

Natural History of Mono Basin Woodpeckers



June 21–24, 2022 • Stephen Shunk

\$280 per person / \$265 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 12 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 local 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. For the last 20

years, Steve has closely studied the woodpeckers of North America and the world. He recently spent three seasons as a field biologist for the Institute for Bird Populations studying Black-backed Woodpeckers in California's Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains. Steve now lectures and leads birding tours across North America and beyond. Steve's first book, the *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America*, will be available for personal book signings during the seminar.

ITINERARY

Tuesday, June 21, 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, as well as the keystone roles played by Mono Basin woodpeckers.

Wednesday, June 22, 7:30am: Meet out front at the Mono Lake Committee. Our morning outing will take us into Jeffrey pine forest to search for woodpeckers and other birds that specialize in this habitat, especially White-headed Woodpecker. We will break from noon to 3:00pm, followed by an afternoon outing into higher-elevation, mixed-conifer forest looking for Williamson's Sapsucker and other forest denizens. We will end the day at approximately 7:00pm.

Thursday, June 23, 7:30am: Meet at the Committee for a day dedicated to burned forests in the region. We will start in a recently-burned forest in search of Black-backed Woodpecker and other burn specialists. After breaking from noon to 2:00pm, the afternoon will take us into a prescribed burn and older burns in the region. We will wrap-up by 5:30pm, followed by a dinner break on your own. At 7:00pm, back at the Committee, Steve will give a presentation sharing his favorite woodpeckers and other highlights from travels outside of North America.

Friday, June 24, 7:30am: Meet out front at the Committee. On our final day we will explore the aspen woodlands of Lee Vining Canyon, where we could see up to five different woodpecker species, along with many other cavity nesters. We will return to Lee Vining and wrap up our course by approximately 12:30pm.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: DIFFICULT

This seminar's activity level: *difficult*. We will be walking up to three miles a day at a leisurely pace, most of which will be over uneven terrain, off trail, and will include stepping up and over obstacles. This type of walking requires good balance, some agility, and stamina. Be prepared for short, steep sections of trail. We will be standing for several hours at a time while out in the field; some of that time may be in the sun without much shade.

WEATHER & ALTITUDE

Temperatures in summer will be hot during the day and drop to chilly at night, with possible windy conditions and afternoon thunderstorms. Average temperatures in June in Lee Vining are 76°F (max) and 47°F (min).

This seminar will take place at elevations ranging from about 6,000 to 10,000 feet above sea level. It is a good idea to acclimate at the elevation of Lee Vining for at least 24 hours prior to the start of the seminar. Those with a history of heart, ear, or respiratory problems should consult their doctors before attending. Anyone restricted to lower elevations should not enroll. *Note: If you have residual respiratory effects from having Covid-19, activities at altitude may be particularly difficult for you.

Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body loses more water at the higher altitudes of the Mono Basin. Begin drinking extra water as you drive to higher elevation in order to prevent dehydration and headaches. Also, the sun is intense at high elevations, capable of burning even on cool and cloudy days, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly using sunscreen, sunglasses, and hat.

MEALS

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

TO BRING

- face mask (N95 or KN95 recommended)
- binoculars
- sturdy footwear
- day pack including plenty of water, sun protection, jacket, and insect repellent

COVID-19 REQUIREMENTS FOR 2022

All participants and instructors must be fully vaccinated and boosted. Proof of vaccination will be required after you register for a seminar.

Please minimize your exposure to Covid in the time leading up to your seminar. We recommend obtaining a negative PCR test result within 72 hours prior to your seminar starting.* If your PCR test comes back positive for Covid, you must cancel your registration and stay home. If you begin to feel sick in the days leading up to your seminar, you must cancel your registration and stay home. You will receive a full refund in either case.

*Depending on the regional Covid situation we may need to *require* a negative PCR test result within 72 hours prior to your seminar starting.

During the seminars masks will be required indoors and in carpools/Mono Lake Committee van in accordance with Mono County requirements (N95 or KN95 masks offer the best protection). If Mono County has lifted the mask requirement, masks will not be required indoors and in vehicles during the seminars. (You may wear a mask at any time if you wish to.)

If you begin to feel ill with Covid symptoms at any time during the seminar, you must immediately notify the instructor or staff member accompanying the group and leave the seminar.

Please keep in mind that conditions may change at any time and we may have to change our procedures in order to provide the opportunity for everyone involved with the Field Seminars to safely participate. Depending on the Covid situation in the weeks leading up to your seminar, we may have to plan to hold the seminar completely outdoors. Mask requirements may change. There's a chance we may have to cancel seminars altogether. We will communicate with you about any of these changes, and you can always get in touch with us if you have questions or need more clarification about specific circumstances, by emailing fieldseminars@monolake.org or by calling (760) 647-6595.



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

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