

Great Birding in the Great Basin  
PLAYA Experience Information and Agenda

**Instructor:** Walt Anderson

**Dates:** Thursday, May 15 - Monday, May 19, 2025

**Arrival:** Thursday, May 15, 2025

**Departure:** Monday, May 19, 2025

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

**Mobility Level:** Most levels of mobility can participate in this Experience. We will carpool to sites of interest and take short walks as we observe birds. 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
- cameras (if desired)
- bird field guides
- cell phones (for using eBird or various birding apps)
- sturdy walking shoes
- sun and insect protection
- clothing for variable weather
- water and snacks for the field

**Description**

May in the Summer Lake area is a time of avian abundance, diversity, and exuberance. Migrants are moving through, and breeding birds are singing and displaying to defend territory and court mates, while some have started nesting. In this Experience, participants will visit birding hotspots like the Summer Lake Wildlife Area and Lake Abert, perhaps ascending Winter Ridge to look for forest birds. We will go beyond identification, discussing bird life history strategies, including habitat needs. We will collect and share data using eBird and will develop familiarity with field guides. There will be sufficient free time for you to bird on your own, study field guides, write in journals, or take photographs. Above all, we will celebrate the joy of birding and birds themselves. The agenda below is subject to change depending on weather and information on where the birds are.

Participants will leave this Experience with an understanding of field identification of birds, knowledge of biogeography and natural history of birds, and how to use eBird for citizen science.

## 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 15

1:00 - 4:00 pm: Arrival

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

Day 2 // Friday, May 16

Morning: Group field trip to the vicinity of Paisley and Winter Ridge; bring snacks.

Afternoon: Independent time at PLAYA

**6:00 pm: Group dinner provided by PLAYA**

Evening: Presentation

Day 3 // Saturday, May 17

Morning: Group field trip to Summer Lake Wildlife Area; bring snacks

Lunch on your own at PLAYA.

Late Afternoon: Field trip back to the refuge (optional)

Day 4 // Sunday, May 18

Morning: Group field trip to Lake Abert; bring lunch.

Afternoon: Independent time at Playa

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

Day 5 – Departure Day // Monday, May 19  
Depart by 12:00 pm