
Gray Lodge Wildlife Area

Seasonal Wildlife Viewing

Summer (June to August)

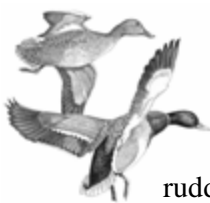
The best viewing time is usually in the morning. Summer is definitely the driest time of year but it is still a time that can offer incredible wildlife viewing. Careful observation will reveal that Gray Lodge is home to several types of resident waterfowl which may be spotted around the permanent ponds and riparian areas. These species include: wood duck, mallard, cinnamon teal, and gadwall. Pied-billed grebes, coots, gallinules and American bitterns also rely on Gray Lodge's summer flooded wetlands habitats. Other summer resident birds include herons and egrets, as well as black-crowned night herons. Black neck stilts, avocets and killdeer also appear. Many raptors such as red tailed hawks, red shoulder hawks, northern harriers, kestrels, along with great horned, screech, and barn owls can also be seen. Pheasants and doves are very common. Many passerines are also here for the summer including swallows, flycatchers, kingbirds, sparrows, finches, marsh wrens, blackbirds and meadowlarks. Other species of wildlife that may be seen are black tail deer, coyote, raccoon, skunk, western fence lizard, gopher and garter snake, western pond turtle, and bullfrogs. Many of the wildlife are nocturnal so day viewing may be limited to some degree. We recommend bringing insect repellent and sunscreen for your comfort.



Late summer to Early Fall (September to October)

Gray Lodge begins its annual "flood up" in mid-august and soon after the area begins to attract early fall migrants. The first ducks to arrive are the northern pintail, usually in late August. An abundance of shorebirds arrive to probe at the many invertebrates coming to life in the shallow ponds. This time also coincides with the migration of warblers through the riparian areas. Sandhill cranes and early white-fronted geese also arrive. This increased wetlands habitat, coupled with the still warm weather, creates an abundance of bugs which increase the prey base. Mosquitoes are at peak numbers.

Mid-Fall to Early Spring (November to February)



This is the busiest time of year for both wintering wildlife and human visitors. The best waterfowl viewing is in the afternoon on a clear day. Gray Lodge is usually occupied by huge flocks of wintering waterfowl and many shorebirds. The main waterfowl species include snow goose, Ross' goose, greater-white fronted goose, northern pintail, mallard, American wigeon, gadwall, northern shoveler, green-wing teal, cinnamon teal, ruddy duck, bufflehead, and ring-neck duck. Heron and egrets are abundant. Raptors can be seen perched in trees or soaring over fields as the prey base has been concentrated. Deer are common sights as are desert cottontail and blacktail jackrabbits. Diligent watching will reveal some of the lesser seen wildlife species.

Spring Drawdown (March to June)

As the marshes are "drawn down" in the spring the exposed mud flats once again become extremely attractive to a variety of shorebirds. Sandpipers, black-necked stilts, avocets, killdeer, yellow legs, curlews, snipe, and a host of others can be found feeding along the shorelines. The receding waters will concentrate prey for the herons, egrets, double-crested cormorants, and American white pelicans. Muskrats, beavers and river otters also become more active in the receding waterways. The riparian and grassland areas are lush with new plant growth as breeding and nesting activities get underway. Reptiles and amphibians also become more active as the days begin to warm.

