



Professional Nature Presentations by Stephen Shunk

Naturalist, Author, Photographer, Field Biologist

“The best presentation we have had in 25 years.”

Bill Clark, Audubon Society of Missouri Historian

Thank you for considering one of my presentations for your event or organization. My goal is to share my knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm at whatever level is appropriate for your audience. I thoroughly enjoy talking about birds, birding, and nature, and regardless of the topic you choose, I promise you an entertaining and memorable program.

All of the presentations below include discussions of relevant conservation issues, as well as natural history of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Regional presentations also comprise a broad range of representative flora and fauna, including wildflowers, mammals, and other treasures from each region. Custom presentations can be designed for just about any group. For example, I have led bird photography seminars and given presentations to flyfishing clubs and children’s home-school groups.

More-detailed descriptions of each program are available upon request, and a brief biographical sketch is included on the last page of these summaries. Honoraria and travel expenses are requested on a sliding scale, depending on the budget of the sponsoring organization. Field seminars can be given in conjunction with any presentation to help cover expenses. Please see the listing at the end of this packet for a summary of events I have attended. For additional information or to book a presentation, please contact me at 541-408-1753, or email steve@paradisebirding.com.

I look forward to hearing from you!

GENERAL BIRDING & NATURE

For keynote appearances, I can craft a broad range of special presentations. Whether I am speaking at your bird festival or your annual meeting, I can promise attendees an evening of wonderful memories. The two summaries below describe my most recent presentations, but I can customize a topic like this for your organization’s special event.

The Magic of Birding — 13th Annual Central Valley (CA) Birding Symposium, November 2009

Picture yourself walking downtown on a busy spring afternoon. It’s starting to get hot and you are ready for the work day to end. Suddenly, you hear a loud twittering coming from above the urban jungle, and you look up to see a swirling flock of White-throated Swifts, just passing through en route to their summer breeding grounds. If only for an instant, your day and your life are transformed.

Birding offers us a wonderful opportunity to escape from our over-civilized lives. Whether we are working or shopping, walking or driving, birds are there, somewhere, with the magical ability to help us reconnect with wild Nature. And wherever we find birds, we can enter the magical world of birding.

Join Oregon naturalist and author Stephen Shunk as he shares stories of discovery in his life as a professional birder. He will tell of unexpected avian encounters, and he will discuss the interpretation of bird “signs” we encounter in our daily routines. Steve will introduce birds in urban settings and backyard habitats, and he will discuss practical ways to experience Nature by observing birds in our everyday lives.

Birding Under the Veil of Winter — *11th Annual Snow Goose Festival; Chico, CA, January 2010*

As the snow falls in the mountains and the darkness of winter takes hold, the outside world seems to sleep. But the rising sun of each winter day signals the start of the brief daily feeding period for all our wintering birds. Many species, like the Nuttall's Woodpecker and Spotted Towhee, reside permanently in the region, adapting to winter with simple changes in behavior. Other birds, such as the Snow Goose and Rough-legged Hawk, travel thousands of miles to enjoy our relatively mild winters, while their arctic breeding grounds are shrouded in ice.

Join Oregon naturalist and author Stephen Shunk as he shares stories of winter discovery in his life as a professional birder. Steve will tell of the invasions of winter finches and wood-boring woodpeckers. He will tell of waves of Bohemian Waxwings and "white" geese, and he will discuss the seasonal movements of northern raptors and waterbirds. You will gain a new appreciation for our wintering avian visitors as Steve shares his favorite winter birding experiences from Northern California and beyond.

Audubon to Internet: History of Birding — *Grand Isle Migratory Bird Fest; Grand Isle, LA, Apr 2010*

The advent of ornithology in North America came with the arrival of the first explorers and settlers to the New World. Binoculars did not exist then, and the primary tool of the ornithologist was the gun. In order to study the birds, they had to be collected. Once collected they could be drawn and dissected to give these early naturalists a window into a different kind of "new world." Today, we can diagnose not only the species, but the age and sex of many birds at great distances through our nitrogen-filled spotting scopes. Hi-tech radar equipment allows us to follow the migration of birds across the continent, and advanced tracking devices give us a map of an individual bird's wanderings over thousands of miles. We even have listening devices that can help us identify bird songs.

Join Oregon naturalist and author Stephen Shunk as he shares stories of birding discovery from the times of John James Audubon to the modern days of the *Sibley Guide to Birds*. Steve will discuss the transition from shooting to viewing and the evolution of birding optics. He will share the contributions of ornithological study over the last two centuries and its significance to modern bird conservation. Then, join Steve in speculating what birding will be like in the next century to come!

WOODPECKERS GALORE

I have lived the last 12 years in "Woodpecker Wonderland" on the east slope of Oregon's Cascade Mountains, and I recently completed the Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America, for which I studied woodpeckers across the continent. With this background, I can safely say that woodpeckers are my specialty. I can customize just about any woodpecker presentation for your group's interests; the offerings below are just a few examples.

Central Oregon's Woodpecker Wonderland

On the east slope of Oregon's Cascade Mountains, 11 species of woodpeckers annually raise their young. The region's extreme rainfall gradient and the resultant habitat diversity create perfect conditions for these cavity-nesting carpenters. Three-toed Woodpeckers reside permanently among subalpine forests. Three sapsucker species nest among mixed coniferous and riparian aspen stands. Black-backed and Hairy Woodpeckers dominate recent burns, with White-headed common in ponderosa pine woodlands. The mighty Pileated can be found scrapping through decaying timber throughout the region, with Lewis's flycatching in burned and open pine woodland. Add an abundance of flickers and the spectacular scenery of the east Cascades, and you have a wonderland of woodpeckers.

Woodpeckers of (any particular state or region; two examples below)

Inland Islands of Woodpeckers — From the western Transverse Ranges north of Santa Barbara to the Laguna Mountains west of Anza Borrego, nine species of woodpeckers hold year-round territories in largely complimentary habitats. Winter also brings an influx of flickers and sapsuckers to the region, when some of the resident species may wander the region. Southern California's local woodpecker populations have developed uniquely specialized lifestyles suited to their preferred islands of habitat, and at least one endemic subspecies inhabits the region's pine forests. Learn about natural history, adaptation, and hybridization among our resident and migratory woodpecker species, as well as potential identification challenges.

Where Are Texas Woodpeckers and Why? — Texas hosts over half of the North American woodpecker species at some time of year, and ten species breed regularly in the state. Owing to its immense land area, many Texas woodpecker populations occupy distantly separated eco-regions, with only the East Texas Pineywoods supporting a broad diversity of nesting species. How did the different species get where they are today, and what adaptations have they acquired that restrict them to certain habitats? I will map out the woodpeckers of Texas and shed light on their unique natural histories and behaviors. Learn about prehistoric and current woodpecker distribution in Texas and beyond, as well as hybridization and range fluctuations occurring in the state.

Tongues, Toes and Tales of North American (or regional) Woodpeckers: Anatomy & Adaptation

Imagine for a moment slamming your face into a brick wall at 16 miles per hour. This self-destructive (and foolish) act would require about 1,200 g of force, almost certainly resulting in your death. Yet, a Pileated Woodpecker exerts the same force up to 20 times per second, and as many as 12,000 times per day, pounding its head into trees! The woodpecker anatomy is perfectly suited for its climbing and excavating lifestyle. Some woodpecker species also possess adaptations for aerial acrobatics, for drilling sap wells, or for extracting ants from underground burrows. And, woodpecker adaptation goes well beyond the anatomy. Cavity excavation, drumming, and food storage are just a few examples of their amazing specialization.

Hybrid Woodpeckers

More than half of North America's 23 woodpecker species have been documented hybridizing with another member of the Picinae subfamily, also known as the "true" woodpeckers. All four sapsucker species, Golden-fronted x Red-bellied, Ladder-backed x Nuttall's, and Gilded x Northern Flickers are the best known examples of this exciting genetic experimentation. Identifying hybrid individuals in the field can be quite a puzzle, especially when migratory species are away from their nesting grounds, but a little background on these ID challenges can go a long way toward understanding the hybridization phenomenon. What makes a woodpecker species "cross the line," and how does the genetic line get drawn in the first place? Learn about the prehistory of woodpeckers and speciation in action.

They Call Him Flicker

The Northern Flicker is more widespread, more conspicuous, and more abundant than any other North American woodpecker. Ironically, it is the least woodpecker-like of them all. Flickers feed almost entirely on the ground, and they eat more ants than any other North American bird. The flicker's bill is decurved slightly, making it excellent for probing into underground ant tunnels but inferior for excavating. On average, Northern Flickers raise the largest brood among all our woodpeckers, and they are the only woodpecker species to readily nest in typical bird boxes. Native Americans adorned their baskets and ceremonial garb with its bright wing and tail feathers; Alexander Wilson wrote more about the "Golden-winged Woodpecker" than any other woodpecker species; it is the only woodpecker to boast "state bird" status (in Alabama); and more than 150 folk names have been assigned to this ubiquitous ant-eater. This presentation celebrates the lives and times of the Northern Flicker.

BIRDING TRAVEL ADVENTURES

Through my company, Paradise Birding, I have traveled throughout North America, in search of the best birding experiences on the continent. For exotic flavor, we have also ventured to San Blas, Mexico, and Sicily, Italy. Enjoy stunning scenery, local culture, and a great diversity of flora and fauna.

Northern Alberta's Boreal Forest and Rocky Mountains

Breeding bird diversity between Alberta's boreal forest and Rocky Mountains is nothing short of phenomenal, with up to 24 different waterfowl, 17 shorebirds, 24 warbler species, and 20 different sparrows. Seemingly endless expanses of forest carpet the northern regions, and the rugged Rockies rise skyward to the west, for truly breathtaking scenery. Highlights include (all in breeding plumage and many nesting): Red-necked Grebe; Common Loon; Trumpeter Swan; Harlequin Duck; White-winged Scoter; White-tailed Ptarmigan; Lesser Yellowlegs; Black Swift; Red-eyed Vireo; Boreal Chickadee; American Dipper; Bay-breasted and Canada warblers; Clay-colored and Le Conte's Sparrows; plus bear, bison, bighorn, marmot, moose, and mountain goat.

Wild Alaska: Oil Spill to Arctic Splendor

I spent the summer of 1990 in Valdez, Alaska; this was the second summer after the Exxon Valdez oil spill. I then made a month-long return trip in 2006, when I visited Glacier Bay, Prince William Sound, the Kenai Peninsula, and Barrow. The juxtaposition of these two experiences gave me a unique perspective on the nature of Alaska. Highlights include: Pacific and Yellow-billed loons; Kittlitz's Murrelet; Horned Puffin; Red-faced Cormorant; Slaty-backed, Glaucous, and Sabine's Gulls; Arctic Tern; Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; Rock and Pectoral sandpipers; Red Phalarope; Common and Hoary redpolls; Snow Bunting; and Lapland Longspur; plus, polar and grizzly bears, calving tidewater glaciers, and arctic wildflowers.

Sky Islands of Southeast Arizona

The late summer monsoon brings new life to the deserts and mountains of southeastern Arizona. Wildflowers and cactus blossoms attract up to 14 species of hummingbirds; many songbirds initiate a second breeding season; and the juveniles of the recent spring are just starting to venture out. The monsoon and "sky island" phenomenon together support amazing habitat diversity. Highlights include: Broad-billed, Berylline, Violet-crowned, and White-eared hummingbirds; Gila, Arizona, and Ladder-backed woodpeckers; Gilded Flicker; Elegant Trogon; Zone-tailed, Harris's and Gray hawks; Cassin's, Tropical, and Thick-billed kingbirds; Botteri's, Cassin's, and Rufous-winged sparrows; Varied and Lazuli buntings; plus, beetles, lizards, snakes, cacti, and wildflowers.

Southern California: Cactus Blossoms and Spring Migration

The southern tier of California, from San Diego to Anza Borrego Desert and the Salton Sea, harbors some of the greatest bird diversity in North America. In late March and early April, seashore, chaparral, pine forest, Colorado desert, and alkali playa all spring to life, with wildflowers and the onset of spring bird migration. Highlights include: Clark's Grebe; Brandt's Cormorant; Costa's Hummingbird; Acorn Woodpecker; Hutton's Vireo; Heerman's Gull; Pygmy Nuthatch; California and Black-tailed gnatcatchers; Crissal and Le Conte's thrashers; Phainopepla; California and Abert's Towhees; Black-throated and Golden-crowned sparrows; Tricolored Blackbird; plus, carpets of desert wildflowers and spectacular natural gardens of blooming cacti.

Northwest Winter Birding

Many northern birds enjoy a relatively mild winter in the Pacific Northwest. Arctic-nesting songbirds, seabirds, raptors, and shorebirds are all well represented in their respective habitats, from southern British Columbia, down the coasts of Washington and Oregon, and inland to the lower valleys. Featured regions include Boundary Bay, BC; Skagit Valley, WA; Willowa Valley, OR; and the infamous Oregon Coast. Highlights include: large flocks of Bohemian Waxwing, Snow Bunting, and

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch; Golden-crowned, Harris's, Swamp, and American Tree Sparrows; all three scoters; four loon species; Snowy, Short-eared, and Northern Hawk Owls; Rough-legged and "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawks; Northern Shrike; and Thayer's, Glaucous, and Mew Gulls.

Breeding Birds of the Oregon Cascades

Oregon's Cascade Mountains epitomize habitat diversity. From the temperate rainforest to the alpine slopes of the Cascades Crest and down to the high desert, the region's nesting bird life exemplifies this broad range of habitats. Eleven woodpecker species, 13 warblers, 10 flycatchers, 18 ducks, and 13 sparrows are just some of the nearly 200 species recorded breeding. Highlights include: Barrow's Goldeneye; Sooty Grouse; Great Gray Owl; Black and Vaux's Swifts; Calliope Hummingbird; American Three-toed and White-headed Woodpeckers; Hammond's, Dusky, and Pacific-slope Flycatchers; Gray and Pinyon Jays; Cassin's Vireo; Veery; Hermit and MacGillivray's Warblers; Northern Waterthrush; and Green-tailed Towhee; plus wildflowers, squirrels, old-growth forest, and pristine wilderness.

Albatrosses to Woodpeckers: The Oregon Birding Experience

Oregon ranks fifth among all North American states and provinces for the number of species on the state bird list. But the Oregon birding experience is about much more than just the birds. A swarm of seabirds following a fish-processing ship; the haunting call of the Mountain Quail echoing up a canyon wall; two young goshawks practicing their flying skills; and the air of virility at a Sage Grouse lek. This is birding in Oregon. Highlights include: Shy and Short-tailed albatrosses; Red-breasted and Williamson's sapsuckers; Cassin's and Red-eyed vireos; Black and Gray-crowned rosy-finches; Pine and Evening grosbeaks; Oak Titmouse and Wrentit; Yellow-headed and Tricolored blackbirds; Ferruginous and Rough-legged hawks; with whales, sea-lions, marmots, and bighorns.

Wings, Wine, and Wonders of Sicily

In 2007, we discovered that we had cousins in Sicily, relatives of Kris's father, Paul "Papa" Falco. Five of the seven cousins remain on the island where Papa Falco's mother and father were born, and we have repeatedly visited the Sicilian homeland to reconnect with the Falco family. From the moment we set foot in Sicily, we were mesmerized by island's rugged beauty, but we have since fallen in love with a Sicily that most of the world has yet to experience. Inhabiting this spectacular landscape is one of the most diverse peoples on the planet, and reflected in the island's dynamic history is a culture that is uniquely Sicilian. The warm, inviting hospitality; the incredible Mediterranean seafood; the endemic island wines; and the fascinating archaeological wonders; all of these contribute to an experience that is truly magical. We are excited to introduce you to the Sicilian way of life, combined with Sicily's geographical position as a hub for migratory birds, for an adventure you will remember forever.

Tale of the Tubenose

Off the Pacific Coast is an unforgiving ocean that harbors a unique ecosystem, the fauna of which have perfectly adapted to its harsh conditions. Some of the most impressive creatures that dwell in this forbidding environment are its birds, most of which only touch land during a couple months each year to raise their young on the ocean's edges. For most of their lives they soar, dive, and thrive in the open sea. Among all the seabirds, the *tubenoses*—the albatrosses, petrels, shearwaters, fulmars, and the tiny storm-petrels—epitomize avian adaptation, with miniature desalination plants in their foreheads that allow them to extract freshwater from the sea. The Alcids can compress their rib cages to manage the extreme water pressures at the depths where their food swims. Skuas and Jaegers have taken to thievery, using their powerful flight to attack gulls and terns, forcing them to drop or disgorge their last meal. And entering the element of the seabird can offer an added bonus. Whales, dolphins, and porpoises course through the rugged waters, and jellies and other invertebrates add color to the monochromatic waters.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF STEPHEN A. SHUNK

Born 1966 in Lafayette, Indiana; lived in Virginia, Texas, and California during childhood. Attended San Jose State University from 1987–1994, studying Meteorology and Environmental Studies. Lived in S.F. Bay Area 1987–1997; resident of Oregon from 1997–present. Currently in Sisters, Oregon.

Began birding about 1989 in San Jose. Began teaching birding classes in 1992. Founded Paradise Birding tour company in 1997. Currently leading tours in Alberta, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, and Texas, with a fall 2009 trip to Sicily. Also owns The Nature Business, LLC, for activities from bird surveys to nature-based tourism development. Extensive writing, public relations, and marketing experience with non-profit and for-profit companies and organizations, primarily in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Oregon. Also, broad non-profit board and management experience.

Steve's woodpecker research began in 1997 on the east slope of Oregon's Cascade Mountains and quickly expanded across the continent. He recently completed the *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America* for Houghton Mifflin Harcourt publishers, and he currently coordinates bird surveys for various agencies and organizations in Central Oregon. Steve co-founded the East Cascades Bird Conservancy and served as its first President. He also co-founded the Oregon Birding Trails program, coordinated its flagship project, the Oregon Cascades Birding Trail, and helped spearhead the development of the Oregon Coast Birding Trail.

Steve has delivered presentations for the annual meetings of state ornithological societies, numerous annual bird festivals, and many local bird clubs. Please see the listing that follows for past presentation audiences. References can be provided upon request.

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Past Audubon Chapter and Ornithological Society Presentations

(Listings are local Audubon chapters unless otherwise specified)

WASHINGTON

Lower Col. Basin
Yakima Valley

OREGON

Oregon Field Ornith.
Central Oregon
Salem
Corvallis
Lane County
Siskiyou
Rogue Valley

CALIFORNIA

Redwood Region Audubon
Madrone
Napa-Solano
Marin
Redwood Reg. Orn. Soc.
Golden Gate

CALIFORNIA (cont'd)

Yolo
Ohlone
Mt. Diablo
Santa Clara Valley
Santa Barbara
Santa Monica Bay
San Fernando Valley
Los Angeles
Conejo Valley
Pomona Valley
Buena Vista
Palomar
San Diego

NEW MEXICO

Audubon New Mexico
Central New Mexico

TEXAS

Ft. Worth
Dallas
Travis
Houston
Bastrop

LOUISIANA

Louisiana Ornith. Society
Orleans Audubon (Apr 2010)

MISSOURI

Audubon Soc. of Missouri
St. Louis (May 2010)
East Ozarks (May 2010)
Decatur (IL; May 2010)

Bird Festival and Conference Tours and Presentations

OREGON

John Scharff Migratory Bird Festival—keynote speaker; annual tours since 1997
Pacific Seabird Group Annual Meeting—tours
Pacific City Birding and Blues Festival—workshop and tours
Silver Falls Birding and Wildflower Festival—keynote speaker and annual tours
Woodpecker Wonderland Festival—founder, speaker, and event coordinator

CALIFORNIA

San Diego Bird Festival—workshop and tours
Central Valley Birding Symposium—keynote speaker
Snow Goose Festival (Jan 2010)—keynote speaker and tour leader
Mono Lake Bird Chautauqua (June 2010)—speaker and tour leader

OTHER REGIONS

American Birding Association (Eugene, OR; Tucson, AZ; Bangor, ME; Alexandria, LA;
Snowbird, UT; Corpus Christi, TX)—workshops and tours
Othello (WA) Sandhill Crane Festival—keynote speaker
Grand Isle Migratory Bird Festival (Grand Isle, LA; April 2010)—keynote speaker and tour leader
Southwest Wings Festival (Sierra Vista, AZ; August 2010)—speaker and tour leader

Non-Profit Organization Board & Management Experience

Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, San Jose, CA—past board member
Environmental Resource Center, San Jose State University—past executive director
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, Cupertino, CA—past board member
San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society, Hayward, CA—past board member
Central Oregon Audubon Society, Bend, OR—past board member
Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce, Sisters, OR—past executive director
East Cascades Bird Conservancy, Bend, OR—founder and past board member

Presentation references available upon request!

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