Edward Sargent Wildlife Area, Site #18**

**and**

## **W. A. 'Bill' Humphries Wildlife Area, Site #16**

The term "undulating greenery" is a good nutshell description of two Watchable Wildlife sites near Chama, New Mexico. The gently rolling, terrain of both the Edward Sargent and W. A. 'Bill' Humphries Wildlife Areas is deeply verdant three seasons of the year.

However, an even better site description would be "elk paradise" since both areas are prime elk habitat with great viewing opportunities.

### **The 'Sargent'**

Many of the Sargent's 20,400 acres are part of a broad, shallow basin. The basin's perimeter rises up to meet the foothills of beautiful Chama Peak, forested with pine, white fir, Douglas fir, and aspen, and Gambel oak.

At the Sargent, visitors may follow the level dirt road (on foot, horseback, or mountain bike) 10 miles to the Colorado border or turn right, 3.5 miles from the site entrance, onto a faint dirt track which leads to Nabor Lake, a small reservoir pond.

To reach Nabor Lake, keep to the left after the dirt track forks and step rock-to-rock cross Rio Chamita, a small trout stream (supporting a stable population of Rio Grande cutthroat trout) which flows from the pond. With its meadows and characteristic short, sturdy aspens, the Nabor Lake area is peaceful, quiet, serene, and green -- a good observation point for wildlife watching. Beaver sign is evident here, some years more noticeable than others.

### **The 'Humphries'**

A 10-mile dirt track winds through scenic foothill country of the Humphries' 10,868 acres. The secluded site is a mosaic of hills forested with juniper, spruce, pine, fir, and primarily Gambel oak, dotted with bowl-shaped, grassy parklands which have not been grazed by cattle for decades.

At the Humphries, as at the Sargent, no motorized vehicles are permitted on site. Mountain bike travel is permitted on the main dirt track only; no off-road travel. About nine miles along the track, a locked gate denotes the Humphries' eastern border and the beginning of private property; no through traffic.

## **Wildlife Viewing at Sargent and Humphries**

July 1 through September 15, wildlife watching at the Sargent and Humphries is superb. Elk are in their element here in abundant numbers. Early mornings and late evenings are best viewing times.

Elk aren't the only species to watch for. Visitors may frequently spot mule deer, coyote, porcupine, and black bear. Although both are secretive and rarely seen, mountain lions and snowshoe hares are also common residents of the area.

A variety of summer birds can be seen at Sargent and Humphries. Most are songbird species that frequent high mountain meadows of the Southern Rockies. Look for the three nuthatch species: pygmy, red-breasted, and white breasted. Four warbler species are commonly seen: Grace's, Townsend's, Virginia, and yellow-rumped. Also watch for American kestrel, Clark's nutcracker, Townsend's solitaire, hermit thrush, Stellar's jay, Western and mountain bluebirds, band-tailed pigeon, brown creeper, evening grosbeak, Western tanager, black-chinned hummingbird, common nighthawk, red-tailed hawk, red-wing blackbird, with occasional viewing of wild turkey and blue grouse.

### **Visitor Access**

The Sargent and Humphries are owned and managed by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Both sites are closed two weeks prior to the start of the first elk season (check the Hunting Proclamation for exact "closed" dates.) Local information may be obtained from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish District Wildlife Officer at (505) 756-2585 or from the Division of Wildlife Supervisor, (505) 756-2718. Wildlife viewing is not recommended during the elk hunts. Hunts generally start in early October and run through December.

### **Directions: Sargent**

At the north end of Chama, turn left on NM 29 at the blue Chama Medical Clinic sign. Go one block, then turn right on Pine Avenue which becomes gravel after one mile. You'll soon come to two gates, the first one iron, the second a cable across the road. (Just beyond the first gate to the right is a portable restroom and pipe horse corrals, set aside as a designated camping area; no water on site.) If the iron gate is shut and locked, the area is closed to all access. If the iron gate is unlocked, visiting is permitted; a walk-through gate is kept unlocked to provide access. You may park in the camp area and proceed down the road on foot, mountain bike, or horseback. Vehicles are not permitted beyond the camping area. Mountain bikes are not permitted off the main road.

### **Directions: Humphries**

Just south of Chama, at the 90-degree right turn of US84/64, continue west about eight miles to the site, located one mile past the Continental Divide sign on the south side of

the highway. Park cars at the pullout on the north side of the highway. Access is provided next to the locked iron gate; enter through the small wire gate on the left.