

# Washington Coast: Fall Migration Shorebirds, Seabirds & More with Naturalist Journeys



**August 18 – 25, 2022**

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Fall migration starts early for many North American birds, and for water birds in particular. Arctic-nesting sandpipers move down the west coast in astonishing numbers, and Black-footed Albatross come to the continental shelf from the northwest Hawai'ian chain to collect food for their young. Heerman's Gull and Brown Pelican disperse northward in the fall, away from their Mexico breeding grounds. And locally nesting water birds—like Rhinoceros Auklet and Pigeon Guillemot—begin dispersing along the coast.

One of the best places to witness this annual waterbird extravaganza is along the central Washington Coast. Our Washington Coast birding tour takes us to two of the most productive estuaries in the west at Willapa Bay and Gray's Harbor, with two pelagic trips scheduled to offshore canyons.

Mudflats host thousands of shorebirds, with great chances to study 'peeps', dowitchers, godwits, and yellowlegs. Every year brings rare shorebirds to the region, with nearly annual sightings of Ruff, Stilt Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit, or golden-plovers. 'Rock-pipers' along the jetties and cliffs may include Black Turnstone, Surfbird, and Wandering Tattler.

The open ocean only enhances the phenomenon. The continental shelf is just 30 miles offshore, and the upwelling nutrients from the deep ocean floor attract hordes of seabirds. Black-footed Albatross, Northern Fulmar, and Pink-footed Shearwater can be abundant, with all three jaegers and Red Phalarope fairly common on local pelagic trips. Up to six alcid species can be seen along with Arctic Tern, Sabine's Gull, and Buller's Shearwater. Seabird rarities in August have included Laysan Albatross and Flesh-footed Shearwater.

But it's not all about water birds! In addition to the aquatic habitats, we visit an array of deciduous and coniferous woodlands, including old-growth Sitka spruce forest. Steller's Jay, Red Crossbill, and Golden-crowned Kinglet can be found in the conifers, with Cassin's Vireo, Cedar Waxwing, and an array of western warblers in the riparian habitats. Vaux's Swift is always possible, and we could easily see six swallow species. Pacific Wren, Purple Finch, and Black-headed Grosbeak should all still be in the area.

Beyond the birds, we expose ourselves to some fine American history and coastal culture. The towering cliffs and lighthouses at Cape Disappointment transport us to the time and place where Lewis & Clark completed their westward journey. Fine northwest wines accompany fresh-off-the-boat seafood, including the famous Willapa Bay oysters. We spend two nights in Long Beach and five nights in Aberdeen on this Washington birdwatching tour, giving us ample opportunity to relax and absorb the ambiance of the Pacific Northwest.

## Tour Highlights

- Witness huge concentrations of shorebirds, with plenty of time to study them well
- Embark on two pelagic trips exploring deep-water canyons; see albatrosses, shearwaters, and more
- Explore the wind-swept cliffs and old-growth Sitka spruce at Cape Disappointment
- See a nice array of western specialty birds like Band-tailed Pigeon, California Scrub-Jay, and Chestnut-backed Chickadee
- Explore the area where Lewis & Clark ended their 18-month, 3,700-mile journey
- Enjoy some of the best oysters in the world and more fresh Pacific seafood, paired with northwest beers and wines
- Embrace cool August weather, with highs in the high 60s

## Tour Summary

7-Night / 8-Day Tour Washington Coast Birding Tour with Steve Shunk

\$3890, from Portland

Airport is Portland International (PDX)

## Day-to-Day Itinerary

### Thurs., Aug. 18 Cape Disappointment & Willapa Bay

Please arrive at the Portland International Airport (PDX) by 2:00 PM. We assemble the group and make the 2.5-hour drive to Long Beach, Washington, with a couple of birding stops along the way. We keep our eyes peeled for Bald Eagle and Pileated Woodpecker along the Columbia River, with a special stop to search for American Dipper and Red-breasted Sapsucker.

Then, we check into our Long Beach hotel and before enjoying our kickoff dinner where we get to know our guide and fellow traveling companions and go over the plan for the week.

*Accommodations at Long Beach (D)*

### Fri., Aug. 19 Long Beach

The extreme southwestern corner of Washington offers a great diversity of habitats, from open meadows to temperate rainforest and rocky coast. Cape Disappointment keeps us busy in the morning, with short hikes to the North Head and Cape D lighthouses, as well as Beard's Hollow. The rocky cliffs below the lighthouses might give us our first Black Oystercatcher of the trip, with Surf Scoter and Western Grebe likely just offshore. Red Crossbill and Golden-crowned Kinglet are regular in the giant Sitka spruce forest, and Beard's Hollow could produce a Wood Duck, Hutton's Vireo, or Varied Thrush. After lunch at Long Beach we make the 90-minute drive to Tokeland, birding both sides of the Willapa River estuary. We likely see several duck species as well as our first shorebird abundance. In some years, a Bar-tailed Godwit visits Tokeland harbor.

*Accommodations at Long Beach (B,L,D)*

### Sat., Aug. 20 Westport Shorebirding

We have a casual day of shorebirding today, covering the southern parts of Gray's Harbor, around the peninsula, and out to the open coast. In addition to plenty of sandpipers, Bottle Beach could bring us Brant, all three scoters, and up to eight different gull species. The Westport Jetty may have both turnstones, plus Surfbird and Wandering Tattler. Along the open coast, Elegant Tern is possible, and we scope the ocean for Alcids and other seabirds. Our precise itinerary is based on the tides and our success at finding certain species.

*Accommodations in Aberdeen (B,L,D)*

### **Sun., Aug. 21 Pelagic Tour**

We head for Westport early this morning to catch the first of our two pelagic trips of the trip. Westport Seabirds has been operating here for decades, and these tours are well known among seabird aficionados. We see an array of common Pacific Coast seabirds, including Black-footed Albatross, Pink-footed Shearwater, and Red-necked Phalarope. Throughout the trip we carefully scan the horizon for jaegers, albatrosses, shearwaters, and true 'sea gulls', like Black-legged Kittiwake. Each trip is different and many encounter rare species, hence our two-trip schedule.

*Accommodations in Aberdeen (B,L,D)*

### **Mon., Aug. 22 Ocean Shores**

We enjoy another casual day of shorebirding today, covering the northern side of Gray's Harbor and the Ocean Shores peninsula. We start at the Hoquiam sewage ponds, which host plenty of duck species and always a possible surprise. We might find Cackling or Greater White-fronted Geese, and we should have a chance for a good comparison of Greater and Lesser Scaup. With all the falcon fodder, we have a good chance for a Peregrine. Gray's Harbor National Wildlife Refuge immerses us in shorebirds. We hope to compare both dowitcher species, and we comb through 'peeps' in search of the larger Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers. Out on the Ocean Shores peninsula, we visit Damon Point, where we look again for all three scoters, as well up to five possible grebe species. As before, our precise itinerary today is based on the tides and our success at finding certain species.

*Accommodations in Aberdeen (B,L,D)*

### **Tues., Aug. 23 Chehalis River & Woodlands**

We begin our last terrestrial day birding our way up the Chehalis River, with stops in at Brady and Elma and up to Lake Sylvia State Park. Our goal is to sample as many habitats as possible, with an emphasis on riparian and coniferous woodlands. The wetlands at Brady and Elma could net us Wilson's Snipe, Virginia Rail, and Green Heron. At Lake Sylvia, we look for Band-tailed Pigeon, Pileated Woodpecker, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, and Varied Thrush. Any of the wooded habitats could have Red-breasted Sapsucker, Purple Finch, Spotted Towhee, and Black-headed Grosbeak. We might get lucky and see a dipper!

*Accommodations in Aberdeen (B,L,D)*

### **Wed., Aug. 24 Pelagic Tour**

We again make an early run to Westport to catch the second of our two pelagic trips. We spend the day cruising, looking for seabirds and hopefully some good rarities before we enjoy a celebratory dinner tonight, going over our final species list and reminiscing about a fun west coast tour.

*Accommodations in Aberdeen (B,L,D)*

### **Thurs., Aug. 25 Return to Portland**

After breakfast, we head toward Portland with a great birding stop at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. We drive the refuge auto tour, though we do have plenty of chances to get out of the vehicle. White-tailed Kite and Red-shouldered Hawk are both possible here, and we encounter an array of water birds. In the wooded areas, we might find Western Tanager and Pacific Wren, plus Yellow-headed Blackbird, Black Phoebe, and Marsh Wren in the wetlands. The Ridgefield eBird list shows more than 160 species for August alone, and we have to forcefully extract ourselves from the birding in order to make our flights on time!

Please plan your departure flights for 2:00 PM or later. (B)

## Tour Details

### Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

### Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey is \$3890 DBL / \$4480 SGL, based on double occupancy, from Portland, Oregon. Cost includes seven nights' accommodations, all meals as noted in the itinerary, airport transfers, ground transportation, professional guide services, park and other entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses. Not included is round-trip airfare to and from Portland, personal expenses such as laundry, telephone, drinks from the bar, and gratuities for luggage handling or other services. Guide gratuities are at your discretion.

### Travel Information

Please plan to arrive at Portland International Airport (PDX) no later than 2:00 PM on August 18. Please plan departure flights after 2:00 PM on August 25.

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