

Nature's Calendar - A Spectacle Every Month

January [Herding deer]

Black-tailed deer gather in small herds of females and young during lean winter months. Survival in the wild requires deer to remain alert for danger using their keen eyesight, great hearing and superb sense of smell. Optimal browsing involves knowing when and where edible plants are available – even if it is in someone's backyard.

February [Overwintering eagles]

Bald Eagles can skillfully hunt for fish and other animals, but more-often-than-not our “national symbol” resorts to piracy to scavenge a meal. Klamath Basin hosts the largest winter gathering of bald eagles in the Pacific Northwest. Winter Wings Birding Festival in Klamath Falls celebrates bald eagles and other migratory birds.

March [Staging swans/geese]

Tundra Swans fly at relatively low altitude in order to save energy, while Snow Geese fly in close formation allowing trailing birds to use less energy in flight. What triggers onset of their journey north is a flock secret? Most likely it is their biological clock, driven by the length of day. Tundra Swans and Snow Geese rest and feed on farmlands adjacent to the Running Y Ranch Resort during their northbound migration (February-March)

April [Migratory cranes]

Sandhills Cranes are a “flagship” species – one that attracts public attention to their plight. These symbolic birds, like swans, stay together as mated pairs for life. Migrating cranes descend on wet meadows and open fields standing head and shoulder above feeding geese. The presence of flocks of migrating cranes attracts enthusiastic birders to Klamath Wildlife Area at (Miller Island) where several pairs nest during summer.



May [Racing grebes]

Western/Clark's Grebes are famous for their courtship dance, attracting birdwatchers from all over the world. Courtship begins in late-April culminating in breeding typically by late-June. A male bird, as if to demonstrate worthiness to a female, carries a small fish as a gift – functioning as a currency of intimacy. When a pair of birds arch their necks upward it's a sure sign, a flamboyant courtship dance is set to begin. They engage in a tandem race on their lobbed-feet, treading water near Moore Park (Putnam Point).

June [Hatching of duckling]

Canada Geese return each spring to their natal breeding sites. An incubating goose will flatten herself out on her nest as the gander charges forward to defend the nest from predators. Young geese and ducks hatch in spring and in short order the offspring are able to swim on Running Y Golf Course ponds.

July [Wading birds]

Great Egrets, a hard to miss “white” wading bird, stand out along the shoreline of ponds and lakes. One would expect that they nest on the ground, instead they congregate in treetop rockeries – a breeding colony roosts in trees along Lakeshore Drive. Great Blue Herons are patient hunters waiting motionless on their long legs for fish or even a ground squirrel.

August [Feeding pelicans]

American White Pelicans are social by nature whether nesting on an isolated “protected” island or feeding together in shallow water. These ponderous birds cooperatively herd fish with their wings outstretched. They dip their bills in unison scooping up aquatic organisms. The bill pouch shovels up several gallons of water then closes, seining out fish and other organisms. This iconic summer bird on Upper Klamath Lake is a thrill to watch.

September [Storing supplies for winter]

Steller's Jays gather seeds into their sublingual pouch (under their tongue), later regurgitate seeds into winter food caches. Steller's Jays are most noted for their raucous call and obnoxious behavior toward anyone in their territory, seemingly communicating to others to "go away". The Western Scrub Jay and many other resident wildlife are busy getting ready for winter.

October [Flocking forest birds]

Mixed flocks of forest birds migrate from high Cascade forests down to lower slopes in the fall. Mountain Chickadees when flushed will freeze while sounding ventriloquism calls to confuse a predator. If a Slate-colored Junco finds some seeds, the rest of the flock will intensify its search in that area – "one-for-all, all-for-one". Also, Gray Jays, the infamous "camp robbers", move to lower elevation in the forests during winter.

November [Migrating waterfowl]

Pintail Ducks and White-fronted Geese are early arrivals in Autumn as northern breeding grounds begin to freeze over. By November over a million ducks, geese and swans fly over Klamath Wildlife Refuges. Hawks (such as Rough-winged Hawks) migrate great distances from northern regions to overwinter in Klamath County.

December [Drifting duck flotillas]

Goldeneye, Bufflehead and Mergansers have stream-lined bodies designed for underwater pursuit of fish. If someone had to pick a diving duck that epitomize swift-flowing stream habitat they would certainly consider the Common Merganser. These weighty birds sink low in the water, preferring diving to flying. Diving ducks remain in Upper Klamath Lake until freeze up, then move to the Williamson and Klamath Rivers.



Western Gray Squirrels are frequently seen in pine trees alongside the golf course