



Klamath Raptors

Why is the Klamath Basin so important for Raptors?

Information from: <http://klamathbasinrefuges.fws.gov/eagle.html>

From December through February, the Klamath Basin hosts the largest concentration of bald eagles in the contiguous United States. Some years more than 1000 of these majestic birds are present with most daytime use occurring at Lower Klamath and Tule Lake Refuges. During these months a large number and diversity of other raptors, including golden eagle, Northern harrier, and red-tailed and rough-legged hawks also can be found.

Why expend the energy to fly from Canada to our area? The main attraction of the Klamath Basin to these eagles is the extensive marshes with their abundant wintering waterfowl. Winter is a tough time to be a duck in the Klamath Basin. With injuries, weakness, and diseases such as avian cholera claiming many waterfowl, the table is set for the eagles. It is easy to catch a dead duck or goose, and the eagles make quick work of them.

Just as sure as the leaves fall and ice begins to coat basin wetlands, they will arrive. Each year during the month of November, bald eagles begin to appear *en masse* on their Klamath Basin wintering grounds. Having traveled from as far away as Northwest Territories in Canada and Glacier National Park, these birds quickly settle into a daily routine of waterfowl scavenging throughout the Basin's marshes by day and locating sheltered roosts at night. The best viewing occurs during January and February when numbers may peak at over 500 birds. During this time, an observant visitor should be able to easily spot dozens of these majestic raptors along the Tule Lake and Lower Klamath auto tours. It is not uncommon to see over 50 eagles from one spot!

What is a Raptor?

A raptor, or bird of prey, is a predatory bird belonging to any of the following groups: hawks, owls, eagles, falcons, and accipiters. Raptors have curved hooked bills, sharp talons, acute hearing, and excellent eyesight with eyes set further forward on their heads than prey bird species. Excellent pictures and explanations of each of these groups of birds and their sounds can be found on the website: www.dfw.state.or.us/springfield/Raptors.html.

Raptors commonly seen in the Klamath Basin include:

Bald Eagle
Osprey
Peregrine Falcon
Prairie Falcon
American Kestrel

Red-tailed Hawk
Ferruginous Hawk
Northern Harrier
Great Horned Owl
Short-eared Owl