



WALLOWA WINTER WONDERLAND: NE Oregon, January 8–12, 2014

Tucked into the northeastern corner of Oregon lies a little slice of Switzerland. This region surrounding the Wallowa Mountains is one of the most remote and most spectacular in the state. Sharp, craggy peaks peer down on ancient glacial lakes, with endless rolling prairie to the north. In winter, everything is covered with a soft blanket of white. Due to their geographical isolation from the rest of the state, the Wallowas harbor some of Oregon's most unique birds. While the region hosts a great diversity of breeding birds, the real spectacle comes in winter. Join us on this exciting escape to sample Wallowa County's impressive collection of wintering avifauna.

*Your host and lead guide,
Stephen Shunk*



TRIP SUMMARY

The forbidding arctic winter drives countless northern breeding birds southward to spend the season in milder climes. Dozens of songbird and raptor species make their way south until they reach winter foraging grounds just across the Canadian border. Those that migrate west of the Rockies run into a formidable barrier in Northeastern Oregon. Here they gather in large concentrations to overwinter in the shadow of the Wallowa Mountains.

Each winter, hundreds of Bohemian Waxwings gorge on mountain-ash and juniper fruits in the Wallowa Valley. Nearly every gully in the nearby prairie is filled with small flocks of American Tree Sparrows. In some years, Common Redpolls swarm the birch and alder trees by the dozens. A few species that breed in the Wallowas, such as Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, make their way down the north-facing slopes each winter. Huge flocks of rosy-finches may join dozens or even hundreds of Snow Buntings to forage on the rolling, snow-covered prairie north of the mountains. Occasionally, Lapland Longspur joins large wintering flocks of Horned Larks, and Northern Shrike patrols the region for easy forage.

Searching for tree sparrows and redpolls along the prairie back-roads typical yields resident coveys of Gray Partridge, and possibly a glimpse of Oregon's only wild population of Sharp-tailed Grouse. Pileated Woodpecker inhabits the forest that meets the grasslands from the north. Rough-legged Hawk and Bald Eagle exhibit a commanding presence throughout the region, highlighting dozens of wintering raptors. In some years, a Snowy Owl or Gyrfalcon spends the winter in Wallowa County. And all of this occurs surrounded by some of the most spectacular scenery in North America.



Our tour begins and ends in Portland, Oregon. Soon after leaving the city, we will enter the scenic Columbia River Gorge, where we may visit spectacular Multnomah Falls. Here we might see American Dipper cavorting in the stream, Chestnut-backed Chickadee among giant Douglas-firs, or Bald Eagle roosting along the Columbia River. We will continue eastward along Oregon's northern border with a birding stop at the mouth of the Deschutes River, in search of Barrow's Goldeneye.

After our first dinner in La Grande, we will continue our journey to Enterprise. However, depending on the weather, we may choose to spend the first night in Enterprise or La Grande to avoid crossing the icy summits after dark. Weather permitting, we will awake at our base in the town of Enterprise, and will spend the next three days exploring all the accessible habitats of the region on our quest for the region's specialty birds. Each day's itinerary will be driven by reported bird movements in the area, as well as our success at finding certain species.

Sunday will take us back along the mighty Columbia River, with additional chances for birding, possibly into the Hood River Valley, depending on the weather and local bird reports. We will return to the Portland airport by 4 p.m. Sunday.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Winter birding in Wallowa County often requires a sense of adventure. Inclement weather will not cancel the tour, and the birding is often better when it is snowing or very cold. The daily weather conditions will dictate our specific birding routes, as well as the amount of time we spend in or out of the vehicle. Snowy days may be broken up by "warm-up" stops for coffee or hot chocolate, and mild weather may invite us to higher elevations in search of forest birds. Each day typically involves light walking; individual walks will be short and at a "birdwatcher's pace," although we will often walk over packed snow or ice. We will start birding after sunrise each morning and will often bird until sunset, but the short winter days allow plenty of time for a relaxed dinner each evening and a review of our day.



Extensive birding experience is not required for this five-day weekend. In fact, the relatively low species count makes this an excellent trip for beginners. Birders with more advanced skills may be able to find and identify more of the anticipated species, while less experienced birders can be guaranteed excellent looks at potential life-birds. Birders of all skill levels will be awed by the endless scenic vistas. Your lead guide, Stephen Shunk, is a patient, experienced educator, and he will work diligently to help each participant learn bird identification, as well as general natural and cultural history of the region.

The group will travel in a large passenger van or sport-utility-vehicle with easy viewing for all participants, and we will take a maximum of seven birders plus your guide. We will repeatedly enter and exit the vehicle from an entrance that is high off the ground, although running boards or a step-stool will assist with this process. This is a non-smoking tour. We stay in non-smoking rooms and eat in non-smoking areas.

CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

Very cold temperatures and low humidity predominate in winter in Northeastern Oregon. The average January temperature in the region sits around 26 degrees F, with an average high of 35 deg. and a low of 17 deg. We could experience everything from bright sunshine with bitter cold to milder temperatures with heavy snow, all in one day. You should be prepared to be outside for short periods in very cold weather.



We will have plenty of room for multiple pieces of small luggage and larger soft luggage (such as duffle bags), but we request that you avoid large rigid suitcases. Please do not compromise your ability to be comfortable in a wide variety of field conditions. You will definitely need warm gloves and hat and insulated footwear in order to focus on the birding at hand. You may even want to bring some of those instant pocket warmers to have handy on colder days. Prior to the tour, we recommend you check the latest weather forecast for Enterprise, Oregon.

We recommend that you bring your own binoculars and favorite field guide. You also may bring a spotting scope, although we will have at least one spotting scope available for the group. We also carry an extensive birding library for reference and learning. We encourage you to take photos as souvenirs, but this is not a photography tour. If you wish to focus on photographic opportunities, we ask that you remain sensitive to the group's needs. Ensuring that everyone in the group gets their binoculars on a bird will take precedence over shooting photos. That said, you are welcome to bring along any camera you can tolerate carrying, and you may at least want to carry a small camera to capture some of the images of Wallowa County's spectacular scenery.

LODGING, MEALS & REFRESHMENTS

We will spend all four nights at a comfortable local motel in Enterprise. The tour fees below list lodging at both single and double occupancy. If you are traveling with a birding partner and wish to share a room, we should be able to accommodate you in a double room. If we are unable to place you with a roommate for any reason, you will be responsible for the single tour rate.

Your tour fee also includes all meals, snacks and non-alcoholic beverages from dinner on Wednesday, January 8, through lunch on Sunday, January 12. We will eat most meals in restaurants with a wide variety of foods, although it may be difficult to accommodate the most restrictive diets. If you maintain such a diet, remember that appropriate foods may not be available locally, especially in this rural corner of Oregon. To prepare for these possibilities you may wish to bring some foods that will satisfy your needs.



We will eat breakfast out each morning, though coffee and tea will be available for early risers in the motel. Most breakfasts will be held around 7:30 a.m. We will eat lunches in local cafes, with dinners held after sunset at casual restaurants. In addition to restaurant meals, we will provide snacks and beverages in the field. One of our goals is to keep you pleasantly fueled and hydrated to help you get the most of your birding days. The survey included in your registration materials asks for 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.

TRAVEL ITINERARY

Your trip fee includes round-trip transportation from Portland (PDX airport). We request that you arrive in Portland by noon p.m. on Wednesday, January 8, to allow some birding time en route to Enterprise. If you will originate near our home-base in Central Oregon or if you wish to meet us somewhere along our route, please let us know this well in advance. We will return to Portland by 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. You may wish to stay in one of the airport motels on Sunday night to meet your travel schedule.



*Northern
Shrike*

Our daily birding will follow the basic itinerary below. Our specific destinations depend on a number of factors, including local bird reports, weather, and our success at finding certain species. If you have additional questions about the route or certain birding spots, please contact us at your convenience.

Wednesday, January 8: Portland to Enterprise

Birding the Columbia Gorge; dinner in La Grande, night in Enterprise.

Thursday, January 9: Wallowa Valley

Birding the valley and foothills; dinner and night in Enterprise.

Friday, January 10: Wallowa Valley

Birding the valley and mountains; dinner and night in Enterprise.

Saturday, January 11: Wallowa Valley

Birding the valley; dinner and night in Enterprise.

Sunday, January 12: Wallowa Valley to Columbia Gorge and Portland

Birding the return route to Portland

TOUR FEE

Your tour fee includes all meals, snacks and beverages from Wednesday afternoon through Sunday afternoon; lodging at single or double occupancy; transportation from Portland; 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.



*Barrow's
Goldeneye*

<i>TOUR FEE:</i>	<i>\$1,575 single/\$1,425 double</i>
<i>NON-REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT:</i>	<i>\$95</i>
<i>BALANCE AFTER DEPOSIT:</i>	<i>\$1,480 single/\$1,330 double</i>

NOTE: Our tour fees are structured to allow the best possible client-to-guide ratio for an optimal birding experience, with a maximum of 7 participants on this tour.

REFUND POLICY: Your deposit is non-refundable. If you cancel your reservation more than 60 days prior to the tour, you will be refunded any payments above your deposit. If you cancel between 60 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 Paradise Birding tour at any time in the future.

To pre-register for the tour, please complete the registration forms printable from our web site at <http://www.paradisebirding.com/2013regforms.pdf> and return them with your non-refundable \$95 deposit. *We look forward to seeing you in Oregon this winter!*

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