



CENTRAL & EASTERN OREGON

*Woodpecker Wonderland &
Malheur Region*

May 26-June 4, 2020

\$3,950 double/\$4,585 single

I first moved to Oregon in early 1997, when I lived and worked at southeastern Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Later that year, I moved to the town of Sisters, in Central Oregon, and in the spring of 1998, I started leading our first multi-day tours, with extended weekends to Malheur. At the same time, I had begun to marvel at the amazing woodpecker diversity on the eastern slope of Oregon's Cascade Mountains. Our multi-day tours grew to include trips in the Cascades, featuring our local Woodpecker Wonderland and the diversity of this spectacular region.

Fast forward 20 years, and Paradise Birding now operates tours on four continents. However, despite so many wonderful trips on the schedule, Oregon remains our home and the cornerstone of our business. It seems overdue, then, for us to feature two of Oregon's premiere birding destinations in the very same tour: our first-ever trip to combine Malheur and Woodpecker Wonderland. Join me to experience some of the best bird diversity in North America, with over 200 breeding species and dozens of possible migrants. And expect some of the best scenery on the continent, from the Cascade volcanoes to Malheur's expansive high-desert oasis. Join us in celebrating Oregon!

Owner & Trail Boss, Steve Shunk

TOUR SUMMARY

Our tour begins when we meet you at the Redmond airport. We will immediately head southeast for the 2.5-hour drive toward Malheur, crossing Oregon's high lava plains. We may make a stop or two in search of a few desert songbirds, like Gray Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Mountain Bluebird in the juniper habitats and Sage Thrasher, Sagebrush Sparrow, and Horned Lark in the sage flats. We may also stop in the irrigated fields farther east to search for a wide array of raptors, an introduction to those we should also see at Malheur.

The Malheur Region

We will arrive in the town of Hines to check-in at our hotel, followed by an early dinner and maybe some evening birding in the Silvies River flood plain. This will be our first introduction to the diverse habitats of the Harney Basin. Sometimes referred to as the Malheur-Harney Lakes Basin, this closed subbasin is named for Harney Lake, the alkali sink in this northwest corner of the immense Great Basin. The Silvies River drains from the southern limits of the Blue Mountains and across its expansive flood plain, with its delta feeding into the north shore of Malheur Lake.



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Each spring, regional water managers direct the flow of the Silvies through a complex network of canals and ditches to flood irrigate the private agricultural lands between the Blue Mountain foothills and Malheur Lake. Flood irrigation in the Silvies flood plain more-or-less emulates the ‘natural’ flooding that once occurred before immigrants settled the region. South of the Silvies flood plain, three lakes—Malheur, Mud, and Harney—form the top of a lopsided T that defines the northern limits of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. The Blitzen River forms stem of the T, running due south about 35 miles from its delta at the southern shore of Malheur Lake to the mouth of the Blitzen Canyon. The primary source of the Blitzen River is the snowmelt from Steens Mountain, a 35-mile-long fault block that rises from the valley floor—at 4,000 feet elevation—to its summit at nearly 10,000 feet. The Blitzen delivers the vast majority of the water that feeds the 140,000-acre Malheur Refuge.

For millennia, migratory birds have fed and bred among the emergent wetlands and surrounding uplands of the Harney basin; this ritual continues today. Many thousands of water birds, raptors, and songbirds return each year, along with thousands of birders, who visit to experience the natural spectacle occurring in this magnificent region.

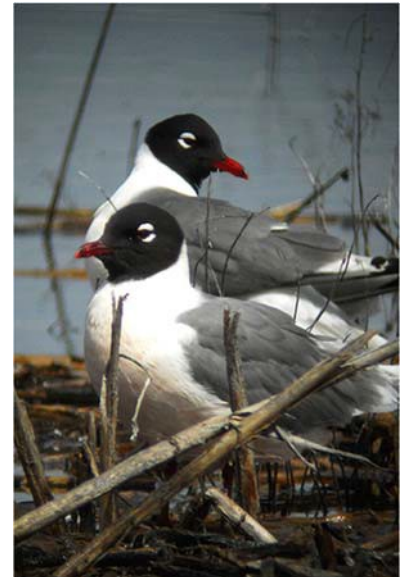
The birding highlights at Malheur are many, and we will spend three full days exploring wetland, desert, grassland, canyon, and riparian habitats. Between Malheur Refuge and the surrounding uplands, we will search for over 150 breeding species, including: 5 different grebes; over 15 nesting waterfowl species; 10 species each of raptors, shorebirds, and sparrows; and up to 8 different flycatchers and 6 swallows. Yellow-headed Blackbirds will be abundant along the fencerows, with Willets and Wilson’s Snipe scattered among them. Thousands of Franklin’s Gulls and White-faced Ibis breed on the refuge, along with over 100 pairs of Sandhill Cranes. Additional breeding bird highlights include rare Oregon nesters such as Trumpeter Swan, Eastern Kingbird, Bobolink, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

While we delight in Malheur’s breeding bird phenomenon, we will also immerse ourselves in a very busy songbird migration. This desert oasis attracts an amazing array of migrants, including flycatchers, vireos, tanagers and warblers. We could encounter *flocks* of Western Tanagers joined by any of 10 likely warblers, out of 20 possible warbler species. Black-headed Grosbeaks and Lazuli Buntings frequent the feeders at the visitor's center, with hummingbird feeders hosting up to four different hummer species.

Malheur offers many other highlights, including: iconic herds of wild horses; nearly 60 species of wild mammals on the refuge alone; carpets of desert wildflowers; a dynamic cultural history, from the first Paiute residents to the later cattle barons, as well as stories from the recent occupation of Malheur Refuge. The region will provide us with an amazing experience, but our adventure has just begun! After breakfast on our last day here, we will head west, with a couple of birding stops before reaching downtown Bend.

The Cascade Mountains

Upon arriving in Bend, we will enjoy lunch along the Deschutes River, followed by checking in at our hotel and an afternoon break. Our first birding in the area will take us into local aspen and mixed-conifer habitats in search of our first woodpecker abundance. This casual day will conclude with dinner downtown and our first night in the shadow of the Cascades.



We will spend the next four full days on the eastern slope of the Cascade Mountains exploring a broad diversity of habitats, from riparian woodland to burned coniferous forest. Our daily itinerary will take us in search of 11 nesting woodpecker species. We will wander through recently burned forests in search of Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers; we will enjoy mature cottonwood and aspen galleries in search of three different sapsuckers; and we'll visit older burns and mature mixed-conifer forest for Lewis's and Pileated Woodpeckers, respectively. Each day, we will encounter ponderosa pine forest, where we should find Williamson's Sapsucker and White-headed Woodpecker.

Woodpeckers may be our primary goal, but the diverse habitats in the region will expose us to a correspondingly diverse array of breeding species and late migrants. 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 phenomenon:

- 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 from the eastern slope, 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. 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 Sandpipers just arriving on breeding territories. This is an excellent time of year for hummingbirds, with our resident Anna's being met by migrant—and locally nesting—Rufous and Calliope. We will enjoy excellent study opportunities for Empidonax flycatchers, with Hammond's, Gray, Dusky, Willow, and Pacific-slope all on territories by mid-May. We will also stay alert for any of the eight local Corvid species, including Gray Jay, Pinyon Jay and Clark's Nutcracker.



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

On our final day in central Oregon, we will enjoy some casual birding before heading to Redmond for our farewell lunch. We will return you to the Redmond airport in time for your scheduled departures.

YOUR GUIDES

To ensure you have the very best birding experience, we will have 2 guides on this tour for a maximum of 6 guests, one of the best guide-to-client ratios in the business.

Professional naturalist and Paradise Birding owner, Steve Shunk, serves as ‘trail boss’ for all our Cascades tours. Steve has lived in Central Oregon since 1997, and he has studied the region’s woodpecker diversity ever since. Steve started birding in 1989 in the San Francisco Bay Area, and he led his first birding classes in 1992. His first field job was a waterbird census with the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. Since moving to Oregon, Steve has conducted field studies from Oregon’s coast range to the central Sierra Nevada. Steve’s woodpecker research culminated in the publication of his Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America, published in May 2016. Steve’s infectious enthusiasm, his legendary birding ear, and his intimate knowledge of the region combine to offer you an incomparable birding experience.



Steve will be joined by one of our favorite local guides, depending on their availability.

TOUR STYLE & PACE

Our primary objective is to offer you a safe, fun, and stress-free birding experience. We can’t guarantee that you will see any particular bird species, just that you will have a good time! We rarely bird from dawn to dusk, especially considering that May gives us over 15 hours of daylight. If we do rise early for a certain birding objective, we typically break in mid-morning for breakfast; likewise, if we bird until sunset, we will have dinner before our late outing. On some days, we will take a break at our motel before dinner; on other nights, we may go straight from the field to dinner. If we encounter particularly warm daytime temperatures, we may take a break or travel between birding sites during the hottest part of the afternoon. In any case, we will review our each day’s plan the prior evening.

We will travel in a large passenger van with comfortable seating for up to six birders and two guides, and everyone will have a window seat. Our birding activity will vary somewhat for the two regions on our itinerary. The nature of birding, so to speak, in the Malheur region will require us to do some of our birding from the vehicle. We will drive a long auto-tour route and long stretches of highway, and we will often bird from the roadsides—with safety as our first priority. Despite some vehicle birding, we will also have plenty of opportunities to hike on short trails, as well as birding on foot at the Malheur Refuge HQ.

In the Cascades, almost none of our birding will be conducted from the vehicle. We will typically travel by vehicle from site to site, and each day will involve considerable walking. We may hike up to three or four miles per day, with mostly short walks at a ‘birdwatcher’s pace’ but a few routes may take us up short, steep trails or over rough terrain. In these cases, one of the guides will be available to hang back with those who prefer a less vigorous approach.

We are not big ‘listers’, and each day’s activities will not be driven by the need for a bigger bird list. We pride ourselves on offering a broad natural history experience, and though our daily itinerary will be driven by the birds, we will take plenty of time to ‘smell the flowers’—and touch the lava rocks, wet our hands in fresh springs, enjoy the antics of chipmunks, etc. We will review our birds and other wildlife sightings at dinner each evening, but we will also discuss the broader discoveries of the day. We lead these tours to help enhance your appreciation for birds and their habitats, and we hope to send you home with a strong conservation message as it relates to our local ecology.

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GENERAL TOUR INFORMATION

Extensive birding experience is not required for this tour. As with most birding outings, birders with more advanced skills will be able to identify more of the anticipated species, whereas less experienced birders will delight in higher numbers of life-birds. Beginning birders should be prepared for the long birding days and abundance of new information. We are skilled at and dedicated to helping each participant get good looks at birds, but not everyone will see every bird. Your guides are patient, professional educators, and we will work diligently to help each guest learn bird songs and visual identification, as well as general natural and cultural history of the region.

This tour is for moderately active people in good health. Our guides are certified first-aid providers, but we will occasionally be a couple hours from any medical facilities; at Malheur in particular, we could be several hours from a major hospital. *It is very important that you share any pertinent medical information* on your registration forms, including current prescriptions and the best person(s) to contact in case of an emergency. This is a non-smoking tour. Your lodging will be in non-smoking rooms, and we will eat in non-smoking restaurants.

CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

Late spring weather in our region is a bit unpredictable. The humidity will always be low, but our daily weather can be quite changeable. Mornings could be quite chilly, and we may experience thunderstorms, light rain, or extended periods of sun in a single day. Higher elevations may even receive snow in spring. In addition, we will be prepared to adjust our itinerary in case of any active wildfires in the region. Most of our fires are lightning-caused and are an important part of the local ecology, and we will do our best to avoid smoky conditions whenever possible.

You should be prepared to be outside, away from the vehicle or other shelter, for a few hours at a time. Your clothing and personal gear for each day should fit into a daypack, but please do not compromise your ability to be comfortable in a wide variety of conditions out-of-doors. We will have plenty of room in the van for everyone's personal gear and equipment. We highly recommend sturdy footwear to help you negotiate any rough terrain we may encounter.

We also suggest that you bring your own binoculars and favorite field guide, although we always carry extra binoculars and a birding library for reference and learning. Birding conditions at Malheur will be very conducive for scope viewing. In the Cascades, we will bird in forested habitats, when scopes can be more of a barrier than a benefit. You may bring your own spotting scope, although we have at least two scopes for the group.

Biting insects may occur in some areas along our route, and we recommend that you take the proper precautions. Very few of our stops host enough mosquitoes to hinder the birding experience, but on these occasions, you may need bug-resistant clothing or repellent to enjoy the birds. Other natural hazards in the region might include the occasional tick, mazes of downed logs, and the sun. Please be prepared with ample sun protection, as most days will involve many hours outside.



ACCOMMODATIONS

We like to stay in comfortable accommodations, and when possible, we work directly with local lodging establishments that reflect the character of the regions we are visiting. We are also committed to spending at least 2 nights in each location, whenever possible.

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At Malheur, we will spend all four nights at the Best Western in Hines. The rooms here are typical for a quality chain motel, and these are the best group accommodations in town. In Bend, we will spend five nights at McMenemy's hotel at [the historic Old St. Francis School](#). Construction on the original school began in early 1925, and the first class graduated later that year. Minor expansions occurred in the 1950s, but a major project in 1968 included the construction of a cafeteria, stage, gym, and meeting rooms. In 2000, the school relocated and the property was purchased by McMenemy's. The McMenemy brothers, Mike and Brian, started their business in 1983, and the company has become a northwest institution, with historic venues converted to tourism properties throughout Oregon and Washington. You will thoroughly enjoy your stay here, and you should be prepared to spend some time in the on-site Turkish bath!

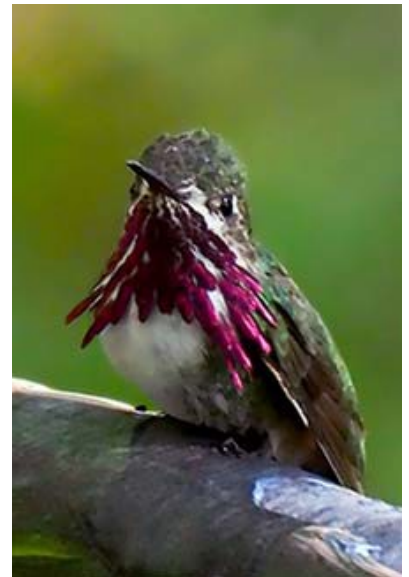
If you are traveling with a birding partner or are willing to room with another solo birder of the same gender, we will likely be able to accommodate you with double rooms at both lodging sites. If we are not able to match you with a roommate due to the gender mix of the participants, you will be responsible for the *single* tour fee.

MEALS & REFRESHMENTS

One of our goals on any tour is to keep you pleasantly fueled and hydrated to help you get the most of each birding day. This tour occurs in a region with a very dry climate, and we will ensure that you have ample water to make it through each day. We recommend that you bring your own refillable water bottle, and we will provide water to refill those bottles. Like our birding activity, breakfast will vary depending on our location. At Malheur, we may have breakfast at the motel, or we may eat at a local café. The Frenchglen Hotel serves a delicious home-style breakfast. In Bend, we may enjoy a light early breakfast paired with a larger lunch, or we may have a sit-down breakfast. Lunches will usually be taken at a local café.

Dinners between our two regions will be an interesting contrast. At Malheur, we will be in the heart of cattle country, and this region is not known for its cuisine. Bend, however, boasts a plethora of casual restaurants serving delectable Northwestern cuisine. Alcohol beverages are not included in your tour fee, but local beers—Bend has over 30 breweries—and Northwestern wines will be common themes for those who wish to enjoy the products of our region. Your tour fee includes all meals, snacks, and non-alcohol beverages from dinner on our first day through lunch on the last day. Throughout each day, we will also provide cold drinks, along with a broad selection of simple but hearty snack foods. Despite our best efforts at selecting meals and snacks with broad appeal, it may be difficult to accommodate the most restrictive diets.

If you maintain such a diet, you may wish to bring some foods that will meet your needs. Your registration materials ask your dietary restrictions and preferences. While we cannot honor every food and drink request, the more detailed your response, the better we can serve you on the road.



TRAVEL PLANNING

Your tour fee includes transportation from the Redmond airport (RDM). For those of you who will fly into Redmond, we request that you arrive by 2:00 p.m. on the first day of the tour so that we have plenty of time for the drive to Malheur and some evening birding. Please schedule your departure from Redmond no earlier than 1:00 p.m. on the final day of the tour. After an early lunch, we will deliver you to the airport by noon.

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If you have any difficulty meeting this schedule, or if you wish to arrive a day early and/or depart a day late, we will do our best to help you arrange extra nights of lodging and transport to and from the airport. If you will travel to the region by automobile, please contact us directly and we will make arrangements for a rendezvous.

NOTE: Our local woodpecker festival is scheduled for June 5-7, and you may wish to stay in the area a few extra days to attend. This event offers a great chance to spend time in the field with some of our best local guides, as well as birders from all over the country. If you wish to attend the festival, note that the event is very popular. In order to get onto any field trips, you should closely follow the East Cascades Audubon website—or subscribe to the local listserv, COBOL—and enroll immediately upon the start of registration. Contact us for further details.

TRIP ITINERARY

Our daily birding plan will always remain flexible depending on weather conditions and local bird reports, as well as our success at finding certain species. The itinerary below is just a basic outline of our travel plans:

May 26: Meet at Redmond airport; drive to Malheur, check in at hotel, dinner, and evening birding. First night in Hines.

May 27: All day birding in the Malheur region. Night in Hines.

May 28: All day birding the Malheur region. Night in Hines.

May 29: All day birding the Malheur region. Night in Hines.

May 30: Drive back to Bend after breakfast; lunch and casual birding in the Bend area. Dinner and first night in Bend.

May 31: All day birding in the Cascades. Night 2 in Bend

June 1: All day birding in the Cascades. Night 3 in Bend.

June 2: All day birding in the Cascades. Night 4 in Bend.

June 3: All day birding in the Cascades. Night 5 in Bend.

June 4: Morning birding in the Bend area; early lunch in Redmond and transfer to airport.



TOUR FEE

Your tour fee includes all meals, snacks, and non-alcohol beverages from the afternoon on day one through the afternoon on day 10; lodging at single or double occupancy; transportation from Redmond; facility, permit, and license fees; service-related gratuities; and the instruction and leadership of your guide(s). The fee does not include guides' gratuities, which are never expected but always appreciated based on your satisfaction with our service.

2020 TOUR FEE: \$3,950 double/\$4,585 single

NON-REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT: \$500

BALANCE DUE 90 DAYS PRIOR: \$3,450 single/\$4,085 double

NOTE: We structure our tour fees for the best possible client-to-guide ratio and an optimal birding experience, with 2 guides, and a minimum of 4 and maximum of 6 participants on this tour.

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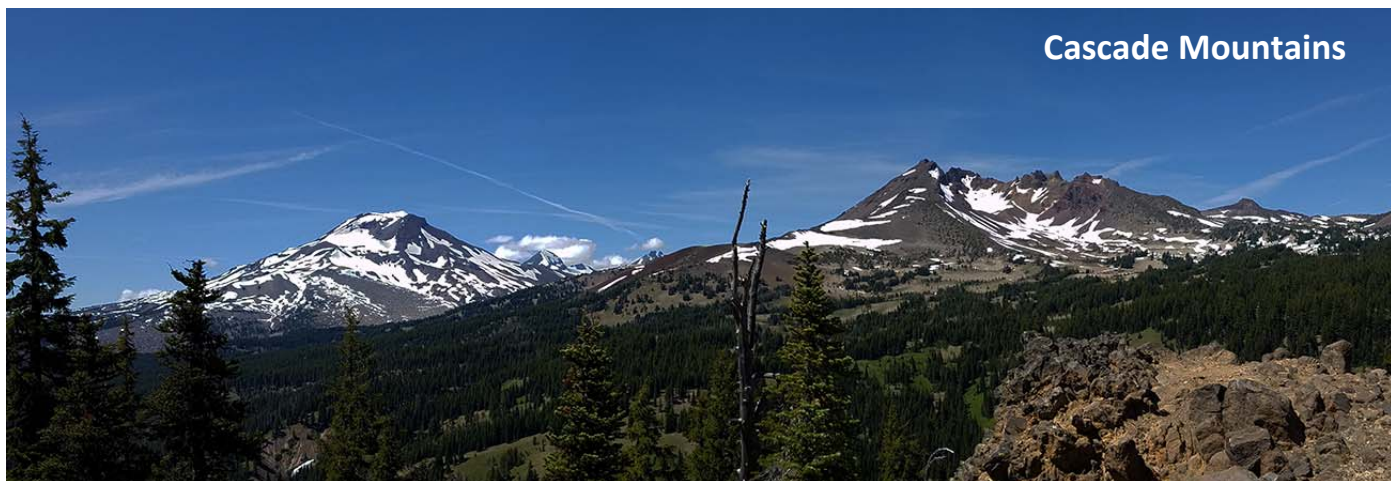
REFUND POLICY: Once we confirm that the tour will go, your deposit is non-refundable. If you cancel your reservation more than 90 days prior to the tour, you will be refunded any payments above your deposit. If you cancel between 89 and 30 days prior to the tour, you will receive a 50% refund of fees paid over the deposit. If you cancel less than 30 days prior, you forfeit your entire tour fee, unless you can fill your space with another birder. If you cancel at any time, your deposit is transferrable to any future Paradise Birding tour. If we cancel the trip for any reason, your deposit and all payments will be refunded.

To reserve your spot, complete the online or PDF registration form and send it to the address below with your non-refundable \$500 deposit. Your balance is due 90 days prior to the start date. For more information, please call 541-408-1753 or e-mail steve@paradisebirding.com.

We look forward to seeing you in Oregon this spring!

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Cascade Mountains



Malheur & Steens Mountain