Oregon's Malheur NWR & Woodpecker Wonderland

Trip Report | May 18-27, 2026 with Naturalist Journeys

By Dave Mehlman

Guided by Steve Shunk and Dave Mehlman

Our group included Chris, Donna, Gabrielle, George, Mary, Pat, Peggy, Sharon and Tim

Monday, May 18 – Arrivals in Redmond | Travel to Hines

About half the group had arrived the day before and were picked up by Steve at the Comfort Inn close to the Redmond Airport. The other half arrived this morning and were picked up by Dave at the airport; the latter group joined the other half at the Comfort Suites, we completed our packing (masterfully done, if I do say so myself), and we then headed to nearby Rigoberto's Tacos for a quick lunch, it being that time of day. Our appetites temporarily sated, we then hit the highway, making our way to the Hines/Burns metro area.

We stopped at the Brothers Oasis Rest Area for a break and a bit of birding. Although a stiff breeze had popped up, we had nice views of several Horned Larks, Brewer's Blackbirds, a Brewer's Sparrow, and a singing Vesper Sparrow among the crowds of Belding's Ground Squirrels and Least Chipmunks present. Most of these were attracted by seed that had been tossed on the ground near some trees.

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We then continued to the east, making one more quick stop at the Sage Hen Hill Rest Area. En-route, some astute observers noted a Bald Eagle and a Ferruginous Hawk in the agricultural fields along the highway. While most used the restrooms, we admired a Say's Phoebe perched in its nest on a light over the women's restroom door. A loop walk around the parking area produced more Vesper and Brewer's Sparrows, Black-billed Magpie, several gorgeous Mountain Bluebirds, and a soaring Red-tailed Hawk. After this, we completed our drive and arrived at the Best Western Rory & Ryan Inn in Hines where we checked in and had a bit of time to unpack. We then met up and went to the very nice Pine Room for dinner, which included introductions and a short introduction to the tour. After dinner, we returned to the hotel to get some rest before our eastern Oregon adventure would begin the following day.

Tuesday, May 19 – Silvies River Floodplain | Malheur National Wildlife Refuge: Headquarters and The Narrows

We began the day with breakfast at the Best Western in Hines, then loaded aboard the vehicles for a morning of birding. Our first destination was a spin around the Foley Loop to explore the Silvies River floodplain north of Burns as it comes out of the Blue Mountains. On our way, a stationary Wilson's Snipe standing on a fence post provided a super start to the day. After that, a beautiful morning greeted us along with birds and the morning chorus: Northern Yellow Warbler, Bullock's Oriole, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Western Warbling Vireo were all at it. As we watched, some Lazuli Buntings chimed in from the hillside nearby and we were able to get on them with some playback assistance. Our luck worked again with a Rock Wren, which perched cooperatively on the rocky hillside. Meanwhile, Cliff and Bank Swallows, Red-tailed Hawk, Turkey Vulture, and Black-billed Magpie flew by to entertain us further. At the end of our stay, a Townsend's Warbler dropped in to add to the fun. About mid-morning, we returned to our hotel for a break, adding Western Meadowlark to our growing list.

After the quick break, we got in the vehicles again to explore the Silvies floodplain south of town, an area with vast expanses of marsh and wetland. Although water levels were lower than usual, the occasional ponds along our route had plenty of birds, with our team observing many Yellow-headed Blackbird, White-faced Ibis, Wilson's Phalarope, Gadwall, Cinnamon Teal, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, and a few Willets. As we stood on the road scoping out the scene, a Sora emerged from the vegetation at very close range to put on a very memorable show for us. As the morning rapidly passed, we headed back to town via the Hotchkiss Lane sewage ponds for a quick scan. A large group of Franklin's Gulls was here, swimming in the water and flying in the air, along with more

Wilson's Phalaropes, Northern Shoveler, a few late Blue-winged Teal, and some Gadwall. Sandhill Cranes wandered around a nearby field and some California Quail ran by to amuse us. The morning over, we then headed into Burns for lunch at Bella Java, which Steve had ordered in advance for us.

The afternoon saw us heading south to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge headquarters to begin our exploration of this legendary refuge. We stopped first at the fire tower on a bluff overlooking the headquarters to get the broad perspective of the refuge and the Malheur Lake basin. The vast expanse of water and wetlands and the surrounding hills made a profound impact on us. As we looked closer, Steve pointed out the enormous colony of American White Pelicans visible in the distance as Great Blue Herons constantly flew by, coming and going from a nearby rookery. Some keen spotters in the group saw a Northern Harrier in the distance along with Common Ravens and Turkey Vultures. We then drove down to the headquarters itself, situated in a large grove of old cottonwoods and other trees—one of the most famous migrant trips in eastern Oregon. Diligent searching among the trees, shrubs, and at the bird feeders produced Black-chinned Hummingbird, Cassin's Vireo, Cedar Waxwing, Townsend's and Wilson's Warblers, Western Wood-Pewee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, several California Quail, and a pair of Gopher Snakes. The latter were probably more interested in the abundant Belding's Ground Squirrels around, but we enjoyed the sighting. The surrounding marshes had Snowy and Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Forster's Tern, and Cinnamon Teal and a Ring-necked Pheasant called from the impoundment roads. Many in the group also took the chance to see what the Friends store had on offer before the hour grew late and we had to head back into town.

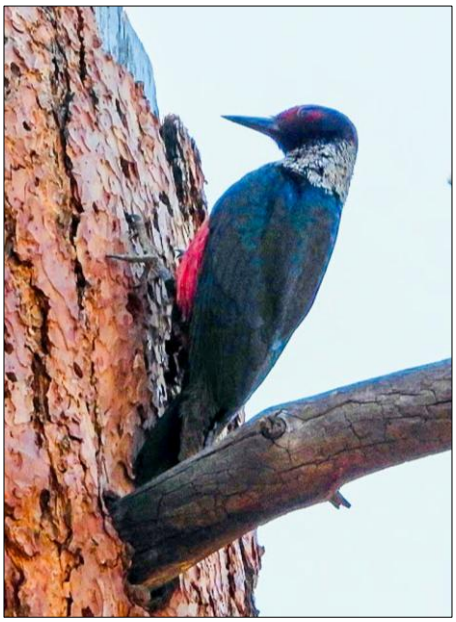
However, we had a bit of time for a final stop on our way back north at The Narrows, the point in the road where water from Malheur Lake on the east flows into Mud Lake on the west. This area had many birds, including the best views of Clark's and Western Grebes with chicks, many of which were hitching rides on their parents' backs! Fortunately, many of the grebes were very close so the distinguishing features between these two similar species were easily visible. Also around were a

Marsh Wren, Canvasbacks, Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks, Eared and Pied-billed Grebes, Bufflehead, and a few Double-crested Cormorants. Although our time here was brief, it was quite productive, so everyone was satisfied as we continued north back to town. After a brief break at the Best Western we headed to El Toreo in Burns for our dinner.

Wednesday, May 20 – Malheur National Wildlife Reguge: South Harney Road and Buena Vista | Frenchglen | Page Springs Campground

We started with breakfast at the Best Western followed by packing the vehicles for our move to Frenchglen later in the day. After a quick stop at the Safeway for supplies, we headed south to traverse the Malheur NWR, passing a nicely perched Ferruginous Hawk on a telephone pole along the way. Our first birding stop was in sagebrush habitat, a type which we had not previously visited before. Driving slowly along a dirt road alongside some cliffs, we had a wonderful experience with a pair of Burrowing Owls on the ground and on fenceposts—very pleasing to the photographers in the group. Continuing, we stopped at a spot with decent sagebrush on either side and began to investigate what might be around. Western Meadowlarks sang all around us and Willets called from off in the distance. Constant Loggerhead Shrike traffic in and out of a nearby shrub revealed the presence of a nest and, with the help of some playback, a few Sagebrush Sparrows popped up for good views as they perched. Brewer's Sparrows showed up, too, mostly off in the distance, as did an unexpected Ash-throated Flycatcher. As we finished and turned the cars around, we made one more stop near the cliffs and scoped a magnificent Golden Eagle near some old nests, apparently unoccupied this year. Eventually, the eagle got tired of the attention and slowly flew and soared off, providing super views of this top-line predator.

Our next stop on the way south was the Buena Vista Overlook and Ponds where we stopped to use the bathroom. Steve and Dave then drove up to the overlook on a bluff while most of the group hiked to the top, finding a few Rock Wrens along the way. The overlook provided some great viewing over the vast expanse of ponds and wetlands, with a few Canvasbacks and Redheads swimming about, accompanied by the ubiquitous White-faced Ibis, Pied-billed Grebe, and American Coots. Cliff and Barn Swallows cruised past and a few observers noted a Sandhill Crane pair with a small colt in



a far-off field. Driving down from the overlook, we then took a swing around the ponds, finding our first Black Terns of the tour, along with Cinnamon Teal, Northern Harrier, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and several Soras (both heard and seen). Reaching the end of the pond drive at the paved highway, we then continued south to the Frenchglen Hotel where we enjoyed a tasty lunch prepared to order.

After lunch, we drove south to the road up Steens Mountain, which was still gated for the winter season. Parking at the gate, we began a slow walk along the Blitzen River into the Page Springs Campground, birding along the way. A Yellow-bellied Marmot welcomed us to the neighborhood, as did a multitude of singing Northern Yellow Warblers and Song Sparrows. We soon dug up Yellow-breasted Chat, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern and Western Kingbird, Western Wood-Pewee, and a few Gadwall and Cinnamon Teal in the creek. The campground itself was pretty birdy, with a Canyon Wren singing away on the cliffs, American Goldfinch, Lazuli Bunting, Black-billed Magpie, California Quail, a fly-by Osprey, and a pair of Black-chinned Hummingbirds at the campground host's feeders. After finishing this short walk, we drove a short way to the back of the campground at the Blitzen River Trailhead to try our luck there. We were able to get nice looks at an Ash-throated Flycatcher in the junipers and a Black-throated Gray Warbler was tracked down as it showed off its spiffy plumage. This outing brought our day to its conclusion, so we returned to the Frenchglen Hotel, got everyone into their assigned rooms, then met for an excellent home-style dinner at the hotel with a review of the checklist beforehand. Then, we were off to our rooms for some free time and to get ready for the following day.

Thursday, May 21 – Frenchglen | Malheur National Wildlife Refuge: Krumbo Reservoir, Benson Pond and Central Patrol Road

Although several in the group were up early to check out the early morning activity around "downtown" Frenchglen, our day formally started with breakfast at the hotel. After polishing off our food, we loaded up in the vehicles and headed out for the morning, our first destination being the refuge's Krumbo Reservoir. After arriving at the parking lot, we took a short walk on a low mesa overlooking both the parking lot and the reservoir. Despite the beautiful weather, the reservoir had very few birds on it, perhaps due to a steady breeze. However, with our scopes, we picked out several

Common Mergansers near the far end of the pool, along with some Eared Grebes, Gadwall, Lesser Scaup, and Bufflehead. Much to our surprise, a small wetland near the parking lot had a Virginia Rail, which some in the group were able to spot as it stalked the remote speaker playing sounds of its arch rival.

We headed back toward the highway and turned south on the Central Patrol Road to visit the Benson Pond part of the refuge. This area consists of a very large wetland surrounded to the north and northwest by a berm with many willows, cottonwoods, and an old homestead. The wetlands had a nice mix of "regular" Malheur wetland birds, including Ring-billed Gull, Pied-billed Grebe, Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Cinnamon Teal, and a few calling Virginia Rails. The large trees alongside had Tree and Violet-green Swallow, the usual abundance of Northern Yellow Warbler, and some Eurasian Starlings. When we walked back into the old homestead site, several sharp-eyed observers spotted a Great Horned Owl lurking in a tree, presumably close to a nest with chicks. We also spotted a perching Hammond's Flycatcher, presumably migrating through, in the trees, and Common Raven and Swainson's Hawk soaring overhead in the blue sky. This lovely walk concluded our morning's activities, so we returned to the hotel for lunch and a short break.

In the afternoon, we returned to the Central Patrol Road from the south end, starting at the P Ranch and working our way north. As we drove, we had the windows down watching and listening and periodically got out to scope out the situation. A major highlight were several Bobolinks in the fields along the road, with the males periodically erupting into their display flights while making their loud songs—always a treat to see, especially this far west in Oregon! Also present were Savannah Sparrows, a few Northern Rough-winged Swallows, and a Trumpeter Swan. The swan, though by itself, was undoubtedly near a nest and had a green neck collar. Continuing north, we stopped at Cottonwood Pond, which had Black-necked Stilts, Wilson's Phalaropes, Willets and the usual common Malheur waterfowl (Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Cinnamon Teal). Sandhill Cranes and Ring-necked Pheasants sounded off as we watched to help build the list. We then continued north to return to Frenchglen via the paved highway, noting a Trumpeter Swan in Benson Pond which had not been there in the morning.

We ended our birding day with a short walk around Frenchglen. The Blue-gray Gnatcatchers really put on a show behind the Drover's Inn, making quite a racket (a squeaky racket!) and many common juniper species turned up such as Ash-throated Flycatcher and Chipping Sparrow, while Bullock's Orioles and Western Tanagers sang from the cottonwoods in town. Much to our great luck, while we watched the gnatcatchers, a lovely Black-throated Gray Warbler dropped in for close views. Finishing our walk, we returned to the hotel for our checklist and a final, family-style dinner at this lovely place.

Friday, May 22 – Frenchglen | Barnes Springs Trail | Diamond Craters | French Round Barn | Shevlin Park

This morning, regretfully the last at the delightful Frenchglen Hotel, started with an optional early birdwalk to the Barnes Springs Trail, very close to the hotel. We drove to the trailhead and then walked along the hillside to the springs, our primary target for the morning being Chukar. Regretfully, the closest we came to Chukar were calls at a great distance, though the habitat looked good and the playback very appealing (to the humans!). We consoled ourselves with views of Green-tailed Towhee, Western Meadowlark, Lazuli Bunting, Brewer's Blackbirds, and a Northern Harrier. After the walk, we returned to the hotel for breakfast and final packing of our gear into the vehicles.

We then headed north, back to Burns, with our first stop at the Diamond Craters Outstanding Natural Area, an area on Bureau of Land Management land adjacent to the refuge. As the publicity material says, Diamond Craters has the "best and most diverse basaltic volcanic features in the United States … within a small and accessible area." Though our time here was short, we parked by the Big Bomb Crater to admire the view over this crater and the vast landscape to the south, including the still snowy Steens Mountain. Although a geological wonderland, we found some birds here, too, including Lark Sparrow, Rock and Canyon Wren (the latter's songs echoing in the crater), Brewer's Sparrow, American Kestrel, and Swainson's Hawk. After leaving here, our next stop was the Pete French Round Barn, a unique structure remaining from the cattle baron days of Pete French. The highlight of the barn, aside from its unique architecture, was the family of Great Horned Owls in the center support structure, including two adults and two chicks—photo op! A small wetland next to the barn had American Avocet, Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, and Northern Shoveler and the grasslands around the barn supported Western Meadowlarks, Cliff Swallows, Willet, and Say's Phoebe.

Leaving here, we made a quick stop at the Round Barn Visitor Center to use the facilities and admire the rocks for sale. Alert observers noted a surprising number of migrants in the few trees around the Center, including Northern Yellow, Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, and MacGillivray's Warbler, Bullock's Oriole, and a Black-chinned Hummingbird—it pays to check every tree in the desert at this time of year! We then finished the morning by driving into Burns along "raptor alley" through New Princeton and Crane. This area has extensive irrigated agriculture and is a raptor magnet, though we found mostly Red-tailed Hawks and Bald Eagles among the perching and flying raptors. Arriving in Burns, we returned to Bella Java for another tasty lunch there.

After lunch, we embarked on the long drive to Bend, stopping once more at the Brothers Oasis Rest Area. The Horned Larks, House Sparrows, starlings, and Brewer's Blackbirds were still present, but not much else, so we continued to the lovely Shevlin Park on the west side of Bend for our first Cascades birding opportunity. Steve and Dave had scouted this park earlier, so the woodpeckers appeared right on cue, most with known nest cavities. These included Red-breasted Sapsucker, and Lewis's, Hairy, and Downy Woodpecker. All these were complemented with Pygmy Nuthatch (also nesting), Chipping Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Wilson's Warbler. Finishing our birding here, we headed into Bend for dinner at the Deschutes Brewery Taproom and then drove to Sisters, where we checked into the Best Western Ponderosa Lodge for the next five nights.

Saturday, May 23 – Sisters | Flat Fire | Calliope Crossing | Road 1012 Aspen Project

Our first challenge of the day was breakfast, since the hotel moved the breakfast room to a different location and gave us conflicting start times—the horror! We then got into our vehicles and started off on our first day in the Cascades. We first went to the Flat Fire burn scar just north of Sisters. Steve and Dave had scouted this location before, so we set off on a meandering walk through the burned area, giving us an opportunity to talk about the role of fire in this ecosystem and to see first-hand the aftereffects of a large wildfire. Birds were present, as expected, including Chipping Sparrows, Gray Flycatcher, Lesser Goldfinch, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Bluebird, and Cassin's Finch. But, woodpeckers were what we were after, and we found them! Numerous Hairy Woodpeckers were about along with a few Northern Flickers. However, the star of the show was our first Black-backed Woodpecker which we found at the previously located nest cavity. As we watched, the bird in the nest hole occasionally stuck its head out and, finally, the mate appeared for a rapid nest exchange.

Considering our trip here a success, we returned briefly to the hotel for a bathroom break and then went to the lovely Calliope Crossing north of town for the rest of the morning. This site, a well-known birding area near Sisters, has a small creek surrounded by Ponderosa Pine forest with many young aspens. This diversity led to a great bird list. Perhaps the star was a Calliope Hummingbird for which the site was named. Here, the males like to perch on phone wires and in the tops of dead willows to guard their domain. Also present were Fox Sparrow (presumably of the Thick-billed form), Tree Swallow, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Tanager, Hammond's Flycatcher, and numerous Northern House Wrens. Altogether, we found 35 species during the outing, one of the larger single bird lists of the tour. However, very few sapsuckers were around, probably due to the loss of large aspen trees. When we were done here, we returned to Sisters for a nice lunch at the Ski Inn Taphouse.

After lunch, we took a break at the hotel, then went into the Deschutes National Forest for an afternoon birding trip at an aspen restoration project in the middle of the pine forest. We walked around the fenced restoration area constantly scanning and listening for birds. Probably the highlight here was a nicely seen White-headed Woodpecker, the "most wanted" woodpecker species of the tour for most. Another great bird was Williamson's Sapsucker, which responded to playback at the edge of the aspens to provide really nice views. Other things found represented the "usual suspects" in this area: Fox Sparrow, Mountain Chickadee, Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco, Hammond's and Dusky Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, and a Cassin's Vireo. At the end of the afternoon, we returned to town for a short break, dinner at Frankie's, and our daily checklist review in the breakfast room.

Sunday, May 24 – Sisters | Lost Lake Campground | Santiam Pass: Big Lake | Suttle Lake | Indian Ford Campground | Upper Indian Ford Creek

Starting once again with the breakfast buffet at the Best Western, we loaded up for another day exploring the Cascades. Today, we headed west over Santiam Pass to start off at Lost Lake Campground on the Willamette National Forest. This lake is west of the divide and in another county, so it provided an easily accessible site for us to try to find some of the Cascade west side species which are harder to find on the east side. Parking in the campground, we started off on a beautiful morning by walking out to the lakeshore. Due to the dry winter, the lake was very reduced so we could walk quite a ways out. As we walked, the birds started to announce themselves, with numerous Wilson's Snipe calling and performing their display flights, Spotted Sandpipers defending territories on the shoreline, Tree Swallow, Western Tanager, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warber,

and Hammond's Flycatcher all chiming in. The lake held mostly Canada Geese, though at least one female Hooded Merganser was present. An Osprey and a Bald Eagle perched in a tree and alert observers spotted a Vaux's Swift skimming the surface for water. As the lake was so low, we were able to get quite close to the large underwater holes in the lake bed which allow the lake to drain at very low water; a phenomenon which gives this lake its name.

Returning to the vehicles for snacks, we then spent a bit of time walking the campground for forest birds. A male Golden-crowned Kinglet got VERY excited in response to playback, showing off its large and bright crown for all. A Hermit Warbler was called in for great views and close enough to determine that it was not a HETO (Hermit/Townsend's Warbler hybrid). Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Siskins joined the fray and a Pileated Woodpecker sounded off in the distance—what a great morning! Finishing here, we started back to the east and drove to very near Santiam Pass itself to bird the area near Big Lake. This area, primarily lodgepole and mixed-conifer forest which had burned years ago, was full of Memorial Day weekend campers. However, we walked slowly along the roads, finding Hairy Woodpecker, Common Raven, and Steller's Jay. Acting on instinct, Steve played recordings of American Three-toed Woodpecker and, much to our delight, one responded with its characteristic knock! As we continued to play, first one, then another came in to perch in the trees near us before flying off into the vastness of the old burn. Definitely a highlight, we were very lucky to catch this species, one that is often missed on this tour.

Our next stop was the Suttle Lake Lodge, where we got lunch sandwiches at the Boathouse and ate at the nearby picnic tables. During lunch and a short walk around the lodge and lake afterward, we found Fox and Song Sparrow, another Hooded Merganser, and a Purple Finch. Alas, there were no dippers in the lake outflow! Following this walk, we started back down to Sisters and stopped at Indian Ford Campground for a short walk. The full cast of "usual suspects" was present, though we saw little action at a sapsucker nest that Steve and Dave had found while scouting. After our walk here, we drove a short distance across the road to the Upper Indian Ford Creek trailhead and walked through the woods to the lovely Glaze Meadow. Again, activity was low, perhaps due to the heat, but we were able scare up a Green-tailed Towhee, along with Pygmy, Red-breasted, and White-breasted Nuthatch, Spotted Towhee, Mountain Chickadee, and Western Wood-Pewee. We then returned to the Best Western for a break, reconvened for our daily checklist, and then went to Three Creeks Brewery in town for dinner on their porch.

Monday, May 25 – Sisters | Trout Creek Hillside | Whispering Pine Campground | Scott Pass Road | Trout Creek Swamp | Cold Springs Campground

We started with another Best Western breakfast and then headed to Oliver Lemon's, where everyone was turned loose to find materials for a picnic lunch. After completing this mission, we headed into the mountains southwest of Sisters. Our first birding stop was along a road running along Trout Creek where Mountain Quail had been reported recently, though only calling. Stopping at a couple of roadside pullouts, we monitored the bird activity, finding Nashville Warbler (quite common here), Fox Sparrow, Steller's Jay, Western Warbling Vireo, and a few other species, but no signs of the quail. Next, we visited the Whispering Pines Horse Campground, which fortunately had very few people or horses. A walk in and around the campground produced a Red-breasted Sapsucker feeding on the ground, Common Raven (apparently looking for handouts), Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Green-tailed Towhee, and (lucky us!) a calling Mountain Quail in the distance.

We then made our way on forest roads to the Scott Pass Trailhead, stopping occasionally to see what birds were about in the area, which had been part of the massive Milli Fire in 2017. Most of the birds were those we had previously encountered, though we did hear an Olive-sided Flycatcher. We ended our journey up at the Scott Pass Trailhead itself with its magnificent view of North Sister, although the surrounding area was in process of recovery from the fire. We then headed back down to the campground where we parked and went on a trail hike to the Trout Creek Swamp. This hike always produces a nice bird list and this year was no exception, with the group adding Western Flycatcher to our list and finding MacGillivray's, Nashville, and Yellow-rumped Warbler, Brown Creeper, Steller's Jay, and Hairy Woodpecker. Returning from our walk, we loaded up and returned to the highway and then stopped at Cold Spring Campground for our picnic lunch and an extended walk. Appetites sated, we soon satisfied our eyes during the walk, getting superlative views of a male Purple Finch, a

pair of Williamson's Sapsuckers, Pygmy and White-breasted Nuthatch, Fox Sparow, and Western Tanager. The Bush Penstemons also were in full bloom along a lava flow bordering the site. On our way back to the hotel, we made one final stop at a prescribed burn unit along forest road 1012, but turned up very little other than a Green-tailed Towhee and Common Raven. We then returned to the Best Western for a short break, our daily bird checklist, and then a nice dinner at the Sisters Saloon in town.

Tuesday, May 26 – Sisters | Head of Jack Creek | Lake Creek Lodge | Camp Sherman | Wizard Falls Fish Hatchery | Candle Creek Road

Once again navigating the breakfast buffet at the Best Western, we then loaded up and headed out for our last full day in the field in the Cascades, this time concentrating on visiting sites in the lovely Metolius River valley to the northwest of Sisters. On our way to our first birding destination, the Head of Jack Creek Trailhead, we paused at a small bridge over Jack Creek and were delighted to find an American Dipper in the stream, foraging and frolicking in the water, as is their wont. Always great to start the day with a highlight bird! After that, we soon arrived at the trailhead and set off on a several hours walk through the surrounding forest to the head of the creek, a large spring. This was a fine and memorable birding morning, with many great sightings. Perhaps the best was a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers which came in to a call and perched nearby for us on several snags for great views and photographs. The lord of the forest had arrived! Other birds found on the walk included several Canada Jays (the only ones of the tour), Cassin's Vireo and Finch, Brown Creeper (coming and going from a nest cavity in a large dead Ponderosa Pine), Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Nashville Warbler. Reaching the spring, we admired the incredible beauty of this spot and some in the group played a game of "stuff the tree cavity."

After finishing our walk, we drove to the Lake Creek Lodge, a lovely facility on the banks of the creek with the same name (this creek is the outflow from Suttle Lake). Steve and Dave broke down and treated everyone to a coffee and then we all went for a loop walk on the grounds of the Lodge, finding White-crowned and Song Sparrow, Tree Swallow, Brewer's Blackbird, Brown-headed

Cowbird, Western Warbling Vireo, and a Red-breasted Sapsucker at its nest cavity in an aspen. Departing here, we went to the Camp Sherman Store and turned everyone loose for lunch, which we ate at the outside picnic tables. After lunch, most in the group wandered over to the nearby Metolius River in hopes of spotting more dippers, which unfortunately appeared to be elsewhere. However, our consolation prize was a Red-breasted Sapsucker coming and going to feed from sap wells it had constructed in a willow clump right next to the picnic tables. After lunch, the group went to a nearby prescribed burn site which Steve and Dave had scouted previously in search of woodpecker nests. For whatever reason, the White-headed Woodpecker which had a nest in a tall, dead Ponderosa Pine was not present, but we found a Northern Flicker nesting in the same tree. We also spent a lot of quality time at a Black-backed Woodpecker nest which we had previously found, watching the male and female of the pair coming and going regularly to the cavity, from which chick noises could be heard whenever the parents landed on the tree. Another super photo opportunity with woodpeckers! Other species present included Cassin's Finch, Mountain Chickadee, Hammond's Flycatcher, Brown Creeper, and, of course, Hairy Woodpecker.

We concluded the afternoon with two stops. We visited the Wizard Falls Fish Hatchery in hopes of finding Belted Kingfisher. Though we dipped on that one, a surprising male Barrow's Goldeneye was floating in the large fish pool. The clear water allowed us the unique sight of seeing it swim underwater with its feet as it foraged on the bottom of the pond. As we stood watching, we noticed swifts flying among the numerous Violet-green Swallows present. Careful watching revealed several White-throated Swifts in the mix along with at least one Vaux's. While here, we also walked over to the bridge across the Metolius River and found American Dippers coming and going, obviously having a nest somewhere under the bridge. We then drove to our final stop of the day on Candle Creek Road on the way to the Jefferson Lake Trailhead. This was part of another large burn in the past with snags galore and great views of Mt. Jefferson. Although cloudy, we found a few Lewis's Woodpeckers

here, along with Fox and Song Sparrow, Red-tailed Hawk, and an active Osprey nest (although there is no apparent nearby water, the birds forage in Lake Billy Chinook a short distance away). As our day ended, we made our way back to Camp Sherman where we enjoyed a lovely farewell dinner at Hola! with its interesting mix of Mexican and Peruvian cuisine.

Wednesday, May 27 – Sisters Ponderosa Pines | Calliope Crossing | Camp Polk Meadow Preserve | Departures from Redmond

Our last morning of the tour started with breakfast at the Best Western, as usual. After this, some in the group took the morning off while others ventured out on a final birding outing, since flights were in the afternoon and we had a short drive to the Redmond Airport from Sisters. We headed out in one vehicle with our first stop an attempt to find the elusive Pinyon Jays known to be in the Sisters area. Steve followed his instincts and we drove on some forest roads west of town, stopping at a few spots. Finally, at one spot, he played some Pinyon Jay calls and, much to our surprise, a Pinyon Jay answered and came in for a brief investigation! This was a wanted bird by some in the group and we were very happy to be able to find one. Other species present included Gray Flycatcher, Steller's Jay, Chipping Sparrow, and Green-tailed Towhee. After this twitch, we went back to Calliope Crossing for one more shot at this beautiful area. Though we technically did not find anything "new," an enjoyable time was spent here as we re-found the Calliope Hummingbird, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Common Yellowthroat, and the other usual suspects.

After the quick visit to Calliope, we went to the nearby Camp Polk Meadow Preserve, since the group had not been there yet. However, not too much was present other than the normal Pygmy Nuthatch, Hairy Woodpecker, and Northern House Wren. At this point, the morning was up, so we returned to the hotel for final packing. We then somehow squeezed everything back into the vehicles and headed to Redmond airport. At the airport, we said our good-byes and departed for various parts, with memories of a fabulous tour in our minds.

Trip Report Photos *–* ***Page 1:*** *Malheur Refuge sign (Dave), Yellow-headed Blackbird (Mary)* ***Page 2:*** *Mountain Bluebird (Mary), Sunny day roadside birding (Dave)* ***Page 3:*** *Buena Vista overlook in Malheur NWR (Dave)* ***Page 4:*** *Cinnamon Teal (Dave), Frenchglen Hotel (Dave)* ***Page 5:*** *Red-breasted Sapsucker (Mary), Lewis's Woodpecker (Mary), Williamson's Sapsucker (Mary)* ***Page 6:*** *Diamond Craters explorers (Dave), Great Horned Owl (Mary)* ***Page 7:*** *Three Sisters view (Dave), Lark Sparrow (Mary)* ***Page 8:*** *White-headed Woodpecker (Mary), Pileated Woodpecker (Dave), Black-backed Woodpecker (Dave)* ***Page 9:*** *"How deep is it?" at Lost Lake hole (Dave), American Dipper (Mary)* ***Page 10:*** *Black-backed Woodpecker at nest (Dave), Woodpecker watchers (Dave)* ***Page 11:*** *Metolius River (Dave)* ***Page 12:*** *Tree cavity crowd (Mary), Barrow's Goldeneye (Dave)* ***Page 13:*** *Bridge birders (Dave)*