



Professional Nature Presentations by Stephen Shunk

Naturalist, Author, Photographer, Field Biologist

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

Bill Clark, Historian—Audubon Society of Missouri

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.

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!*

“None of our previous programs specifically focusing on birds has been more ecologically informed.”

Ed Henry, Program Chair—San Diego Audubon Society

“Your presentation was the perfect combination of science and entertainment.”

Bartshe Miller, Director—Mono Lake Bird Chautauqua



GENERAL BIRDING & NATURE

The Magic of Birding

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.

Birding Under the Veil of Winter

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.

Audubon to Internet: History of Birding

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. Today, we have nitrogen-filled spotting scopes and hi-tech radar contributing to avian knowledge.

WOODPECKERS GALORE

I have lived the last 15 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—and all 11 can be found in an area about the size of Oregon’s largest city, Portland. The outstanding habitat diversity creates perfect conditions for these cavity-nesting carpenters.

Burned Forests & Black-backed Woodpeckers in the Wild West

Forest fires present a classic ‘man vs. nature’ dilemma, especially in the montane regions of western North America. In particular, the Cascade Mountains and Sierra Nevada evolved with fire as a critical part of their ecology, and the Black-backed Woodpecker is the quintessential poster-child for the current state of western forests. Enjoy this primer on the ecology of western forests, with an emphasis on forest management and conservation and the keystone roles played by the woodpeckers themselves.

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. 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. Dive deep into the world of woodpecker specialization.

Woodpeckers of (any particular state or region; one example below)

Inland Islands of Woodpeckers — From the western Transverse Ranges north of Santa Barbara to the Laguna Mountains west of the Anza Borrego Desert, nine species of woodpeckers hold year-round territories in largely complimentary habitats. Learn about natural history, adaptation, and hybridization among our resident and migratory woodpecker species, as well as potential identification challenges.

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. This presentation celebrates the lives and times of the Northern Flicker.

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. 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.

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*, and *Malaysian Borneo*. Enjoy stunning scenery, local culture, and a great diversity of flora and fauna.

Wings, Wine, and Wonders of Sicily

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 combine with the island's post as a hub for migratory birds for an experience that is truly magical.

Malaysian Borneo: a Rainforest Safari

Explore "The Land Beneath the Wind"—home to orchids and pitcher plants, hornbills and horned frogs, all inhabiting the equatorial island of Borneo. Travel from Southeast Asia's highest mountain—13,000-foot Mt Kinabalu—to the white-sand beaches of the South China Sea. See Orangutans and Proboscis Monkeys in the pristine tropical rainforest, and view the world's smallest raptor, the Bornean Falconet, and the world's largest flower, the Rafflesia. A true nature safari!

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.

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. Enjoy birds, bears, porpoises, glaciers, and arctic wildflowers.

Sky Islands of Southeastern 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.

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.

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 stretch from Victoria, BC, to the magnificent Oregon Coast.

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.

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. Learn about the seabirds (and marine mammals!) of the eastern Pacific Ocean.

Pacific Coast Waterbirds: Albatrosses, Sea Ducks & Sandpipers

From coastal terrestrial habitats of the Pacific slope to some of the world's most productive ocean waters, and from Alaska to California, dozens of waterbird species feed their way through diverse aquatic habitats. Stories include the Kittlitz's Murrelets of Glacier Bay; wayward Bristle-thighed Curlews on Oregon's northern coast; Brandt's Cormorants courting at La Jolla shores; and Black-legged Kittiwakes breeding at Kenai Fjords.

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 Bend, 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, Texas, Florida, Mexico, and Sicily. Co-founded the East Cascades Bird Conservancy and served as its first President; co-founded the Oregon Birding Trails program and coordinated its flagship project, the Oregon Cascades Birding Trail.

Woodpecker research began in 1997 on the east slope of Oregon's Cascade Mountains and quickly expanded across the continent. Recently completed the *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America* for Houghton Mifflin Harcourt publishers, and currently coordinating bird surveys for various agencies and organizations in Oregon and California.

Steve has delivered presentations for the annual meetings of state ornithological societies, numerous annual bird festivals, and many local bird clubs, including nearly 50 local Audubon chapters. References and a listing of past presentation audiences can be provided upon request.

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