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those dwelling in lush, forested areas near the fort, birders are advised to start by listening. Many songbirds vocalize a myriad of distinct calls and songs in the spring, often from perches at or below eye level. Several sparrow species will seek protection under large fern fronds or the thick tangles of native shrubs. Once homed in on the source vegetation, birdwatchers should look for movement, often subtle but occasionally elaborate, on the forest floor. Most small songbirds are perfectly camouflaged to their environment. Spotting them takes a patient eye. Common spring species include the song sparrow, house sparrow, and dark-eyed junco.

### Raptors

After looking and listening underfoot, park visitors should head eastward to the Lewis and Clark River and turn their eyes upward toward the tallest treetops. Here, large birds of prey often rest in high branches. Bald eagles, perhaps the easiest raptors to locate, impose impressive silhouettes among the deciduous trees of the river's eastern bank.

Ospreys, with distinct angled wings and delicate whistling calls, often circle the river in search of fish. Birdwatchers willing to travel south along the flat Netul River Trail may be treated to the sight of a peregrine falcon. These large birds often hunt in small meadows near the canoe landing. Advanced birdwatchers can try their skills by returning to the forest and attempting to locate one of several owl species, including the northern saw-whet owl, great horned owl and western screech owl.

### Seabirds and ducks

With tens of miles of river bank and intertidal shoreline, the Lewis and Clark park system is an excellent showcase for a diverse and intriguing lineup of regional seabirds, ducks and other wet-footed feathered creatures. Gulls, including the Western gull, glaucous-winged gull and Heermann's gull, are abundant and can often be seen poking at crevices of the muddy bank.

The vast majority of area ducks spend time in the park, and springtime visitors are



Photos by Andy Cameron

The lesser scaup, one common duck species within the park.

often treated to sightings of scaups, mallards, and mergansers lazily floating along the tides. Great blue herons, the ubiquitous denizens of nearly all Clatsop County waterways, are often seen standing stoically along the shallow waters near the western riverbank.

### Logistics

National park fees apply for Lewis and Clark National Historical Park. A seven day park pass is available for \$10, while admission is free for those 15 and under. The annual Oregon Pacific Coast Passport, available for \$35, covers entry and parking to a variety of federal and state operated fee sites along the coast. Binoculars are highly recommended for birdwatching, as is a lens at least 300mm in length for those wishing to document their sightings.



LEFT: A pair of mallard ducks swim through a wetland marsh. RIGHT: A great blue heron walks carefully across seaweed covered rocks.



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