

Oregon Birds & Botany

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



July 18 - 26, 2021

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Naturalist Journeys, LLC





Explore the quiet backroads of northeastern Oregon with Naturalist Journeys. Discover stunning mountain scenery and an array of native wildflowers in bloom in the Wallowa Mountains, often referred to as the Oregon Alps. Travel through areas swept by the Missoula Floods at the end of the Ice Age.

Stand besides wild rivers as you seek riparian birds. Search for Great Grey Owl and Williamson's Sapsucker in mixed-conifer forest, and watch American Dipper on bubbling streams.

Your experience is enhanced with turn-of-the-century charm in a series of very comfortable and updated small boutique hotels. And enjoy the modern-day wineries and wine-tasting rooms in quaint, art-filled Walla Walla, Washington. You discover the quiet beauty of a little-known but much enjoyed part of America.

Itinerary

Sun., July 18 Arrivals

Arrive at the Pasco Airport (PSC) by 5 p.m. in time to take the airport shuttle to your hotel and join the group at 5:45 p.m. for dinner at Anthony's at Columbia Point, on the bank of the mighty Columbia River.

Accommodations at Best Western Plus Pasco Inn and Suites (D)

Mon., July 19 Exploring to Geiser Grand Hotel

Early morning birding in Tri-Cities at confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers, where Lewis and Clark camped. Along with way to Baker City, we take time for a culture stop in Pendleton, where we visit the

Tour Highlights

- Stand on the shores of the mighty Columbia River, where Lewis and Clark passed by.
- Visit the rugged Elkhorn Ridge of the Blue Mountains to walk on gentle trails, searching for birds and wildflowers (including species of Penstemon, Phlox, and Indian Paintbrush).
- Travel near the northernmost edge of the Great Basin, keeping our eyes open for possible sightings of Sage Thrasher, Prairie Falcon, Say's Phoebe, Golden Eagle, and other sagebrush-steppe species.
- From our comfortable base at the Wallowa Lake Lodge, wander up Forest Service roads to the edge of the Eagle Cap Wilderness, visit The Nature Conservancy's Zumwalt Prairie, or take an aerial tram to the top of Mount Howard for some of the fifty-plus subalpine wildflower species and high elevation birds (such as Clark's Nutcracker, Canada Jay, and Red Crossbill).
- Relax in historic restored small hotels with period fixtures including the Geiser Grand Hotel and Marcus Whitman Hotel. Explore the sophisticated yet accessible small-town culture of Walla Walla, the center of southeastern Washington's wine growing region.

Tour Summary

8-Night / 9-Day Tour with Steve Shunk and Bob Meinke
\$3290, from Pasco

Airport is Tri-Cities Airport in Pasco (PSC)



Pendleton Woolen Mill and Retail Store and if time before lunch, the Tamastslikt Cultural Institute. On the way to Baker City, stop to bird at the classic ponderosa pine forest at Spring Creek between Blue Mountain Summit and La Grande. Spring Creek is well known for its population of Great Gray Owls. And while searching for the owls, we may see Lewis's Woodpecker, Steller's Jay, Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, and MacGillivray's Warbler.

Showy wildflowers are evident as we cross the northern Blue Mountains, and we watch for species of Fleabane (*Erigeron*), Lupine (*Lupinus*), Wild Onion (*Allium*), Penstemon (*Penstemon*), Cinquefoil (*Potentilla*), Buttercup (*Ranunculus*), Buckwheat (*Eriogonum*), Milkvetch (*Astragalus*), Biscuitroots (*Lomatium*), Mule's Ears (*Wyethia*), Larkspur (*Delphinium*), and Jacob's Ladder (*Polemonium*), among many others.

Arrive in time to check in for two nights at the historic Geiser Grand Hotel and relax before we head out for dinner at a local brew pub.

Accommodations at Geiser Grand Hotel (B, L, D)

Geiser Grand Hotel: Your luxury basecamp to explore the wonders of eastern Oregon. This charming historic landmark stands proudly on Main Street in Historic Baker City with luxurious guest suites and incredible food. Crystal chandeliers, a majestic stained-glass ceiling and mahogany columns inspire wonder and romance. While the setting is historic, services are unquestionably state-of-the-art. At the Geiser Grand, the rich heritage of the architecture carries over to the menu offerings. Everyday authentic Northwestern cuisine is a culinary delight. An architectural treasure combining ornate details with all modern amenities – the Geiser Grand Hotel was recently named one of the great hotels in the state by *The Oregonian* newspaper.

Tues., July 20 Elkhorn Ridge

This morning we explore close to Baker City. Birding along the Powder River and at some of the picturesque small lakes and ponds close to town. Depending on current conditions and the productivity at each site, these may include Bowen Valley, Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, and Baldock Slough.

After lunch, we drive into the Elkhorn Ridge of the Blue Mountains. Topographically rugged, this is an area home to a wide array of montane birds and many native wildflowers, including endemic species. The Elkhorns form the most prominent ridge of the Blue Mountains, dominating the skyline to the west of Baker City, with the highest peak (Rock Creek Butte) rising to 9,106 feet. The lower slopes are characterized by Ponderosa Pine forest with scattered Big Sagebrush, transitioning to dense stands of Douglas Fir, Lodgepole Pine, and White or Grand Fir as we move upslope.



The highest subalpine slopes support scattered groves of Subalpine Fir, Engelmann Spruce, and Whitebark Pine. We bird and botanize along trails in the vicinity of Anthony Lakes, which are surrounded by hillsides and meadows featuring species of Penstemon (*Penstemon*), Gentian (*Gentiana*), Rangers Buttons (*Sphenosciadium*), Lovage (*Ligusticum*), Monkeyflower (*Erythranthe*), Twinflower (*Linnaea*), Marsh Marigold (*Caltha*), Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria*), Lousewort (*Pedicularis*), Wintergreen (*Pyrola*), Paintbrush (*Castilleja*), and False Hellebore (*Veratrum*). Birding on Elkhorn Ridge could produce American Three-toed Woodpecker, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Red Crossbill, and Pine Siskin.

Late afternoon includes time to walk in Baker City, an historic gold mining town, and enjoy the Miner's Jubilee taking place during our stay. Or feel free to return to rest before dinner in our hotel's dining room.

Accommodations at Geiser Grand Hotel (B, L, D)

Miners' Jubilee makes the heritage and history of Baker County come to life with a parade, vendors in the park, a huge food court, sidewalk fair, mining demonstrations and kids' activities. Bronc Riding Friday night and Bull Riding Saturday night, along with a carnival create a full weekend of events that draws family and class reunions to Baker City every year.

Wed., July 21 Wallowa Mountains

We depart after breakfast for the Wallowa Mountains and Wallowa Lake area; with birding and botanizing stops we take the full day, with about three hours of driving time.

Our first stop is the Thief Valley Reservoir. The reservoir has the longest eBird list of any spot in the county and it's one of the best birding spots in the northwestern Oregon. Stroll and drive around the reservoir while seeking a wide variety of waterfowl and shorebirds, sparrows, warblers and more including Common Loon, Lark Sparrow and Lazuli Bunting. After a satisfying morning, enjoy Oregon back roads en route to lunch in the town of La Grande in the beautiful Grand Ronde Valley. After lunch, relax in-between birding and botany stops, potentially including Rhinehart Canyon, the Minam/Wallowa Rivers confluence, gateway to the wild and scenic Grande Ronde River, or upstream along the Wallowa canyon. You arrive at our hotel with plenty of time to check-in and relax before dinner.



We'll stay three nights in the historic Wallowa Lake Lodge, overlooking one of the most beautiful lakes in the Pacific Northwest. Like one of the great national park lodges-but without the crowds-the warm, cozy lodge is the perfect base for exploring the Wallowa Mountains and surrounds or just relaxing on the expansive back deck to enjoy the view.

Accommodations at Wallowa Lake Lodge (B,L,D)

Thurs. & Fri., July 22 & 23 Wallowa Lake & Mount Howard

The Wallowa Mountains feature great botanizing and birding, which we experience after breakfast at the lodge each morning. Several montane Forest Service roads meander up Lostine and Hurricane canyons to the edge of the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Depending on weather conditions, other outings include an afternoon trip on the aerial tram up to the top of Mount Howard to see endemic subalpine wildflowers and look for high elevation birds and great views, or you may drive over to TNC's pristine Zumwalt Prairie.

The Rocky Mountain influence on the flora of Northeast Oregon is especially on display on the cooler north-facing slopes of the Wallowas, where the Wallowa River and Hurricane and Lostine Creeks drain the watersheds of the Eagle Cap Wilderness. We plan a short hike to bird and look at wildflowers in one of these areas.

Birding on the trails around Wallowa Lake and the river canyons may produce Spruce Grouse, Vaux's Swift, Red-naped Sapsucker, American Three-toed Woodpecker, American Dipper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Townsend's Solitaire, Western Tanager, and Black-headed Grosbeak among many others. Many plant species occur here in the meadows and forests (mixed-coniferous, with pine, larch, fir, and spruce, as well as aspen), some of which are found nowhere else in Oregon. Highlights include various Milkvetches (*Astragalus* and *Oxytropis*), annual Gentians (*Gentianella* and *Gentianopsis*), Asters, Clematis, Valerians (*Valeriana*), Louseworts (*Pedicularis*), Gooseberries (*Ribes*), Monkeyflowers (*Erythranthe*), Pussytoes (*Antennaria*), Grapeferns (*Botrychium*), and Columbines (*Aquilegia*).

On the way back to the Lodge, we stop at the Chief Joseph Memorial along the south end of Wallowa Lake. The rare Spalding's Catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*), a federally listed endangered plant species now restricted to just a few uncultivated areas in the "Palouse Prairie" of Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, occurs here, along with an array of other native grassland species.

On another morning, explore a Forest Service road that meanders up and over the Wallowa range, stopping at prime birding sites and areas featuring many colorful and unique wildflowers, which should be at their prime in July. Perennials such as Wild Heliotrope (*Phacelia*), Balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza*), Camas (*Camassia*), Mariposa Lilies (*Calochortus*), Stonecrop (*Sedum*), Bog Orchids (*Platanthera*), Catchfly (*Silene*), Stoneseed (*Lithospermum*), Peony (*Paeonia*), Lungwort (*Mertensia*), and several shrubby Penstemon species are all possibilities, while colorful annuals (including species of *Clarkia*, *Castilleja*, *Gentianella*, *Ipomopsis*, *Phacelia*, and *Collinsia*) may be common if spring rains have been plentiful.



From Wallowa Lake Lodge, it's only a short walk to the aerial tram that transports us to the 8,200-foot summit of Mount Howard. The ride up is exhilarating, with fantastic views in all directions. As we exit the tram station, we have the choice of several (mostly level) trails that wind their way through a stunted Subalpine Fir and Whitebark Pine forest, liberally interspersed with fescue meadows supporting a diverse montane flora.

High elevation species (both plants and birds) thrive here, and on a clear day you can look far into Washington State to the north. Below us we can see all of Wallowa Lake (3½ miles in length), with clear views of its stunning glacial moraines. From this vantage point, it's easy to understand how the craggy Wallowas—with many peaks visible from Mount Howard—have been nicknamed the “Alps of Oregon.”

Birds we search for on Mt Howard include Dusky Grouse, Golden Eagle, Williamson's Sapsucker, American Pipit, Mountain Bluebird, Clark's Nutcracker, Rock Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, White-crowned Sparrow, and Pine Grosbeak. Fifty or more alpine wildflower species can be found blooming on Mount Howard's summit during mid-summer, which is also home to one of the rarest plant species in North America, Greenman's Desert Parsley (*Lomatium greenmanii*). Known only from the Wallowa Mountains, 95% of its few occurrences are restricted to the top of Mount Howard. Other locally endemic plants occur here, as well, including a range-restricted species of yellow Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja chrysantha*).

Dinner is at the lodge or in the nearby towns of Joseph or Enterprise. The Old West feel of Joseph is evident, featuring galleries, bronze foundries, distillery, cafes, shops and restaurants. Enterprise hosts still more cafes, restaurants, and a brewery/pub known statewide. *Accommodations at Wallowa Lake Lodge (B,L,D)*

Sat., July 24 Walla Walla

After breakfast, we pack our bags for a leisurely drive northwest to Walla Walla, Washington, birding and botanizing as we go. We take a short walk on our way past Wallowa Lake, up Lostine Creek to bird and photograph meadow and streamside wildflowers, then heading to Elgin for lunch at a local café. The route continues into the northern Blue Mountain forest and meadow habitat of the Umatilla National Forest, through the Tollgate area adjacent to Langdon Lake, and down the mountains into alluvial-floored river valleys supporting ranches and irrigated fields towards Walla Walla.

Arriving in time to unpack for two nights at the elegant Marcus Whitman Hotel. Dinner is on your own tonight, and you can relax at the hotel for the evening or choose one of the many dining establishments available in downtown Walla Walla.

Accommodations at Marcus Whitman Hotel (B, L)

Sun., July 25 Bennington Lake

After breakfast, morning birding sites in and around the Walla Walla area include Bennington Lake and several spots along the Walla Walla River, including Rooks Park and Fort Walla Walla City Park. Scan for Western



specialties like Black-chinned and Calliope Hummingbirds, Lazuli Bunting, Western Wood-Pewee, and up to six swallow species, plus many migrating waterbirds, including sandpipers and gulls. The afternoon is available for you to explore art, and winery-filled downtown Walla Walla, walking the beautiful campus of Whitman College, or arranging to participate in a winery tour, making sure to return to the Marcus Whitman Hotel for our farewell dinner.

Accommodations at Marcus Whitman Hotel (B, L, D)

Mon., July 26 Departures

We depart after breakfast for a 50-minute drive to the Pasco airport. Please plan your flight to leave no earlier than 11 a.m.

Guides Steve Shunk & Bob Meinke



Steve Shunk has been teaching adults about birds and nature since 1992. Steve is a seasoned tour guide, with over 150 trips under his belt, mostly in the western and southern US, but also in Canada, Mexico, Honduras, Peru, the Caribbean, Malaysian Borneo, and Sicily. Steve is a patient, experienced educator with an infectious enthusiasm for all things in nature, and he strongly incorporates ecology and conservation messages in all the regions where we travel. Steve has visited Jamaica three times, scouting all our travel routes and birding locations. He was also a keynote speaker at the BirdsCaribbean 20th International Meeting in Jamaica in July 2015.



Bob Meinke started birding in earnest while an undergraduate in plant science at Humboldt State University in northern California. After graduate school he went on to join the botany faculty at Oregon State University (OSU), where he's led the state's Native Plant Conservation Biology Program (in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture) for over 25 years. Bob and his graduate students conducted research on the conservation and recovery of threatened and endangered plants in the western U.S., focusing on life history and re-introduction studies, and have also discovered and named a number of plant species new to science. When not botanizing, Bob enjoys travel with his wife Kelly (also a botanist)—never having lost their early interest in birding, Bob and Kelly have traveled extensively over the years, searching for birds and other wildlife in areas as diverse as Papua New Guinea, southern India, Fiji and Tonga, Australia, Iceland, Brazil, and southwest Africa. They share a particular interest in the avifauna of Central America and reside with their cats in an historic neighborhood in Corvallis, Oregon, a few blocks from the OSU campus.

Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. A handy link for travel insurance is in the footer of each of our emails. Their website shows a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Travel Information

Please plan to arrive on the first day of the tour no later than 5 p.m. (July 18, 2021). The tour starts with dinner at 5:45 p.m. at Anthony's, Columbia Point, on the bank of the mighty Columbia River. If you arrive somewhat later, the tour-leader can leave a note for you at reception stating breakfast time.

Please plan to fly out no earlier than 11 a.m. on Monday, July 26. We depart for the airport after breakfast, and the airport is a 50-minute drive from the hotel.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey is \$3290 DBL / \$4090 SGL from Pasco, Oregon. This cost includes accommodations for 8 nights, all meals as specified in the itinerary, professional guide services, other park and program entrance fees and miscellaneous program expenses.

Tour cost does not include: transportation from your home city to Oregon, optional activities, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone charges, gratuities for guides, lodges and drivers, or beverages from the bar.

Photo Credits

Golden Eagle, Greg Smith (GS); Long-eared Owl, GS; American Kestrel; GS; Clark's Nutcracker, GS; Mount Hood, Atanas Malamov (Unsplash); American dipper, GS; Pygmy Nuthatch, GS; Red-breasted Nuthatch, Doug Greenberg, DG; Allen's Hummingbird, Steve Wolfe (SW); Lincoln's Sparrow, Peg Abbott (PA); Indian Paintbrush, Naturalist Journeys Stock; Dusky Grouse, Carlos Sanchez.

Group Size

The minimum group size is 6 with our local expert guides. The maximum number of participants is 12.

Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.