North Dakota

Prairie Birding at its Best!

Tour Leader: Eric Ripma
May 26-June 1, 2025

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North Dakota is overlooked as a birding destination by many a birder. However, during the spring and summer, it can be one of the most exciting destinations for any bird enthusiast. Our participants are always amazed at the number of breeding birds that are present throughout this scenic state!

We’ll start our tour in the western part of the state where we’ll spend time in the grasslands, wetlands, and badlands. We will be searching for several specialty species such as Baird’s Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, and Sprague’s Pipit. Other highlights could include Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Long-billed Curlew, Upland Sandpiper, and Mountain Bluebird. Mammals are also a big draw in this area and we will keep an eye out for American Badgers, American Bison, Pronghorn, and many others!

On the second half of the tour, we’ll spend time birding in the prairie pothole region of central North Dakota. This area is known as the “duck factory” for a good reason! Any bit of water we pass will likely have at least 2-3 species of ducks on it. Up to 6 species of grebes are also possible. We will also be looking for breeding songbirds such as Marsh and Sedge Wrens, LeConte’s and Nelson’s Sparrows, and the abundant Yellow-headed Blackbird!

**Itinerary Overview:**

May 26: Arrival in Bismarck, ND - Transfer to Dickinson
May 27: Little Missouri National Grassland (LMNG) and the Little Missouri River
May 28: Southern portions of LMNG
May 29: Missouri River and McKenzie Slough - Transfer to Steele
May 30: Horsehead Lake Area
May 31: Chase Lake NWR and surroundings - Transfer to Bismarck
June 1: Departure from Bismarck, ND

**Detailed Itinerary:**

**May 26: Arrival in Bismarck, ND - Transfer to Dickinson**

Upon arrival in Bismarck, your leader will meet you at the airport (arrival at the airport by 2pm). From Bismarck, we will travel west for an hour and a half to Dickinson which lies just east of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and Little Missouri National Grassland. Time permitting, we will bird around a lake just outside of Dickinson in the evening.

- Overnight: Dickinson, ND

**May 27: Little Missouri National Grassland (LMNG) and the Little Missouri River**
Today we’ll visit the largest National Grassland in the United States, Little Missouri National Grassland. As we explore the vast expanses of this property, we’ll search for Chestnut-collared Longspur, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Baird’s Sparrow, and Sprague’s Pipit among the more common species such as Western Meadowlarks, Bobolinks, and Grasshopper Sparrows. We’ll also visit a couple of Black-tailed Prairie Dog towns where we will look for the Burrowing Owls that nest within the towns.

In the afternoon we will visit Sully Creek State Park and spend time birding the riparian habitats that this park protects. We will be looking for Bullock’s Oriole, Lazuli Bunting, Black-headed Grosbeak, Spotted Towhee, Ovenbird, and many others!

-Overnight: Dickinson, ND

May 28: Southern portions of LMNG

On this day we will spend time birding portions of the Little Missouri National Grassland to the south of where we birded the previous day. As we head into these southern sections, we will spend time in more grassland, Ponderosa Pine forest, badland, and riparian habitats. Some of the species we will be searching for include Golden Eagle, Long-billed Curlew, Mountain Bluebird, and Sprague’s Pipit. We will also spend time looking for any species we may have missed the previous day. Our list for today is sure to be long and varied.
-Overnight: Dickinson, ND

May 29: Missouri River and McKenzie Slough - Transfer to Steele

We’ll begin our drive east toward Steele with a couple birding stops along the way along the Missouri River. We hope to see many riparian species and uncommon breeders such as Least Tern and Piping...
Plover. After lunch in Bismarck, we’ll make our first stop in the prairie pothole region at McKenzie Slough where species such as Black Tern and Yellow-headed Blackbird are abundant. We should also get our first close looks at many species of ducks and grebes. We plan to make it to our hotel in Steele by the late afternoon/early evening.

-Overnight: Steele, ND

**May 30: Horsehead Lake Area**

The entire day will be spent birding the portion of the ‘prairie pothole’ region around Horsehead Lake. In the early morning, there can be so many birds singing that it’s almost overwhelming! We’ll search for species such as Western, Clark’s, and Eared Grebes, Wilson’s Phalaropes, Marbled Godwits, and LeConte’s and Nelson’s Sparrows. In the afternoon, we’ll bird on the eastern side of Horsehead Lake where species such as Common Tern, American Bittern, Red-necked Grebes, and many others are rather common.

-Overnight: Steele, ND

**May 31: Chase Lake NWR and surroundings - Transfer to Bismarck**

Our final day of birding on this tour will begin at Chase Lake NWR which contains the largest breeding colony of American White Pelicans in the United States. Depending on what species we have seen thus far, the guide will make a decision as to the best locations to visit during much of the day.

-Overnight: Bismarck, ND

**June 1: Departure from Bismarck, ND**
American Bittern

Nelson’s Sparrow
Trip Details:

Cost:
Price per person (double occupancy), from Bismarck, North Dakota: $3,099
Single Supplement: $600
Minimum Participants: 4
Maximum Participants: 6

Price Includes:
Expert Guide
Ground Transportation in North Dakota
All Lodging
All Meals
Park Entrance Fees

Price Does Not Include:
Airfare to and from Bismarck, ND
Visa and Passport Fees (if applicable)
Alcoholic Beverages
Personal Items
Tips
Travel Insurance

Deposit:
A deposit of $500 per person is required to hold your spot on this tour. The remaining balance is due no later than 3 months prior to the scheduled start date of the tour (February 26, 2024).

If you have any questions about this tour or would like to sign up for it, please contact us at info@sabrewingnaturetours.com, by phone at 317-324-8505, or register through our website at sabrewingnaturetours.com.

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