

Northern Arizona Wildlife Viewing by Month

January

Snowshoes allow a silent walk through the woods and the chance to listen for dark-eyed juncos, downy and hairy woodpeckers, and Stellar's jays around Flagstaff and Coconino County. If you see small pine boughs littered along the snowy base of a group of pines, stop and listen for Abert's squirrels moving through the canopy foraging on the cambium in pine branches.

March

Migratory waterfowl stop over to forage on their way north, crowding open water as ice begins to recede on high country lakes. Look for cinnamon teal and other waterfowl at Rogers Lake and the chain of Anderson Mesa lakes. Grand Canyon visitors can be rewarded with views of a California Condor (Navajo Bridge is among the best places to see these majestic giants in flight).

April

In Flagstaff and Northern Arizona bighorn sheep and mule deer become more visible against a backdrop of green spring vegetation at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, where eastern collared lizards, common side-blotched, and tiger whiptails are easily photographed basking on warm rocks.

May

Near Flagstaff, May is a great month to enjoy prairie wildlife. Pronghorn, elk, buffalo, and Gunnison's prairie dogs are active this time of year at the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Raymond Wildlife Area, where spring grasses and wildflowers tempt even reclusive wildlife out into the open. Bring your camera: views of the San Francisco Peaks shouldn't be missed.

June

It's hard to beat the Arizona high country in the summer, and the elk would agree. Hundreds of bull, cow, and calf elk can be found in the early evening at Mormon Lake – and this scenic drive is worth the trip! Birders flock to Mormon Lake to find Osprey, Ibis, and Avocet. Large numbers of elk can also be found this time of year at Upper and Lower Lake Mary as well as Rogers Lake. Visit Arizona Game and Fish Department's Lamar Haines Memorial Wildlife Area (San Francisco Peaks region) for songbirds in aspen forests, where visitors also may spot mule deer and elk in the mornings and evenings.

July

Midsummer is lizard season in the high country - walk the Flagstaff Urban Trail System for short-horned lizards, western fence lizards, tiger whiptails, and plateau lizards basking along the dark, basalt rock walls of the Rio de Flag. You will also spot rock squirrels scurrying around looking for seeds and juicy plants to eat.

August

On your way to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, take in some California condor watching at Vermillion Cliffs then stop by the Arizona Game and Fish Department's House Rock Wildlife Area to see some buffalo and mule deer. At the North Rim, look for squirrel sign (sheared pinecones, clipped pine twigs, small digging spots around the base of big pine trees) and look up!

You're probably going to see a unique population of the Abert's squirrel, known on the North Rim as the Kaibab Squirrel.

September

Aspen leaves changing to their blazing Autumn gold announce the elk rut. Elk are still in high numbers at Mormon Lake and territorial bulls can be found at dawn and dusk bugling and moving from their daytime, forested rest areas to open meadows at night.

October

Monsoon rains replenish high country lakes just in time for fall waterfowl migration, now ducks and geese drop in to forage on their flight north, crowding open water before the ice begins to encroach on high country lakes. Hundreds of cinnamon teal visit Rogers Lake and the chain of Anderson Mesa lakes host a wide diversity of waterfowl species making for an excellent day tour.

As the aspen leaves begin to turn, this is a great time of year to take a drive to the Kendrick Park Watchable Wildlife Trail and up along the Kaibab Plateau Parkway. Expect to see mule deer, Abert's squirrels, Merriam's turkey, red-tailed hawks, western bluebirds, Williamson's and red-naped sapsuckers, pine siskins, red-faced warblers, and Clark's nutcrackers.

November

Icy lakes and early snow prompt migratory bald eagles to descend on Arizona's high country to spend the winter, making for some spectacular easy winter wildlife photography. Winter is anything but desolate. Hardy permanent resident birds include white-breasted and pygmy nuthatch, mountain chickadee, Steller's jay, dark-eyed junco, northern flicker, and acorn, hairy and downy woodpeckers; all of these populate the pine forests and are active throughout the day. In the pinyon-juniper woodlands, American robin, western and mountain bluebirds and white-crowned sparrows flock to feed on leftover seeds and berries. Townsend's solitaire can often be found at the tops of large juniper trees, and are often located by their monotone, single-note call before they are seen. Also arriving in winter is the Oregon strain of the dark-eyed junco and house and Cassin's finches, which can be found in hedgerows, scrubby vegetation and now-leafless willow thickets. Did you realize the Grand Canyon state has badgers? Oval-shaped den openings are a clue to their homes.

December

Large groups of wintering bald eagles in the Flagstaff region can be found at Upper and Lower Lake Mary, Mormon Lake, Marshall Lake, Rogers Lake, Kachina Wetlands and Pumphouse Greenway, Cataract Lake, and Kaibab Lake. Dress warmly for the cold temperatures at these lakes in the early morning and late evening, you will also be rewarded with good views of elk in their winter coats. Bald Eagle sightings continue throughout winter.

Other Wildlife Viewing Sites

Don't Miss These Outstanding Wildlife Viewing Areas and Many Others Highlighted in The Arizona Wildlife Viewing Guide

Grand Canyon National Park

A powerful and inspiring landscape, the Grand Canyon overwhelms our senses through its immense size, but the appeal is not limited to the vistas and geology. The park contains several major ecosystems and great biological diversity.

Vermilion Cliffs Condor Viewing Site

The California condor successful reintroduction efforts began here in 1996. From the viewing kiosk at the west end of the monument, visitors are almost guaranteed to see the enormous black birds soaring above the beautiful Vermilion Cliffs at any time of year. Viewing is best with the aid of binoculars or a spotting scope.

Directions to viewing site/kiosk:

From Jacob Lake: Go east on Hwy 89A down the switchbacks. Turn north on House Rock valley Road (BLM Rd 1065) and travel 3 miles up to the viewing kiosk.

From Page: Travel south on Hwy 89 past Marble Canyon Lodge, Vermilion Cliffs Lodge and Cliff Dwellers Lodge. BLM Rd is just past the snow chain-up area at the end of the valley. Just north of the junction of Hwy 89A and BLM Rd. 1065 is a sign denoting entrance to the monument.

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

A kaleidoscope of colors where canyon meets the river and encompassing over 1.2 million acres, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area offers unparalleled opportunities for water-based and backcountry recreation. The recreation area stretches for hundreds of miles from Lees Ferry in Arizona to the Orange Cliffs of southern Utah, encompassing scenic vistas, geologic wonders, and a vast panorama of human history. The recreation area includes Lake Powell, a stretch of the Colorado River and miles of rocky, colorful desert country.