

Oregon's Malheur NWR & Woodpecker Wonderland Species List | May 31 – June 9, 2024 With Naturalist Journeys



With Guide Steve Shunk with clients Bob, Jeff, Leslie, Maddy, Maggie, Nancy, and Robert

Summary:

Can the second time around be as good as the first? I'm here to tell you that it can! The second installment of our annual Oregon tour matched the earlier (May 20-29) trip in many ways, and it boasts its own highlights. Both trips came in at around 170 bird species—this one tallied 175—and both trips found all of the expected specialty birds. Each trip found at least three unexpected species—Wood Duck, Horned Grebe, and Black-throated Sparrow—and each one tallied 10 of the 11 woodpecker species breeding in Central Oregon's Woodpecker Wonderland. And both trips scoured two of the most diverse, most productive, and most scenic regions in the state. This report covers the wildlife highlights from trip II, and it baits the hook for those of you who have not yet had the pleasure of exploring these two magnificent corners of Oregon.

Bird highlights of Trip II included 19 different waterfowl, 12 raptors, and 12 flycatchers. We found all the specialty breeding birds at Malheur, including 10 Willow Flycatchers, 14 Yellow-breasted Chats, 18 Eastern Kingbirds, and nearly 70 Yellow Warblers. Other Malheur nesters included nearly 60 Yellow-headed Blackbirds and 14 Bobolinks, with several males of the latter performing their entertaining courtship flights. We found more than 600 White-faced Ibis and almost 400 Franklin's Gulls, plus a rare Least Flycatcher and a very rare leucistic Horned Grebe.

The timing of the trip also allowed us to observe many active nests. How many is "many"? How about 29 active nests, not including woodpeckers or the colonial Cliff Swallows. And the woodpeckers? We watched birds carrying food into, carrying fecal sacs out of, or otherwise making nest exchanges at 20 woodpecker nests, including three each of Red-breasted Sapsucker and Lewis's Woodpecker, with two White-headed nests and a ready-to-fledge Black-backed. Raptor nests made an especially good showing at Malheur; we found active nests of Bald and Golden Eagles, and Ferruginous, Swainson's, and Red-tailed Hawks.

Non-bird highlights included many pronghorn in the Malheur region, plus badger, fox, and muskrat. The marmots and cottontails in Frenchglen also provided some nice entertainment, and we enjoyed the parade of squirrels and chipmunks in the Cascades.

The link below will get you to the eBird trip report for the entire tour. Once you have pulled up the report, you will first see the list of species we encountered, in taxonomic order. Clicking on any species will take you to the eBird reference page for that bird. Clicking the green icons to the right will show you the different checklists from the sites where each species was encountered, and these listings link to the checklists themselves. Back on the main page, you can access the complete set of checklists from the tour by clicking the blue box at the top. Enjoy perusing through our 175 bird species. We certainly enjoyed finding them!

MAMMALS & OTHER NOTABLE FAUNA:

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* — This was the first fox I have seen in Oregon in nearly 27 years. It was quite a thrill to see this beauty sauntering across a field along the highway at Malheur.

American Badger *Taxidea taxus* — A curious badger stared at us from just off the highway at Malheur.

Western Gray Squirrel *Sciurus griseus* — Just a couple observed in ponderosa pine forest

Douglas's Squirrel *Tamiasciurus douglasii* — Heard more than seen

Yellow-bellied Marmot *Marmota flaviventris* — Best looks were at the Blitzen bridge near Page Springs

Belding's Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus beldingi* — East of Cascades, including dozens at Malheur

Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus lateralis* — Common in the Cascades

Yellow-pine Chipmunk *Neotamias amoenus* — Also fairly common in the Cascades

Least Chipmunk *Neotamias minimus* — One at Brothers rest area and a few at Malheur HQ

Western Meadow Vole *Microtus drummondii* — We saw many voles at Malheur, and they may have represented multiple species, but this one is the most common at the refuge.

Black-tailed jackrabbit *Lepus californicus* — We saw a couple of jackrabbits at Malheur.

Mountain Cottontail *Sylvilagus nuttallii* — Several seen at Malheur

Mule Deer *Odocoileus hermionus* — Malheur and Sisters area

Pronghorn *Antilocapra americana* — Lots seen around Malheur

REPTILES:

Western Fence Lizard *Sceloporus occidentalis* — One very dark individual encountered at Malheur

Nevada Side-blotched Lizard *Uta stansburiana nevadensis* — We had a great look at this lizard at Malheur's Buena Vista overlook.

Common Garter Snake *Thamnophis sirtalis* — One seen in the trail next to Malheur's Benson Pond.