



# American Birding Association Birding Rally

# Minnesota and North Dakota

## Boreal Forests and Prairie Potholes: Itinerary

June 6 to 15 2020    June 6: Arrivals in Minneapolis

You may arrive in Minneapolis at any time today. After collecting your luggage, please plan to take advantage of our hotel's complimentary airport shuttle. Hotel check-in time is 3 p.m.

Please plan to arrive before 4 p.m. today, as the group will plan to have supper together at 6 p.m. We will have a have a trip overview this first evening to get you excited for the days ahead.

Overnight in Minneapolis

**June 7: Morning Birding in the Minneapolis Area; Mid-Day Transfer to Beaver Bay with Birding (including Lake Superior Shore and More)**

Birding begins this morning with visits to a variety of sites in the Minneapolis area.

Around Minneapolis we can find a few species that are much less likely to be seen during the remainder of the trip. Possibilities include

Henslow's Sparrow, Willow Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Scarlet Tanager, Blue-winged Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Hooded Warbler and Prothonotary Warbler.

After we have enjoyed a nice birding around Minneapolis, we will begin the drive north towards Beaver Bay.

We will make some birding stops during the drive, including at one or two rest areas. Before we pass through Duluth, we will stop for some birding along Lake Superior. We should see Common Terns, loons, ducks, gulls and shorebirds. Peregrine Falcons are a possibility as well.

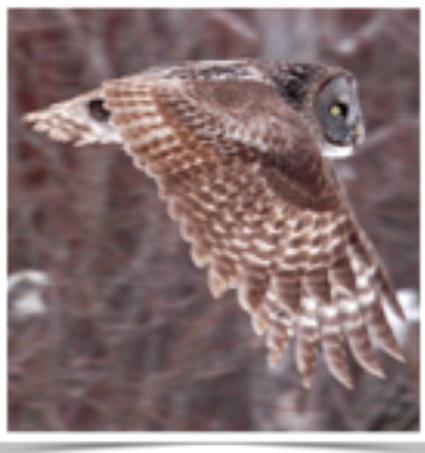
The group should reach our lodging by around 5 p.m., and we will have supper together at the lodge close to 6:15 p.m.. At some point this evening, your small group tour leader will review the bird checklist with your group and confirm plans for the morning.

Overnight in Beaver Bay.

### June 8 and 9: Two Full Days Birding Key Sites in Boreal Forest: Birding Lake County, Cook County (Gunflint Trail and More) and the famous Sax-Zim Bog

With sunrise around 5:15 a.m., it is preferred that we make early departures from the lodge in order to begin birding when the birds are most active.

Each day, groups will take different routes. This will reduce the number of people trying to see individual birds and allow leaders to share sightings from their routes to aid in bird finding on subsequent days. Each trip participant and small birding group (again in the eight to nine participants per tour leader level) will have a chance to visit all of these key birding areas/routes. These areas include:



**1. Cook County: Grand Marais and the Gunflint Trail:** On one of these two days, you will head northeast along the shore of Lake Superior, towards Grand Marais and the Gunflint Trail.

**2. Lake County:** Lake County birding sites are mostly along Highway 2 and Highway 1 going towards Ely. We will stop at a number of sites as we drive along these highways.

**3. Sax-Zim Bog and Duluth:** Sax-Zim Bog is a large area north of Duluth. Lightly-traveled roads offer many stopping places to look and listen for birds, including likely our best chance to see Great Gray Owl during the tour.

All three of these routes offer similar birding but spending parts of three days exploring them increases our chances for seeing the birds we are looking for here. These birds include Spruce Grouse, Ruffed Grouse, Common Loon, Northern Goshawk, Black-backed Woodpecker,

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, Canada Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Evening Grosbeak, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Cape May Warbler and Bay-breasted Warbler, among several other boreal species. While uncommon, there is always a chance we may encounter some Red Crossbills.

Additional warbler species that nest in the area include Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler and Canada Warbler.

Some other birds that are likely to be sought after by some of the group include Common Goldeneye, Black-billed Cuckoo, Wilson's Snipe, Bald Eagle, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Winter Wren, Purple Finch and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

While most of these birds can be found throughout this region of the tour, the Sax-Zim Bog area offers a better chance to find the following species: Sharp-tailed Grouse, Sandhill Crane, Great Gray Owl, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Black-billed Magpie, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren, Golden-winged Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, LeConte's Sparrow, Bobolink and both Eastern and Western Meadowlarks.

Each day, we will try to return to Beaver Bay for dinner between 5 and 6 p.m.. At some point each evening, your tour leader will review the day's bird checklist with the group and confirm plans for the following morning.

Overnight in Beaver Bay.



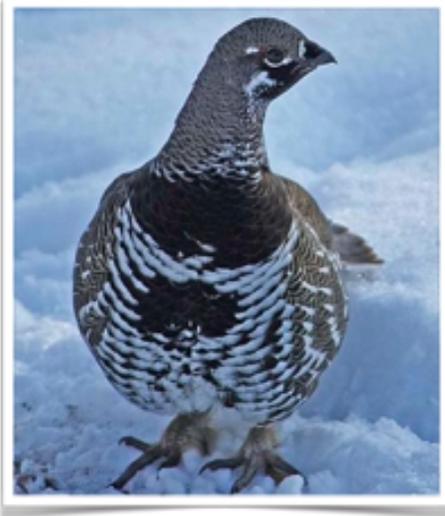
## June 10: Morning Birding Sax-Zim Bog or Lake County; Afternoon Birding Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge and/or Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge

Since we have a long drive to Fargo (North Dakota) today and since we still want to get in some great birding in the morning, we will need another early departure from the lodge.

This morning will be our final chance to add one of the birding loops for each of the groups. Given our drive plans today, your options are Lake County or Sax-Zim Bog (and possibly a combination of both). Plans for each small group will depend upon species they may still need to find in the boreal forest part of the tour.

No matter your morning birding plans, the groups will need to leave the Sax-Zim Bog area by around 11:30 a.m. (and some groups may leave earlier depending upon the success of their bird finding) to begin driving westward. It is about a three hour drive to our next birding stop(s) near Fargo, but we will stop for a lunch break along the way, as well as for any interesting birds reported along the route. We may pass some ponds that could have Trumpeter Swans on them, and we will certainly take time to view them.

About an hour from Fargo we begin to leave the forested region and start seeing prairie habitat. Two excellent birding sites are found on either side of this line – Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (mostly forest) and Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge (mostly grassland). Between 3 and 4 p.m., groups should arrive in this area. Short stops here will allow looks at some new species for the trip, as well as a nice break from the drive.



At Tamarac, we can observe the bird feeding station at the visitor center, watch Pine Warblers in the parking area, and likely see a few additional warblers and vireos, some of which may still be migrating through the area.

At Hamden Slough, we should add a few sparrows to our list, such as Clay-colored Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow. Also possible here are Marbled Godwit, Black Tern, Sedge Wren, Yellow-headed Blackbird and a few species of waterfowl.

From here, we will now need to head directly to Fargo to check in to our hotel and then go out for supper.

Overnight in Fargo, North Dakota.

## June 11: Morning Birding Transfer through North Dakota Wetlands and Lakes to Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge; Late Afternoon Birding at Arrowwood for Start of North Dakota Prairie Birding

This morning we will have breakfast at the hotel, with plans to leave Fargo before 8 a.m.

About an hour west of Fargo we will get off the interstate and start birding back roads towards Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge. As we drive, we will look for Gray Partridge, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Short-eared Owl and Yellow-headed Blackbird. The route will pass through areas with some lakes that are sometimes teeming with water birds. If this is the case, we will stop to scope the waterfowl, herons and shorebirds. Some possibilities on these lakes include Redhead, Western Grebe, American White Pelican, American Bittern, Sora, Willet, Wilson's Phalarope and Forster's Tern.

Around lunch time, groups should reach the vast Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge, one of the key sites for North Dakota Prairie Potholes specialties. We will spend a few hours birding here, especially looking for Chestnut-collared Longspur, LeConte's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow and Lark Sparrow. Wetlands hold Sora, Virginia Rail, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-headed Blackbird and hopefully a few American Avocets. Scanning the skies could produce a Swainson's Hawk or even a Ferruginous Hawk.

By about 4 p.m., we will need to start back to Jamestown to check in to our hotel.

We should be at the hotel between 5 and 6 p.m.. We will review the bird checklist and then go out for supper. We will also review plans for the next day's birding.

Overnight in Jamestown.

## June 12 and 13: Birding Two Full Days at Key Prairie Pothole Sites: Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Horsehead Lake, Alkaline Lake and Other Sites West of Jamestown

During these two days, we will visit the prairie potholes region. This area holds some of the highest density of wetlands in the nation, as well as remnant areas of tall grass prairie. There are many excellent birding sites within about an hour from our hotel.

We will visit Horsehead Lake Wildlife Management Area, Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Alkaline Lake. In addition to these excellent birding destinations, we will take short walks exploring from the roadsides throughout the region.



Two of the main targets here are Baird's Sparrow and Nelson's Sparrow. There is always a chance we may find a Sprague's Pipit as well. Other birds we hope to see here include Western Grebe, Clark's Grebe, Gray Partridge, Sharp-tailed Grouse, American Bittern, Piping Plover, Upland Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, Wilson's Snipe, Wilson's Phalarope, California Gull, Black Tern, Short-eared Owl, Sedge Wren, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Vesper Sparrow and LeConte's Sparrow.



We will return to the hotel in Jamestown by about 6 p.m. both days. We will meet in the hotel lobby to review the bird checklist and plans for the next day, then go out to enjoy supper together.

Overnight in Jamestown for two additional night

### June 14: CLEAN UP DAY: Focused Birding on Any Species We May Have Missed; Afternoon Birding at Sheyenne National Grassland



Where you go for our final full day of birding will depend on which birds your group still needs to find. Your tour leader could take you back to one or two sites you have already visited or check out some new places.

Since we will spend the night in Fargo, one excellent destination will be Sheyenne National Grassland, just forty-five minutes southwest of Fargo. This large area of grassland, wetland and woodland may be our best place during the trip to see Greater Prairie-Chicken (difficult) and Dickcissel. It is also good for American Bittern, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren, LeConte's Sparrow and Nelson's Sparrow. Wooded areas offer a fine assortment of songbirds, which may add a few new birds to the tour list.

We will arrive in Fargo by about 5:30 p.m., check in to our hotel, and then meet for a final dinner together.

The group will spend their final night together in Fargo.

## June 15: Early Morning Birding Bluestem Prairie Preserve, and Flights Home from Either Fargo or Minneapolis

Anyone interested in trying to see Greater Prairie-Chickens can join some optional early-morning birding. We will need to leave the hotel by about 5 a.m. to bird the Bluestem Prairie Preserve at sunrise. After a couple hours of birding, the group will return to the Fargo hotel for breakfast at about 7:30 a.m..

**Note:** *If you wish to fly from Fargo today and avoid the four hour drive to Minneapolis with your guide and the rest of the group, you are free to do so. We will work with you on a plan to get you to the airport on time. Hotel check out time is noon.*

If you are flying out of Minneapolis today, you should plan to leave at 8 a.m. from our Fargo hotel with your tour leader. The actual drive time is about three and a half hours, but we will stop for breaks as needed along this drive. Our goal is to reach the Minneapolis airport as close to noon as possible.

**Note:** *If you wish to fly from Minneapolis today, we will have you back at the airport sometime between noon and 1 p.m.. We suggest flights out of Minneapolis after 2 p.m. today.*

## ABA RALLY ENDS

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