

A Naturalist's Ways of Seeing  
PLAYA Experiences Information and Agenda

**Instructor:** Walt Anderson

**Dates:** Thursday, May 22 - Monday, May 26, 2025

**Arrival:** Thursday, May 22, 2025

**Departure:** Monday, May 26, 2025

**Skill Level:** All skill and knowledge levels welcome

**Mobility Level:** Most levels of mobility can participate in the Experience. We will carpool to sites of interest and take short walks as we observe species. The hiking level for these excursions is easy to moderate and adaptable to your comfort level. This will include walking on dirt, gravel, and uneven terrain. While PLAYA is accessible, the sites off campus are not.

**Materials List to Bring:**

- Good binoculars
- bird and/or plant field guides
- sketchbooks and art media (as desired)
- camera (a useful tool and aid for esthetic expression)
- sturdy walking shoes
- hiking poles (if you use them)
- sun and insect protection
- clothing for variable weather
- water and snacks for the field

**Description**

Science and art merge in a naturalist's approach to viewing and understanding nature. In this Experience, participants will visit several diverse ecosystems (wetlands, high desert, pine forest) and practice the art of "seeing." The instructor will provide a working framework for thinking about life history strategies (including ecological concepts such as herbivory, predation, migration, foraging, competition, cooperation, reproduction, parental care, and social behavior) of animals and plants. There will be time in the field and at the PLAYA campus for independent journaling, field sketching, and photography. Participants can share their work with others, and the instructor is happy to provide individualized feedback.

Participants will leave this Experience with diverse ways of perceiving and interpreting nature, and familiarization with plants, animals, ecosystems, and ecological and evolutionary processes.

## **Instructor Bio**

Walt Anderson is an accomplished author, wildlife artist, photographer, lecturer, and expedition guide who taught environmental studies courses for 27 years for Prescott College in Arizona. He is a pioneer of ecotourism with experience around the globe. Since retiring from Prescott College, he continues to teach and reach out through his photographs, paintings, and writing on a daily basis. In 2024, Artists for Conservation recognized Walt with its highest honor—the Simon Combes Conservation Artist Award--“in recognition of Walt’s lifelong dedication to conservation, artistic mastery, and sharing of his scientific knowledge.”

As a well-rounded naturalist, he feels that interpretation is his calling. He is on the boards of multiple conservation NGO’s that work from local to international levels. Currently residing in Prescott, Arizona, Walt has fond memories of living for years in Eugene and working several times as a wildlife biologist at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon. Two residencies at Playa reinforced his love for the ecosystems of the Great Basin and his passion to integrate art and science, in tune with the mission of Playa.

## **Agenda**

Day 1 – Arrival Day // Thursday, May 22

1:00 - 4:00 pm: Arrival

6:00 pm: Meet and Greet (BYOB and snacks)

Day 2 // Friday, May 23

Morning: Group field trip to vicinity of Paisley and Winter Ridge emphasizing plants and wooded ecosystems; bring lunch

Late Afternoon: Independent time at PLAYA

6:00 pm: Group dinner provided by PLAYA

Evening: presentation

Day 3 // Saturday, May 24

Morning: Group field trip to Summer Lake Wildlife Area emphasizing birds and wetland ecosystems; bring lunch

Late-afternoon: Independent time at PLAYA

Day 4 // Sunday, May 25

Morning: Group field trip to Lake Abert emphasizing geology, plants, birds, and anything else we observe; bring lunch.

Late Afternoon: Independent time at Playa

6:00 pm: Group debrief and summary (BYOB)

Day 5 – Departure Day // Monday, May 26

Depart by 12:00 pm