



## Potholes & Prairie Birding Festival

*Guided Bus & Specialty Tour Descriptions*      June 13-17, 2018

### **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.

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

**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).

**WEATHER:** Be prepared for windy conditions. It can be calm in the early morning hours, then pick up throughout the day. Other times it may be windy in the early morning hours and calm down later in the day. Sometimes no wind, sometimes all day long.

**BUGS:** Come prepared for insects (including ticks and mosquitoes), sun or rain! We strongly recommend wearing rubber boots with your pants legs tucked in to minimize contact with ticks. Even with this precaution, you may find ticks crawling on your clothes after walking in tall grass. Generally, the ticks we have here (wood ticks) don't carry Lyme, but it is best to examine your clothes before getting back on the bus to check for ticks so they can be discarded. We do not have deer ticks.

**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 included.

Birders taking the *'Specialty Tours,'* may eat at local cafes or eateries.

**Birders are welcome, 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 this information at the bottom of your registration form.**

Thursday, June 14, 2018

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

dancing sharp-tailed grouse

**Guided by Corey Ellingson, Adrian Azar, Stacy Whipp  
-35 passenger limit**



**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, shelter belts, 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.

**6am – 2pm Guided Bus Tour: Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge Tour**

**Guided by Bob Anderson, Alex Galt, Paul Halko** **-35 passenger limit**

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – This tour is designed for birders wanting to see a wide variety of local birds and other native wildlife while learning about the natural history of the region and prairie conservation. The route takes participants along the Hawks Nest hills which identify the transition between the Missouri Coteau and the Drift Plains ecoregions. The Missouri Coteau is known for its rolling topography and countless prairie pothole wetlands. Much of the remaining prairie in this area is grazed by cattle since it is too steep and rocky for crop production. These working lands support diverse bird communities that include Marbled Godwits, Black Terns, Grasshopper Sparrows, Le Conte’s Sparrows, and Chestnut-collared Longspurs. Least Flycatchers and Red-eyed Vireos are common in the wooded draws and shelter belts while the wetlands provide ideal habitat for the region’s waterbirds. The Drift Plains are more gently rolling and have been largely converted to farmland. The shallow temporary and seasonal wetlands of this ecoregion are often farmed through but in wet years they support a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds. The large emergent marshes are ideal for secretive marsh birds like Sora, Virginia Rail, and American Bittern. Gray Partridge tend to prefer the matrix of farmland and fence row habitat and can occasionally be spotted on the gravel roads along the route.

After lunch at a local cafe, the tour will venture to the Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge, which is located along the James River. The 15,934-acre refuge is made up of lakes, marshes, grasslands, wooded coulees, and cultivated fields. As for bird species, the shallow wetland areas of the refuge often produce 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 sharp-tailed Grouse, Willow Flycatchers, Upland Sandpipers, and Bobolinks. Other frequently seen species include Savannah, Grasshopper, and Clay-colored Sparrows. Le Conte’s and Nelson’s Sparrows are not common, and can be seen on occasion. A variety of breeding waterfowl can also be seen.

### 5am – 2pm Specialty Tour: ND Specialties

**Guided by Jesse Kolar**

- 8 passenger limit

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – Our Specialty Tour is 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 Jesse Kolar 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.

Friday, June 15, 2018

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

**Guided by: Bob Anderson, Jesse Kolar, Stacy Whipp**

- 35 passenger limit

**ABOUT THE 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. Great, Snowy, and Cattle Egrets, California Gulls, Black-crowned Night Herons and a few Caspian Terns typically nest here. Other common bird sightings likely will include Western, Clark's and Eared Grebes, White-faced Ibis, Franklin's Gulls, Forster's and Black Terns, and a wide variety of breeding duck species. Birders will also have the opportunity to hear or see Virginia Rails, Soras, Marsh and Sedge Wrens, and Baird's, Swamp, Grasshopper, LeConte's, and Nelson's Sparrows. Upland sandpipers, Chestnut-collared Longspurs, and Ferruginous hawks are regular sightings on this tour.



### 5am – 2pm – GUIDED BUS TOUR: Horsehead Lake & Kidder County Tour

**Guided by Ron Martin, Corey Ellingson, Adrian Azar**

- 35 passenger limit

**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, 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 two of the area's most sought after species, the Baird's Sparrow and Sprague's Pipit.

## 6am – 2pm – Specialty Tour: Sparrow School – Field Trip

**Guided by Alex Galt**

- 18 passenger limit

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – Our Specialty Tour, The Sparrow School, will be a narrowly focused study combining a classroom session with a field trip designed to explore and illuminate the nuanced aural and visual differences separating our prairie sparrow species. The classroom session is designed to help participants build a simple, yet effective, strategy for identifying this challenging group of birds. Armed with the information gleaned from the classroom, participants will take their newly found knowledge to the grasslands with a reasonable level of comfort when encountering those pesky LBBs emitting insect-like trills. Your expert guide will carefully walk you through this process in hopes of clarifying doubts participants may harbor regarding the separation and identification of LeConte's Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Baird's Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, and Henslow's Sparrow.



Baird's Sparrow →

**Saturday, June 16, 2018**

## 5am – 2pm – GUIDED BUS TOUR: Horsehead Lake & Kidder County Tour

**Guided by Ron Martin, Corey Ellingson, Bob Anderson**

- 35 passenger limit

**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, 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 two of the area's most sought after species, the Baird's Sparrow and Sprague's Pipit.

## 5am – 2pm – GUIDED BUS TOUR: Sully's Hill NWR

**Guided by Alex Galt, Adrian Azar, Paul Halko**

- 35 passenger limit

This tour more closely resembles one through an eastern deciduous forest with birds found here and a few other places in the area. Expect Northern Waterthrush, American Redstart, Eastern Wood Pewee, Veery, Indigo Bunting (one of 2 or 3 spots where they nest in ND), and Broad-winged Hawk, and similar nesting species. Small wooded ponds at Sully's Hill provide nesting habitat for Common Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser. An added bonus is the great Devil's Lake, an inland sea where gulls and waterfowl proliferate. Birders interested in wingless wildlife might also be interested to see the captive bison population, possibly elk, and black-tailed prairie dogs.

### 5am – 2pm Specialty Tour: ND Specialties

**Guided by Jesse Kolar**

- 8 passenger limit

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**Sunday, June 17, 2018**

### 5am – 2pm Specialty Tour: ND Specialties

**Guided by Adrian Azar**

- 8 passenger limit

**ABOUT THE TOUR** – Our Specialty Tour is 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 of participants on the birds they most wish to see, then pursuing the birds that are most sought after by the group. Tour guide Adrian Azar 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.



Chestnut-collared Longspur