

March

March brings harbingers of spring, though the cold waters of Vineyard Sound and Buzzards Bay mean that Falmouth rarely gets warm temperatures in March (but a sunny spot out of the wind can provide a foretaste of warm weather.) March is a revealing time to walk in the woods. Because the leaves still haven't opened the lay of the land and its secret rocks, hollows and heights are visible. Try Beebe Woods,* Cardoza Farm* or Mares Pond.* Wherever you go, here are some things to watch for in Falmouth in March:



Pussywillows begin to show on willow branches. These flowers of willow trees will begin to turn yellow with pollen as the season warms.

Numbers of **Turkey Vultures** are often seen in March in Falmouth. These birds are passing by as they migrate north from their warmer wintering sites in the south.

Adult **Ospreys** return about the middle of March from their winter sojourns in the south to reclaim their nests. Look for them sitting on the bulky stick nests, and listen for their chirping courtship call high in the sky.

The **Spring Equinox** about the 21st marks the time when day and night are of equal length.

Double-crested Cormorants, which in spring have Dagwood-like tufts of feathers above their eyes, return for the summer, replacing the Great Cormorants that have wintered here and are now moving back north to nest.

The northerly winds and storms of winter begin to give way to the **southwesterly winds of the warmer season**. The gentler waves created by these winds push sand moved offshore by the strong winter winds back onto the beaches, shaping them into their summer profile. This general pattern is interrupted by groins and jetties along the shore, and controlled in detail by the angle of the waves to the shoreline.

The first **Herring** start returning to the streams; they aren't always obvious as they often migrate at night, but the Osprey, Herring Gulls, and Cormorants fishing for a meal can indicate their presence.

Spring Peepers begin their shrill evening chorus about the middle of the month; they will continue into April.

Mourning Cloak Butterflies, named for their black wings, are one of the few insects to hibernate through the winter in New England. They appear about now in sunny woods.



*Osprey. Photo by Craig Gibson
Calendar by Beth Schwarzman*

Piping Plovers return to nesting beaches. Mass. Audubon's Coastal Waterbird Program monitors beaches and puts up symbolic fencing to protect nest sites. These simple string fences give the plovers much-needed help in surviving on the beaches we also use.

American Woodcocks begin courting at dusk in open fields near woods including at Crane Wildlife Area and along the Bikepath. The males make nasal "peents" while circling on the ground, then fly high up and sail back to the ground twittering their wings. The 300 Committee sponsors Woodcock walks.

*Trail maps at www.300committee.org

Preserving Open Space for Falmouth

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