

Photography Seminar

Oregon's Woodpecker Wonderland

with Naturalist Journeys



June 7 – 12, 2023

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When Steve Shunk, naturalist and author of the *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America*, joined Naturalist Journeys, he brought expertise and familiarity with Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. Steve hails from the Bend/Sisters area and his signature tour showcases the best of Central Oregon's Woodpecker Wonderland. Now, we are excited to offer a brand new photo seminar in Steve's backyard. Designed for beginning to intermediate photographers, this intensive woodpecker experience elevates the artistry of your images as you spend four full days photographing up to 11 different woodpecker species, along with other specialty birds and sweeping Cascade Mountain vistas!

Joining Steve to lead this photography seminar, we are pleased to introduce you to award-winning wildlife photographer and author Kirsten Hines. Based in Miami, Florida, Kirsten relies on her biology background to capture intimate images of birds and other animals from around the world. Her writing and photography have appeared in numerous exhibitions and publications. Her six books on Florida's nature and history include three on south Florida's national parks and the bird-themed books *Attracting Birds to South Florida Gardens* and *Birds of Fairchild*. With 25 years of experience leading nature and photography trips and workshops, she assists you both in the field and with post-processing techniques to elevate the quality and aesthetics of your images.

The tour starts and ends in Redmond, Oregon, from which we drive a short distance to the small tourist town of Sisters. Throughout the trip we are surrounded by the region's impressive Cascade volcanoes and immersed in a broad diversity of habitats—from aspen groves to burned conifer forest—and we enjoy comfortable accommodations and northwestern cuisine.

Our daily itinerary takes us on a quest to photograph all of the region's 11 nesting woodpecker species. We wander through recently burned forests in search of Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers. We enjoy mature cottonwood and aspen galleries in search of three different sapsuckers. And, we visit older burns and mature mixed-conifer forest for Lewis's and Pileated Woodpeckers, respectively. Each day we encounter ponderosa pine forest, home to an abundance of White-headed Woodpeckers. Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers and Northern Flicker are widespread in the region. Additionally, each day includes quality time photographing woodpeckers at their nest sites, as well as reviewing photos and workshoping each afternoon or evening.

Tour Highlights

- Share the combined experience of two seasoned naturalists: Steve brings intimate knowledge and experience with woodpeckers and the region and Kirsten with world-class photography and an ecological approach to nature interpretation
- Enjoy a high-quality guided experience within a small group, ideally sized for photo instruction
- Observe and document breeding behavior for up to 11 different woodpeckers, representing half of the 22 North American species
- Explore a wide diversity of scenic habitats, with minimal driving and optimal field time
- Settle into one accommodation for the entire tour
- Enjoy quality northwestern cuisine, including many local beers and wines

Tour Details

6-Day / 5-Night Oregon Nature Photography Seminar
\$3,490 DBL / \$4,150 SGL with 6+ participants
\$3,990 DBL / \$4,650 SGL with 4 - 5 participants, from Redmond
Airport is Redmond Municipal (RDM)

Day-to-Day Itinerary

Wed., June 7 Arrive in Redmond, Oregon | Drive to Sisters

Please plan to arrive at the Redmond Municipal Airport (RDM) by 2:00 PM. We have a 30-minute drive to Sisters, with plenty of time to settle into our rooms before our first afternoon outing. We spend a couple of hours this afternoon discussing photographic techniques and putting them to use in the field in preparation for the next few days. We get to know each other tonight over our first dinner together in Sisters.

Accommodations at the Best Western Ponderosa Lodge, Sisters (D)

Thurs., June 8 – Sun., June 11 Photographing Woodpecker Wonderland!

Our explorations in Central Oregon's Woodpecker Wonderland take us into a broad array of habitats. In addition to woodpeckers, we also take some time to photograph other regional specialty birds as well as some of the mountain scenery surrounding us. Each day follows a similar routine:

- 6:00 AM – Hotel or bakery breakfast
- 6:30 AM – Head into the field
- 11:30 AM – Break for lunch and photo processing time
- 2:30 PM. – Photo review and discussion
- 3:30 PM – Back into the field
- 6:30 PM – Break before dinner
- 7:30 PM – Dinner
- 9:00 PM – Return to hotel

Depending on our success at finding certain species, we ought to have some flexibility in the schedule for our last day or two. Meals are a combination of favorite local restaurants and some picnic lunches.

Accommodations at the Best Western Ponderosa Lodge, Sisters (B,L,D)

Mon., June 12 Morning Birding | Departures from Redmond

On our last day in central Oregon, we enjoy one final morning of photography and some casual birding before heading to Redmond Municipal Airport. We plan to arrive back to the airport by 11:00 AM; please plan your flights out after 1:00 PM (B)

About Woodpecker Wonderland

Central Oregon's Woodpecker Wonderland hosts 11 breeding woodpeckers—half of all the extant woodpecker species in North America.

Woodpecker searching gives us the framework for our days, but the diverse habitats in the region exposes us to a correspondingly diverse array of breeding species. The eastern slope of the Cascades is characterized by stratified montane habitats that range from juniper woodlands to alpine tundra. Several factors contribute to this diversity:

- The annual rainfall gradient from the Cascades crest to the ponderosa pine forest ranges from 120 inches to 10 inches in as few as 10 miles; this is 'rain equivalent', as most precipitation falls as snow. This horizontal gradient results in narrow bands of habitat, each of which is adapted to a different amount of precipitation.
- Several significant streams and two rivers flow down the eastern slope of the range, supporting riparian

habitats characterized by aspen, willow, alder, and other streamside vegetation.

- 'Natural' fire regimes in the region vary by elevation and habitat type, with more frequent, less intense fires typical at lower elevation pine forests and high-intensity, infrequent fires at higher-elevation mixed-conifer forests.
- All fires burn in a mosaic of intensities, with patches of high-intensity, mixed intensity, and low intensity fire interspersed throughout a given fire perimeter.

These factors combine to support nearly 150 species of breeding birds. Most of the trip focuses on the region's abundant woodpeckers, but we often succumb to the distraction of other species. Lakes in the region host nesting Hooded and Common Mergansers, as well as Bufflehead and Barrow's Goldeneye. Osprey and Bald Eagle occur along the shorelines, with Spotted Sandpiper just arriving on breeding territories. We face excellent study opportunities for Empidonax flycatchers, with Hammond's, Gray, Dusky, Willow, and Pacific-slope all on territories by mid-May. We also stay alert for any of the eight local Corvid species, including Canada Jay, Pinyon Jay, and Clark's Nutcracker.

Each of the habitats we visit brings us a new array of songbirds. Cassin's Vireo, Cassin's Finch, and Pygmy Nuthatch are most common in ponderosa pine forest; mixed-conifer forest supports Hermit Thrush, Hermit Warbler, and Evening Grosbeak; and shrubby slopes are loaded with Fox Sparrow and Green-tailed Towhee, with plenty of Lazuli Bunting and Nashville Warbler. Across the region, we see Western Tanager and Black-headed Grosbeak. Red Crossbills are a regular distraction flying above the forest canopy, while Vaux's Swifts occasionally twitter overhead. Wherever we go, we can count on great birding and the amazing scenery of the Oregon Cascades.

Photography & Field Conditions

During this photography seminar, you have unprecedented opportunities to photograph an incredible array of nesting woodpeckers with both field and post-processing instruction to ensure you have the tools you need to create images you are proud of not only on this trip but into the future. There is ample time in the woods to practice a variety of techniques, including quality time at multiple nest sites to experiment with elements such as lighting, angle, and framing. Field instruction is combined with indoor discussions of workflow, compositional elements, post-processing techniques using Adobe's Lightroom, and hands-on practice through photo review to improve the overall artistry and effectiveness of your imagery.

We travel in two minivans, with seating for three participants each and ample room for each day's gear and clothing. Expect cool to cold mornings and warm to hot afternoons, though we reserve the hottest part of the day for indoor photo processing and review. We could experience inclement weather, so please be prepared for a wide array of conditions. Ground conditions may be dusty and we may spend considerable time standing on open sunny slopes.

A tripod is recommended for nest photography and a laptop for photo processing and review sessions. You may also wish to bring a USB flash drive for transferring your images to the computer that we use for reviewing each other's work on a projection screen. Please plan to bring a telephoto lens with focal length of at least 300 mm and a comfortable pack to carry your gear on short, moderate hikes through potentially uneven terrain. For those interested in capturing environmental portraits of the birds and/or landscapes, please also bring a mid-(24-105mm) to wide-angle lens (35mm or less). If you have any questions about what equipment to bring, please email Steve *and* Kirsten at steve@paradisebirding.com and kirsten@kirstenhines.com. Contacting both of us ensures that you get timely responses as well as the combined expertise of both guides.

Tour Details

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Their website will show 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.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the Journey is \$3,490 DBL / \$4,150 SGL with 6+ participants, \$3,990 DBL / \$4,650 SGL with 4 - 5 participants, based on double occupancy, per person. The tour price includes airport transfers, 5 nights' accommodations, all meals from dinner Day One through breakfast Day 6, professional guide services, park and preserve entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses.

Cost of the journey does not include airfare to and from your home to Redmond, Oregon or items of a personal nature, such as drinks from the bar, telephone, and local guide gratuities (at your discretion, we will give some guidelines).

Travel Information

Please plan to arrive at Redmond Municipal Airport (RDM) by 2:00 PM on June 7. Please plan departures after 1:00 PM on June 12.

Photo credits: Red-breasted x Red-naped hybrid Sapsucker, Steve Shunk; White-headed Woodpecker, Steve Wolfe; Lewis's Woodpecker, Steve Shunk; Williamson's Sapsucker, Steve Shunk; American Three-toed Woodpecker, NJ Stock.

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