

Natural History of Mono Basin Woodpeckers



June 13–15, 2017 • Stephen Shunk

\$165 per person / \$150 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 15 participants

Woodpeckers are one of the most specialized bird families in the world, with a suite of anatomical and behavioral adaptations that make them perfectly suited for their unique lifestyles. Woodpeckers also serve as “keystone” organisms in our forests and woodlands, playing critical ecological roles that support a host of bird species and other forest organisms. At least nine woodpecker species occur regularly in the Mono Basin, most of which are permanent residents, and an additional three species have been recorded in the region, making the forests around Mono Lake a perfect stage for observing these amazing forest carpenters.

Join Oregon naturalist and North American woodpecker specialist Steve Shunk for this dynamic overview of Mono Basin woodpeckers. Steve will take you into prime habitats to discuss forest ecology and interpret woodpecker behavior and natural history, and he will deliver two evening lectures on specialized woodpecker topics.

Steve started birding in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1989, and he moved to central Oregon's "Woodpecker Wonderland" in 1997, where 11 woodpecker species breed annually in an area just 50% larger than the current surface area of Mono Lake! For the last 18 years, Steve has closely studied the woodpeckers of North America—and the world. Recently, he spent three seasons as a field biologist for the Institute for Bird Populations studying Black-backed Woodpeckers of California's Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains. Steve now lectures and leads birding tours across North America and beyond. Steve's long-awaited *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America* will be available for personal book signings during the seminar.

ITINERARY

Tuesday, June 13, 7:00pm: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining. After introductions, Steve will give a presentation covering woodpecker anatomy and adaptation, along with his insights on the development of his Peterson woodpecker guide.

Wednesday, June 14, 7:00am: Meet out front at the Mono Lake Committee. We will spend the day exploring two key habitats in the basin—aspens woodland and burned pine forest—in search of woodpeckers and other bird species that specialize in these environments. Our target species will be Red-breasted Sapsucker and Black-backed Woodpecker, but we can also expect Hairy Woodpecker in both habitats, with a good chance for Lewis's Woodpecker in the burned area. We will return to Lee Vining at approximately 4:00pm. After dinner (on your own), Steve will give a presentation sharing his favorite woodpeckers from recent travels outside the US.

Thursday, June 15, 7:00am: Meet out front at the Mono Lake Committee. Today, we will explore the region's expansive Jeffrey pine forests in search of White-headed Woodpecker and Williamson's Sapsucker. If we have not observed them yet, Downy Woodpecker and Northern Flicker will also be on the agenda. We will return to Lee Vining by about 3:00pm, but participants may leave at varying times depending on individual travel plans.

Altitude and Dehydration Cautions: This seminar will involve easy to moderate hiking at elevations up to 9,000 feet. We will hike about two miles a day, mostly on level terrain, with some short walks on steeper or more rugged terrain. Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body dehydrates quickly at the higher altitudes of the arid Mono Basin. Experts recommend that you begin drinking extra water as you drive to higher elevations in order to prevent dehydration and headaches. Also, the sun is fierce at this altitude, capable of burning even on cool and cloudy days, so be sure to protect yourself with sunscreen, sunglasses, and hat.

MEALS

All meals are on your own; please bring lunch, snacks, and water for both field days.

TO BRING

- binoculars
- sturdy footwear
- day pack including plenty of water, sun protection, jacket, insect repellent
- picnic lunch for both days



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

P.O. Box 29 • Lee Vining, CA 93541 • (760) 647-6595 • monolake.org/seminars