

# PUBLIC BIRDWATCHING WALKING TOUR

Highlighted by the return of the comical Tufted Puffin each spring, Cannon Beach offers an amazing array of birdwatching opportunities throughout the year. Try this walking route to check out some local birding hotspots.

## 1 HAYSTACK ROCK & THE NEEDLES

Start your tour with one of Oregon's most famous landmarks. From top to bottom, Haystack Rock and its nearby Needles are a protected habitat that can feature an often-staggering variety of birds to observe. The star of the show for most is the colorful Tufted Puffins that return each spring to nest and raise their young in burrows on the grassy, north facing upper slopes of Haystack Rock. They arrive decked out in their colorful breeding plumage which includes a white face, yellow eyebrow tufts, orange beak, a squat black body and red-orange feet. Near the base of the Rock, Black Oystercatchers with pointy orange bills and red eye rings announce their presence with shrill calls. Look closely for ledge nesters like cormorants and dark Pigeon Guillemots with red feet on both Haystack and the Needles. In the turbulent waters around the near shore rocks, you may also see Harlequin Ducks and scoters swimming and diving. Listen for a large ruckus and groups of birds fleeing Haystack to indicate the presence of predators like Bald Eagles or Peregrine Falcons.

**PRO TIP:** Keep an eye out for the red truck next to Haystack Rock signaling the presence of the Haystack Rock Awareness Program. Staffed with informative volunteers, these stewards of Haystack Rock occasionally set up spotting scopes for bird watching and also share helpful information about this federally protected Marine Garden and Wildlife Refuge.

## 2 ECOLA CREEK ESTUARY

Walk north from Haystack Rock along the beach to Ecola Creek remembering to scan the skies and tree snags along the shoreline for Bald Eagles. The north shore at the mouth of the creek is a popular spot for Western Gulls year round and you might find groups of Brown Pelicans lingering there during summer and fall. If you're particularly lucky, you may also catch shorebirds like Sanderlings or Whimbrels scurrying along the water's edge, along with seasonal visits from other types of gulls.

## 3 CANNON BEACH NATURE TRAIL

Follow the trail up from the beach then walk the bark trail running along the north side of the schoolyard adjacent to Ecola Creek, then cross the road and look for the Cannon

Beach Nature Trail across from NeCus Park. In this section of Ecola Creek, you'll often discover busy waterfowl like Common Mergansers with their distinctively long, narrow bodies perfect for diving; Northern Shovelers with their broad, flat bills; and diving black and white Buffleheads in winter and spring. Watch along the shores for chattering blue and white Belted Kingfishers and lanky Great Blue Herons fishing for their next snack. In the right seasons, you may also discover Western Grebes, Hooded Mergansers and Great Egrets. As the trail gets more wooded, listen for the songs of woodland birds like Song Sparrows and Black-Capped Chickadees.

## 4 SETTLING PONDS & LITTLE POMPEY WETLAND

Continue on the Nature Trail and make a left at the street, continuing to the settling ponds where you'll find a small viewing platform great for observing additional birds including the vibrant, but elusive, Green Heron creeping along the water's edge; dozens of acrobatic Violet-Green and Tree Swallows skimming the surface of the ponds during the summer; and ducks including Gadwall and Mallards swimming alongside Canada Geese. Visit during late spring and you'll likely find dozens of little ducklings trailing behind their parents, as well. Continue down the trail on the west side of the ponds and listen for the distinctive song of dozens of Red-Winged Blackbirds in the adjacent Little Pompey Wetland. Cross the footbridge at the south end of the ponds and continue south through the woods keeping your eyes out for the elusive Brown Creeper and listening for the tap-tapping of the Downy Woodpecker. Summertime may also bring the interesting calls of the masked-face Cedar Waxwings and vibrant orange Varied Thrush. Year round residents, you might also be startled by the occasional buzz of a passing Anna's Hummingbird, joined by the returning Rufous Hummingbird each spring. To complete your loop, turn west on Monroe and make your way back to the beach.

## SIDE TRIP: CHAPMAN POINT AND BIRD ROCKS

At the far north end of the beach, the stars of the avian show at Chapman Point are the large colonies of penguin-like Common Murres that crowd shoulder to shoulder onto nearby offshore rocks throughout the summer. With numbers easily in the thousands, you can often hear their gargling ruckus before you even get close enough to observe them.

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**1 HAYSTACK ROCK & THE NEEDLES**

Distance: 1 mile, 30 minutes

**2 ECOLA CREEK ESTUARY**

Distance: 1/3 mile, 10 minutes

**3 CANNON BEACH NATURE TRAIL**

Distance: 1/3 mile, 10 minutes

**4 SETTLING PONDS & LITTLE POMPEY WETLAND**

Distance: 1.25 miles, 40 minutes

