



## **Potholes & Prairie Birding Festival** ***Guided Bus & Specialty Tour Descriptions*** **June 13 - 17, 2012**

### **What to expect on the bus tours:**

All tours will depart from the **Chieftain Conference Center**, Carrington, ND, festival headquarters, (701) 652.3131. Tour capacity will vary.

**TERRAIN:** Although some bus travel will be on pavement, the majority will be on gravel roads. Buses will make frequent stops (based on the guides' discretion), where birders will have the opportunity to get out and observe a variety of bird species. Expect some off-trail walking through tall grass over varied, but mostly flat terrain.

**WHAT TO WEAR:** Wear comfortable, waterproof/resistant boots or shoes. Because of the heavy dew which coats the grass in the mornings, we do advise that you bring your (preferably knee-high) rubber boots, if you've got them. Also, it is recommended that birders dress in layers, as the weather varies from cold (mornings) to hot (midday).

**BUGS:** Come prepared for insects (including ticks and mosquitoes), sun or rain!

**FACILITIES:** *'Guided Bus Tours,'* (as indicated), will be equipped with lavatory facilities. *'Specialty Tour'* buses are not equipped with lavatory facilities; there will be designated rest stops during those tours. Due to the fact that these tours are in extremely rural areas, the somewhat limited facilities will include local establishments such as cafes and gas stations. When done discreetly, it is also acceptable to utilize the great outdoors for this task.

**EATS:** Lunch and water are included with the larger *'Guided Bus Tours.'* Water will be provided to birders taking the *'Specialty Tours,'* but lunch will be eaten at local cafes or eateries, where birders will be expected to pay for their meals.

**Birders are welcome to, and encouraged to plan ahead and bring their own snacks along on the tours, as snacks will not be provided.**

If you have any special dietary requests, require a vegetarian meal, have food allergies or any other concerns, please indicate that information at the bottom of your registration form.

**Time, locations, and guides are subject to change. See registration form for fee schedule.**

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# Guided Bus Tour & Specialty Tour Descriptions

Thursday, June 14, 2012

## 5 am – 2pm Guided Bus Tour: Birds of the Drift Prairie

*Guided by – Dave Lambeth with Asst Guide Stacy Adolf-Whipp*

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – This tour is designed for birders looking for a wide variety of local birds found on the glacial drift plain that covers much of North Dakota. Habitats that will be visited include riparian woodlands, shelterbelts, native prairie, conservation plots, and a variety of wetlands. **Lake Juanita**, the **Sheyenne River**, the **James River** and **North Dakota State School Land** are all potential points of interest. Shallow wetland areas will be searched for Willow Flycatchers and Marsh and Sedge Wrens. Deeper wetlands often harbor Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, American Bitterns, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and Hooded Mergansers. In grassland areas, we will look for Sharp-tailed Grouse, Gray Partridge, Upland Sandpipers, Sedge Wrens, and Bobolinks. Other frequently seen species include Savannah, Grasshopper, and Clay-colored Sparrows. Dickcissels, Le Conte's and Nelson's Sparrows are not common, but can be seen on occasion. A variety of breeding waterfowl and upland game birds will also be seen.

## 5am – 2pm - SPECIALTY TOUR: ND Specialty Birds

*Guided by Bob Anderson*

*-8-passenger limit*

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – A totally new and unique approach for a birding festival outing, our 'Specialty Birds' tour has a highly-focused objective of finding a select-few rare or more difficult-to-see North Dakota bird species. Limited to eight (8) participants, this small-group approach ensures an intimate experience and a higher degree of success. Our entire itinerary will be decided by polling the small group of participants on the birds they most wish to see, then pursuing the birds that are most sought after by the group. Tour guide, Bob Anderson, will set the itinerary customized for the group, to put birders in the right place at the right time to see the specialty birds on the collaborative 'most wanted' list. **A few weeks prior to the festival, each participant will be contacted by email to determine which birds to look for.**

## 6am – 2pm – SPECIALTY TOUR: Arrowwood NWR

*Guided by Corey Ellingson with Paul Halko, Refuge Manager, Arrowwood NWR*

*-15-passenger limit*

dancing sharp-tailed grouse



**ABOUT THE TOUR** – This tour is designed for birders looking for a wide variety of local birds and other indigenous creatures. Along with other nearby destinations, the tour will venture to **Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge**, which is located along the **James River** in east-central North Dakota. The refuge is 15,934 acres in size and made up of lakes, marshes, prairie grasslands, wooded coulees, and cultivated fields. Along with other native wildlife, we anticipate that birders will get a good look at a local bison herd from a ranch adjacent to the refuge which often grazes the property. As for bird species, the shallow wetland areas of the refuge often produce **Sharp-tailed Grouse**, Willow Flycatchers and Marsh and Sedge wrens. Deeper wetlands often harbor Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, American Bitterns, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and Hooded Mergansers. In grassland areas, look for Upland Sandpipers, Sedge Wrens, and Bobolinks. Other frequently seen species include Savannah, Grasshopper, and Clay-colored sparrows. Dickcissels, Le Conte's and Nelson's Sparrows are not common, and can be seen on occasion. A variety of breeding waterfowl and upland game birds can also be seen.

# Guided Bus Tour & Specialty Tour Descriptions

## Friday, June 15, 2012

### 5 am – 2 pm – Guided Bus Tour to Chase Lake NWR

*Guided by Bob Anderson with Keith Corliss*

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – For those in search of some of North Dakota's specialty birds like the Baird's Sparrow, don't miss this tour. The guided tour to **Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge** will take birders through rolling hills of the **Missouri Coteau region**. The mixed-grass prairie and agricultural land here is dotted with thousands of prairie wetlands of various sizes and permanency. This area provides a diverse blend of habitats that support a wide array of bird species. The highlight of this tour is the refuge itself, home to North America's largest American White Pelican nesting colony. Also, several hundred Double-crested Cormorants, Ring-billed and California gulls, and a few Caspian Terns typically nest here. Other common bird sightings might include Western, Clark's and Eared grebes, Cattle and Snowy egrets, White-faced Ibis, Franklin's Gulls, Forster's Terns, and a wide variety of duck species. Birders will also have the opportunity to hear or see Virginia Rails, Soras, Marsh and Sedge wrens, and Swamp, LeConte's, and Nelson's sparrows. The popular Baird's Sparrow, along with Sprague's Pipits and Chestnut-collared Longspurs are usually present. Swainson's Hawks can be common sightings in some years.

### 5am – 5pm – SPECIALTY TOUR: Dueling Big Day

*Guided by Bill Thompson, III*

*-15-passenger limit*

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – This will be a whirlwind competition for tallying the most birds in 12 hours. The winning team will be awarded \$500 towards a conservation project for Arrowwood NWR.

### 5am – 5pm – SPECIALTY TOUR: Dueling Big Day

*Guided by Julie Zickefoose*

*-15-passenger limit*

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – This will be a whirlwind competition for tallying the most birds in 12 hours. The winning team will be awarded \$500 towards a conservation project for Arrowwood NWR.

## Saturday, June 16, 2012

### 5am – 2pm – Guided Bus Tour to Horsehead Lake Region

*Guided by Ron Martin & Dave Lambeth*

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – Here is another opportunity for birders to add to their life lists. Guided by experts, birders will explore the **Horsehead Lake** area for more of the state's specialty birds, and will discover much more. Horsehead Lake is located in Kidder County, which is known as one of North Dakota's hottest birding spots. This is a premier example of the famous Prairie Pothole Region, especially the glacial outwash area which is teeming with an extreme diversity of breeding grassland and wetland bird species. Birders will have the chance to see American Bitterns, Franklin's Gulls, Yellow and Virginia rails, Sedge and Marsh wrens, and Le Conte's and Nelson's Sparrows. Drier prairie sites might offer sightings of Ferruginous Hawks, Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Vesper, Savannah and Grasshopper sparrows, as well as one of the area's most sought after species, the Baird's Sparrow.

## Guided Bus Tour & Specialty Tour Descriptions

### 6am – tba – *SPECIALTY TOUR: Prairie Ramble*

*Guided by Julie Zickefoose & Keith Corliss*

- 15 passenger limit

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – Native unbroken prairie is immediately recognizable for its emergent stones and its great diversity of wildflowers. Along with that go special birds: chestnut-collared longspurs, Sprague's pipits, Brewer's blackbirds and sometimes Baird's sparrows. Hidden in these special places are traces of Native Americans long gone: rings of rocks called teepee circles. Experience the magic of unbroken prairie with Native American historian and keen birding guide Keith Corliss and Julie Zickefoose. The Prairie Ramble is a slower-paced look at this remarkable ecosystem past and present, ideal for those who enjoy photographing birds and wildflowers.

### 6am – tba – *SPECIALTY TOUR: Hawks Nest Region*

*Guided by Alex Galt*

- 15 passenger limit

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – This tour will begin at the top of the Hawks Nest hills with a moderate hike, on uneven terrain, through the bur oak forest stand of Hawks Nest and the adjacent mixed-grass prairie. It is designed for birders who want to “stretch their legs” after a week of bus tours. Eastern breeding bird species, such as Eastern Wood-Pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, and Least Flycatcher can be expected throughout the woodland habitat, while Clay-colored, Grasshopper, and Vesper Sparrows can be expected throughout the grassland habitat. Other potential points of interest on this tour will be the George Karpen Wildlife Management Area, Hawks Nest Waterfowl Production Area, Mallard Marsh, and Barnes Lake. These wetland complexes will be searched for marsh birds including American Bittern, Marsh Wren, Sedge Wren, Sora, and Virginia Rail. Clark's Grebe can be seen on occasion mixed among the more abundant Western Grebe. Sharp-tailed Grouse and Gray Partridge are often seen throughout this area.

## Sunday, June 17, 2012

### Sat Midnight - Sunday – *SPECIALTY TOUR: Nature's Night Symphony*

*Guided by Keith Corliss*

- 8 passenger limit

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – Your tour guides will help sort the various cacophonies of sound on the early morning prairie. Come along and experience the multitudes of night sounds present during the short but dynamic prairie summers. Step out of your comfort zone and try this unique trip. All manner of birds, amphibians, insects, and even mammals treat the dark of night as their personal auditorium. We hope to locate enthusiastic night singers such as LeConte's and Nelson's Sparrow, and hopefully the Yellow Rails will be out clicking! You may also get to hear the hoot of the owls and the howls of the coyote. In addition, cross your fingers for a clear sky for unparalleled views of our starry nights and just maybe, the Northern Lights.

### 5am – 2pm – *SPECIALTY TOUR: Birding the Sheyenne Valley & Beyond*

*Guided by Bill Thompson, III*

- 15 passenger limit

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – On this Sunday field trip, we will load up the festival's "people mover" and head northeast to the Sheyenne River Valley for some specialty birds that can be hard to find out here on the prairie: veery, rose-breasted grosbeak, American redstart, and other species that call this beautiful riparian habitat home. After birding the woodlands of the Sheyenne, we will head further east to check out some lesser-known locations for Sprague's pipit and other prairie birds.

## **Guided Bus Tour & Specialty Tour Descriptions**

**5am – 2pm – SPECIALTY TOUR: Touring the Missouri Coteau**

***Guided by Chris Wood***

**- 15 passenger limit**

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – Few areas in North America rival the Missouri Coteau in mid-June. Every year I try to leave my home in Upstate New York and visit this amazing region for its bountiful birdlife. Each year is different, but one thing is always consistent – there are a LOT of birds here. We'll explore a diversity of habitats including wetlands, prairies and small woodlots – each with its own suite of specialty species. We'll look for striking Chestnut-collared Longspurs, certainly at their very best at this season and hopefully, performing flight songs. With luck and dependent on moisture levels we will try to find Sprague's Pipit and Baird's Sparrows, two of North America's most enigmatic breeders. We'll search for reclusive Le Conte's and Nelson's Sparrows in damp areas. Throughout the trip we'll pass and stop at a variety of potholes that provide breeding areas for a myriad of nesting grebes and waterfowl. I can hardly wait!