

# Wildtales' Country Journal

by Heather A. Wallis Murphy ©2003



**March:** From Roman mythology, the god of war, Mars; in this month occurs the vernal equinox, Spring (Webster's Dictionary). March's birth flower is the Jonquil or Narcissus jonquilla (multi-flowered daffodil), and the birthstone is the Bloodstone.

## March Dates to Celebrate:

1<sup>st</sup> of March Yellowstone Natl. Park 1872  
 5<sup>th</sup> Ash Wednesday  
 6<sup>th</sup> Michelangelo born 1475,  
 11<sup>th</sup> Johnny Appleseed died 1847,

14<sup>th</sup> Albert Einstein born 1879,  
 15<sup>th</sup> beware the *Ides Of March*,  
 17<sup>th</sup> Saint Patrick's Day (died 461),  
 18<sup>th</sup> Full Moon,

19<sup>th</sup> Swallows return to Capistrano,  
 20<sup>th</sup> First Day of Spring, 5:00pm PST,  
 25<sup>th</sup> Aretha Franklin born 1942,  
 26<sup>th</sup> Robert Frost born 1874,

30<sup>th</sup> Alaska purchased from Russia 1867,  
 30<sup>th</sup> Vincent Van Gogh born 1853,  
 31<sup>st</sup> Civilian Conservation Corps began 1933,  
 31<sup>st</sup> Lewis & Clark "gangs of geese pass" 1805.

**Nature Tales** - The "wild" are on the move in this transition month of March. In the mountains, ice and snows are receding, soils are warming, plants are growing, the first bug hatches of the year emerge, and bald eagles repair their nests. March is a fantastic time to keep observational records of the movements of wildlife, the changes in plants, and the variety of weather. Nearly each day you can see some new marvel.



Nature Tales by Heather A. Wallis Murphy © 2003

Insects warmed from a spring sun. This phoebe is the first neotropical migratory bird back from its wintering grounds between southern California and Mexico. Violet-green swallows are a close second, coming back from Mexico and Central America. By March 31<sup>st</sup> each year, the osprey has returned from winters as far south as Chile.



Phoebe by Heather A. Wallis Murphy © 2003

Spring travel for the Lewis and Clark Expedition occurred in 1806, in the country now known as Washington State and Idaho. They noted Pileated Woodpecker on March 4<sup>th</sup>, Fort Clatsop; Canada Goose on March 8<sup>th</sup>, the ocean; Western Trillium on April 10<sup>th</sup>, Columbia River; Glacier Lily on May 8<sup>th</sup>, Potlatch River; and Spring Beauty on June 27<sup>th</sup>, Clearwater Divide, Idaho.



Pileated Woodpecker by Heather A. Wallis Murphy © 2003

The beginning of the month finds coyotes pouncing on mice in greening fields, whereas by the end of March local deer herds are welcomed back. Herons move deeper to mountain lakes as waters warm. Around the vernal equinox, be mindful of a haunting Chinook wind - a warm, dry spring breeze from the west: the "snow eater".

Past records show the Say's phoebe arriving by March 13<sup>th</sup> and feeding on



Just after snowmelt by March 15<sup>th</sup>, the very first wildflower of the year blooms - a Spring Beauty, followed by Glacier Lilies by March 30<sup>th</sup>.



Spring Beauty by Heather A. Wallis Murphy © 2003

"Spring Ephemeral" wildflowers are a remarkable group of plants that bloom immediately after, or in the last remnants of, snowfields. These short-lived flowers include Spring Beauties, Glacier Lilies, as well as trillium and Skunk Cabbage. These tender species have an internal heating system, which melts the snow encircling them. Yellow fields of Glacier Lilies flourish in this manner. The reward for being an early bloomer is they set flower and seed well before the more lush competition arrive on the scene. These early flowers quickly store high-energy bulbs, which in turn are favored food by bear, elk, deer, pocket gopher, and deer mouse.

Nature is shifting, this month of March. Woodpeckers begin their courtship ritual of loud drumming. The snowshoe hare begins to change its appearance from winter white to a mottled color, eventually fully brown for summer. Deer are following the new grasses, and daffodils bloom.



Heather is a feature writer from Leavenworth, Washington, sharing her field travels as an artist, nature writer and practicing wildlife biologist. Visit her in stores across the Northwest OR online at [www.wildtales.com](http://www.wildtales.com), for her "Walleye Cards", a naturalist notecard, and journal business.

## HOMeward

Listen to the music,  
 Dancing down the lake  
 On the wings of geese,  
 — Homeward.

~ Heather A. Wallis Murphy, 2001 ©



- Canada Goose - *Branta canadensis*:
- The symbol of "the wind"; "freedom".
  - Most common goose in North America. Introduced TO Europe in 1600's. Lewis & Clark described on March 8<sup>th</sup> 1806.
  - Flocks in "V" formation, punctuated by a "honking" hullabaloo. Winters coastal.
  - One brood each year, female sits on floating islet nest. Mates for life.
  - Feeds mostly on marsh plants/root stalks.
  - American Indians believed waterbirds as "spirits of the air, land and water"



March 1875

Journal Entries

Seasonal Notes

Spring Beauty

HERONS ON ICE PAVILION

HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY - SPOONER - BOON - REID

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3-03-96 Pileated woodpecker drumming in Aspen

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3-11-02 Evening grosbeak flock

3-17-01 Violet Green Swallow 3 seen

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