Michigan’s Upper Peninsula
Photography

Tour Leader: Brian Zwiebel
February 2 - 8, 2020
We started off on the eastern side of the state, a mostly agricultural area that hosts large numbers of wintering Snowy Owls. It is always fun to see the excitement of people who have never been up, to see them trying to keep count of the numerous owls that we tally within a ten-mile radius. This trip was no different and we had a several racked up before dark. A roadside, Ruffed Grouse was our last bird of the evening after which we all caught some zzz's before a drive across the state in the morning.

An early stop to Hulbert Bog the following morning netted both Red and White-winged Crossbills, Purple Finch, Pine Siskins, and the always friendly and curious Black-capped Chickadee. We even spotted some fresh wolf tracks along the road. Our drive west included more crossbills and a pair of Canada Jay's near Seney. Later in the afternoon we spotted our first major target, a Northern Hawk Owl that was teed up fairly low to the ground. We finished our evening at the famous Iron Ore Dock doing some landscape shots and watching displaying Common Mergansers and Common Goldeneye.

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Our next morning started at a private residence where we have access to many feeders. Evening Grosbeaks were calling as soon as we stepped out of the vehicle. A large flock regularly visits the feeders and gave us great looks. Blue Jays, Red-breasted Nuthatch, both Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were in good numbers. The flexibility of being able to move feeders and set up perches is a wonderful opportunity for photo ops. An afternoon shoot in beautiful light netted the group some stunning Northern Hawk Owl photos later in the day.

We returned the feeder set up the next day and managed a Pine Grosbeak flyover sighting, which have been practically absent from the lower 48 this year. More ops were had with the Evening Grosbeaks before heading back east in the afternoon. A short stop back at Hulbert got the group a Ruffed Grouse, and more finches before a nice dinner in the Sault. A spectacular sunset was enjoyed by all before we called it a night.
The next morning’s target is always a favorite as we focused on Snowy Owls. We had numerous birds, including an almost completely white adult male, who challenged the whole group in finding focus in an almost completely white on white situation. We had a very cooperative female bird that perched for some time and gave us some nice flight opportunities. While searched for Snowies, we stumbled upon a group of lekking Sharp-tailed Grouse and we enjoyed photographing the displaying males. A Red Fox was also a fun find for everyone!

Our last full day was spent watching Sharp-tailed Grouse in several different locations, including from a blind where we could hear them calling and carrying on in preparation for breeding season. A trip to the Dunbar feeders produced some incredible images of Pileated Woodpeckers, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, and more. A late afternoon stop at another private feeder offered the opportunity to see over a hundred Snow Buntings that gather at the property. It was quite interesting to see so many hanging out in pine trees!
On our last morning, we found a cooperative Sharp-tailed Grouse, several coyotes, and an ermine that hunted and caught a vole! The morning’s sunrise provided some stunning images of the snow-covered landscape. The group headed south after a hearty brunch and parted ways with plenty of shots and smiles. Join us next year for the incredible photo-ops that can be found in this beautiful winter wonderland!
Join us in the Upper Peninsula for the opportunity to photograph birds in one of the best spots Michigan has to offer!

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