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Birdwatching in Klamath Falls, Oregon

If the sight of birds taking flight sets your heart aflutter and their song is music to your ears, plan a spring migration to Klamath Falls, Oregon. The Klamath Basin boasts more than 200,000 acres of prime bird habitat stretching from south central Oregon into northern California, making up the Klamath National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The area is home to more than 350 bird species.

Considered to be one of the best birding locations in the country, the Klamath Basin is located along the Pacific Flyway—a route taken by migratory species on their semi-annual treks between wintering grounds in southern climes and their summer homes in the north. And some birds, like the Bald Eagle, choose to overwinter here.

Although Klamath Falls offers year-round birdwatching, spring is an ideal time to visit when migration is at its peak, generally from mid-March to mid-May. Waterfowl species you are likely to see in spring are the American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron, Great Egret, Tundra Swan, and many geese and duck species. Shorebirds are commonly seen including several Sandpiper, Gull and Tern species. Birders come from far and wide to see Western and Clark's Grebes do their unusual mating dance—a side-by-side running dash across the surface of the water.

Watch for raptors like the Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel. Other frequent sightings include Ring-necked Pheasant, American Coot, Killdeer, Northern Flicker, Steller's Jay, Horned Lark, Cliff Swallow, Red-Winged Blackbird plus many common field and woodland species including Warblers, House Finches and Sparrows. And these are just the usual suspects; there's hardly a better place to spot an unusual species and expand your life list. For more information, see the Klamath Basin Audubon Society website (*klamathaudubon.org*).

There are six National Wildlife Refuges here: Upper Klamath, Lower Klamath, Klamath Marsh, Bear Valley, Tule Lake and Clear Lake. Upper Klamath features a 9.5-mile canoe trail, while Lower Klamath and Tule Lake offer driving tour routes with observation points and blinds for birdwatching and photography. Bear Valley's old-growth timber provides roosting sites for Bald Eagles. Clear Lake is closed to public access.

Flock together with fellow birding enthusiasts during the Klamath Falls Migratory Bird Festival, or join activities at the Tule Lake Bird Festival, both held in mid-May. Or, you might prefer to visit during a quieter time, when the best viewing spots are less crowded.

When planning your trip, you could book a Klamath Falls hotel or RV site. But why not splurge a little and stay at a guest ranch or resort where birdwatching is as easy as walking out the front door?

Lonesome Duck (*lonesomeduck.com*), a 200-acre guest ranch near the Upper Klamath Refuge, offers two guest houses with full kitchens, Arrowhead Cottage and the family-sized Rivers Edge log home. Rental fees include use of a boat or canoe for paddling on the Williamson River. Arrange a personalized tour with the ranch's naturalist, Marshal Moser, a certified wildlife biologist and experienced field naturalist; or just head out on your own.

The 82-room Lodge at Running Y Resort (runningy.com/resort) near Upper Klamath Lake has onsite dining, room service, a spa, fitness center, swimming pool and hot tub. There is an Arnold Palmer-designed golf course, plus miles of hiking/biking trails threading the resort grounds, home to a variety of wildlife including more than 200 bird species.

When you arrive, stop at the Discover Klamath Welcome Center (discoverklamath.com). Pick up the Klamath Basin Birding Trails Guide and talk with local tourism experts who can help you plan your birdwatching itinerary, as well as suggest local dining and entertainment options.

Sources & Photo Contacts:

Meet Me In Klamath, the Official Tourism Agency for Klamath County, Oregon

<https://discoverklamath.com>

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