

Carrington to Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge



Carrington to Chase Lake NWR (97 miles)

Home of the largest nesting colony of American White Pelicans!

We will begin our trip at the junction of US 281 and US 52/ND200 on the north side of the city. Proceed west on US 52/ND 200 for seven miles and turn left (south) at milepost 215.7, the Foster/Wells Co. line. As you proceed south you will begin to climb onto the Missouri Coteau.

Stop #1 (7 miles West, 6.3 miles South). Listen for Wilson's Snipes, Le Conte's Sparrows, and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows in the fen on both sides of the road. In the next half mile you might find Baird's and Grasshopper Sparrows and in the gravel pit look for Bank and Northern Rough-winged Swallows.

Stop #2 (1.2 miles South). Turn west onto trail that leads to Hawk's Nest Ridge. This trail can be negotiated with a conventional vehicle, but you might want to walk this stretch after a rain. Watch for Sharp-tailed Grouse along the entrance road. A hike to the top will be rewarded with expansive vistas in every direction. During spring hawk migration (particularly in early April), one might see large numbers of hawks passing over the ridge on their way northward. Cloudy days with southeast winds are the best conditions to view migrating hawks. The woodlands at Hawk's Nest have typically eastern avifauna, including Eastern Wood-Pewee.

Stop #3 (.5 miles South). George Karpen Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Check the pasture to the north of the WMA for Chestnut-collared Longspurs and the WMA for Clay-colored Sparrows.

Stop #4 (1.2 miles South). Hawk's Nest Waterfowl Production Area (WPA). Check this area for various waterfowl, Short-eared Owls, and Le Conte's Sparrows.

Stop #5 (2.4 miles South). You might find Black-billed Magpies and Sprague's Pipits. The brush on the right (west) side of the road might harbor a few Willow Flycatchers.

Stop #6 (.9 miles South). Listen for Sprague's Pipits here.

Stop #7 (.6 miles South, .6 miles West). During high water years, check the causeway for shorebirds and scope the wetlands for Western Grebes. At appropriate seasons you might find Horned Grebes, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Bonaparte's Gulls, and Forster's Terns. As you proceed to the next stop, watch for Double-crested Cormorants nesting on the right (north) side of the road.

Stop #8 (.4 miles West, 2.8 miles South). Barnes Lake. Here is a public use area with a shelter and restrooms. This area offers a good view of Barnes Lake and area for various waterfowl and other waterbirds.

Stop #9 (1.5 miles South). Look for Le Conte's Sparrows on the Mallard Lake WPA on the left (east) side of the road.

Stop #10 (2.1 miles South, 1 mile West, 5.2 miles South). Listen for Sprague's Pipits and Baird's Sparrows in the pasture on the right (west).

Stop #11 (4.4 miles South). Check these old buildings for Say's Phoebe.

Stop #12 (.4 miles South, 1.7 miles West). This solid, two-track road may not be passable after a significant rain, so make your plans accordingly.) You will cross the first of two causeways through Pearl Lake. Watch for Spotted Sandpipers as you cross. Scan the wetlands for Western, Clark's, and Eared Grebes, Franklin's Gulls, Forster's Terns, and over a dozen duck species. In the cattails and marsh edges, listen for Marsh and Sedge Wrens; Swamp, Le Conte's, and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows; as well as Sora and Virginia Rails. Keep an eye out for Cattle and Snowy Egrets, both of which have nested in this area in recent years.

Stop #13 (1.5 miles West). Continue west on the two-track trail for about four miles. Look and listen for grassland sparrows; Baird's Sparrows are present most years, usually several hundred feet from the road. Search along the ridges (on the left) for singing Sprague's Pipits. Watch for nesting Swainson's Hawks and Loggerhead Shrikes in the tree row to the right (north).

Stop #14 (4.2 miles West, 1 mile South). Chase Lake Pass. From the signed overlook you can scan the nesting islands for American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, and Ring-billed and California Gulls. In recent years a few Caspian Terns have nested. In low water years, scope the beaches for nesting Piping Plovers and migrant shorebirds. Remember that this is a wilderness area, so use common sense and, as always, do not disturb nesting birds.

Stop #15 (Return to 56th Ave (County Road 68) turn left and travel North to 21st St. SE, turn right (East) and travel .5 miles). The land to the north is state school land, and the land to the south is Peda WPA. Walking access is permitted in both of these areas. The state land might support Sprague's Pipits, Baird's Sparrows, and Chestnut-collared Longspurs.

The following stops traverse excellent grassland habitat with wetlands interspersed. During high water years, make sure to check road edges for shore birds. Listen for more grassland sparrows and view the Drift Plain from the edge of the Coteau.

Stop #16 (.5.5 miles East, .5 miles North).

Stop #17 (6 miles North).

Stop #18 (1.5 miles North, 2 miles East, 1 mile North).

Return to Carrington (15 miles North, 1 mile East)

For more information, call Chase Lake NWR at 701-752-4218.