

Natural History of Mono Basin Woodpeckers



June 19–22, 2023 • 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

Monday, June 19, 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.

Tuesday, June 20, 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.

Wednesday, June 21, 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.

Thursday, June 22, 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.

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

- binoculars
- field guide(s) of your choice
- sturdy footwear
- day pack including plenty of water, sun protection, jacket, and insect repellent



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

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