North Dakota
Photography on the Prairie

Tour Leaders: Jamie Cunningham and Tyler Ficker
May 22 - 28, 2021
Colder and dreary weather didn't stop our group from starting out strong on this trip with a very photogenic Nelson's Sparrow right away. This individual spent quite some time around us just sitting up in the open watching and walking along the ground almost at our feet. Other individuals came and went with as many as three being seen in one spot from where we were. Western Meadowlarks, Eastern Kingbirds, and Sedge Wrens also put on quite a show for the group along the same road.

A marsh we stopped at provided many Ring-necked Pheasants, a very cool opportunity to watch an American Bittern call from atop a patch of cattails, and a very photogenic and unusually still Marsh Wren. We later found a pond on the side of the road where we had the opportunity to get low and photograph some absolutely striking Wilson's Phalaropes in great lighting with a beautiful setting to work with. A pair of Eared Grebes also swam over to check us out.

The next morning was spent with beautiful morning light and some cooperative Chestnut-collared Longspurs, a pretty great way to start the day. Savannah and Grasshopper sparrows were also present and made for some great images.
In the late morning, we drove around in search of Upland Sandpipers which often sit on the fence posts and call. Once we finally found one, a Marbled Godwit stole the show as it flew around our heads vocalizing, landing on the road, running up to the group, before taking off and doing it all again. We were able to enjoy this bird and get some great images from it for nearly 30 minutes. Later that day, we had the opportunity to photograph a pair of displaying Red-necked Grebes, a colony of Black Terns, and displaying Bobolinks.

We later had the opportunity to photograph many Eared Grebe pairs along with Ruddy Ducks doing their bubble display on our way to a location where we knew Great-horned Owls to have chicks about ready to leave the nest. We spent a short amount of time enjoying these birds from a safe distance before heading back for the day.

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The next morning, the group had the opportunity to photograph Grasshopper Sparrows in a very close range on some great prairie vegetation, making for a great scene. Down the road, a male Bobolink put on quite a show and Sedge Wrens came close and sat along the fences and sang for us. The highlight of the day was a very nice looking Clay-colored Sparrow perching in a shrub full of yellow flowers, making a great setting for the photo. The group then headed further west in the state in hopes of photographing Lazuli Buntings that evening before flying out of Bismarck to mark the end of the tour. Upon arrival, the group had a gorgeous individual posing very nicely for them, a great way to end the trip!
Join us in North Dakota for the opportunity to photograph birds in best spots the prairie has to offer!

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