



# Great Lakes

*A Spectacle of Bird Migration*

Tour Leader: Eric Ripma

May 15-24, 2026

## **Itinerary Overview:**

May 15: Arrival in Cincinnati, Ohio - Transfer to Slade, Kentucky

May 16: Red River Gorge

May 17: Red River Gorge - Transfer to Oregon, Ohio

May 18: Magee Marsh Wildlife Area

May 19: Magee Marsh and Other Northwest Ohio Hotspots

May 20: Oak Openings - Transfer to Tawas City, Michigan

May 21: Birding for Kirtland's Warbler, Tuttle Marsh Wildlife Area, Oscoda Area

May 22: Birding Tawas Point State Park

May 23: Birding Au Gres and Nayanquin Point - Transfer to Detroit Airport

May 24: Departure from Detroit, Michigan

## **Detailed Itinerary:**

### **May 15: Arrival in Cincinnati, Ohio - Transfer to Slade, Kentucky**

Your Sabrewing guide will meet you at the Cincinnati airport (CVG), and we'll transfer to Natural Bridge State Resort Park in Kentucky. If time allows, we will do some light birding upon arrival.

*-Overnight: Hemlock Lodge, Natural Bridge State Resort Park*



*Swainson's Warbler*

### **May 16: Red River Gorge**

We'll spend the day birding in the incredible forests that make up the Red River Gorge region. Our

main target for the day will be the Swainson's Warbler, but many other southern specialties are to be expected. Other possible species include Worm-eating, Cerulean, Hooded, Kentucky, Blue-winged, Prothonotary, and Prairie Warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush, Yellow-breasted Chat, Carolina Chickadee (US endemic), and Summer Tanager. After dinner, we'll have the option too look and listen for Eastern Whip-poor-will around the lodge.

*-Overnight: Hemlock Lodge, Natural Bridge State Resort Park*

### **May 17: Red River Gorge - Transfer to Oregon, OH**

We'll have time this morning to look for any species that we might have missed the day before. Afterwards, we will begin driving north toward Magee Marsh. We'll make some birding stops along the way to look for grassland and shrubby habitat species such as Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Prairie Warbler. We will arrive at our hotel by the late afternoon.

*-Overnight: Hampton Inn, Oregon, Ohio*



*Cape May Warbler*

### **May 18: Magee Marsh Wildlife Area**

Our first morning will be spent birding at Magee Marsh. This is the most famous wildlife area in the region and the main reason so many people from all over the world travel to Northwest Ohio each spring. We'll enjoy a full morning of birding on the boardwalk and other trails in search of migrant warblers, vireos, thrushes, and many others. If it's a good day for migration, over 100 species can be expected in just a few hours of birding!

After lunch, we'll decide where to bird based on the activity level. We may spend more time at Magee

Marsh or visit other NW Ohio hotspots such as Metzger Marsh, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Mallard Club Marsh Wildlife Area, Maumee Bay State Park, Howard Marsh Metropark or others.

Metzger Marsh has a small woodlot on the shores of Lake Erie that is surrounded by marsh. On a good day, the woodlot can be filled with migrant passerines and the surrounding marsh can have many shorebirds, rails, bitterns, and more! The shoreline at this location is also a good spot to watch the morning flight of songbirds as they are moving along the lakeshore through the morning.

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge is a large marsh complex along the shores of Lake Erie. The auto loop allows access to great marsh habitat and depending on water levels, mudflats that attract many shorebird species. Several woodlots on the refuge can also attract numerous migrant songbirds. This is a can't miss birding location when visiting northwest Ohio.

Mallard Club Marsh Wildlife Area protects about 400 acres of wetlands along the Lake Erie shoreline. Trails through this wildlife area provide great access for birding this lesser visited site. Many species of ducks, shorebirds, sparrows, and swallows are likely to be seen as well as more secretive species such as Least and American Bitterns, and several species of rails.

Maumee Bay State Park is another great birding destination with a mixture of woodlands, grasslands, marsh, and shoreline habitat. The list of birds seen here is usually quite long and some of the specialties include roosting Eastern Screech-Owls, displaying American Woodcocks, Eastern Whip-poor-will, and many species of warblers.

Howard Marsh Metropark protects more great marsh habitat near the Lake Erie Shoreline. Many of the same marsh species are present here, but Yellow-headed Blackbirds are more common here than any of the surrounding areas. Depending on water levels, this marsh can also have an incredible number of shorebirds. Some open country species such as Bobolink and Horned Lark are present regularly right around the parking area.

*-Overnight: Hampton Inn, Oregon, Ohio*

### **May 19: Magee Marsh or Other Northwest Ohio Hotspots**

See the itinerary for the previous day for the locations that we may visit on this day.

*-Overnight: Hampton Inn, Oregon, Ohio*

### **May 20: Oak Openings - Transfer to Tawas City, Michigan**

This morning, we'll have our bags packed and ready to go since we will be transferring to Tawas City in the afternoon. We'll travel about 45 minutes to the west to visit the incredible Oak Openings Metropark. This metropark protects a very different habitat than we will have seen in over the past several days leading to a much different species list. Possible species include: Wild Turkey, Broad-winged Hawk, Barred Owl, Red-headed and Pileated Woodpeckers, Acadian Flycatcher, Blue-winged, Pine

and Hooded Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Grasshopper, Henslow's, and Lark Sparrows, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, and Orchard Oriole among many others. Once we are finished birding at Oak Openings, we will make our drive to Tawas City. If time permits, we may spend some time birding along the bay behind our hotel.

*-Overnight: Tawas Bay Beach Resort, Tawas City, Michigan*



*Red-headed Woodpecker*

### **May 21: Birding for Kirtland's Warbler, Tuttle Marsh Wildlife Area, Oscoda Area**

Although Kirtland's Warblers have a small range, they are somewhat common when you visit the proper breeding habitat. Today we will spend the morning looking for this special warbler.

After our time looking for the Kirtland's Warbler, we'll visit a number of other wonderful birding locations in the area. In addition to the Kirtland's, target species for the day include: Piping Plover, Upland Sandpiper, Alder Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Sedge Wren, Nashville and Golden-winged Warblers, Clay-colored, Vesper, and Lincoln's Sparrows, Dark-eyed Junco, Brewer's Blackbird and many others.

*-Overnight: Tawas Bay Beach Resort, Tawas City, Michigan*

### **May 22: Birding Tawas Point State Park**

This morning will be spent at one of the best locations in the Great Lakes during spring migration, Tawas Point State Park! Tawas Point is a sand spit that extends south into Lake Huron. For many birds that are migrating over the lake, this is the first bit of land they see as the sun rises. Depending on weather conditions, this park can be as busy with migrants as anywhere in the Great Lakes. We will spend the whole morning walking the trails at the point and looking for migrant ducks, shore-

birds, terns, thrushes, vireos, flycatchers, warblers and more!



*Kirtland's Warbler*

### **May 23: Birding Au Gres and Nayanquin Point - Transfer to Detroit**

After breakfast and packing our luggage, we will make a short drive south the forests around Au Gres. The number of breeding birds in this forest can be incredible. We'll have to pick through the Northern Redstarts to look for less common species such as Golden-winged and Mourning Warblers. This is also a location where Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers commonly hybridize, so we have a good chance at seeing one of these hybrids. After spending time on a nearby boardwalk, we will continue south along the lakeshore.

After lunch, we will visit Nayanquin Point State Wildlife Area where we will be looking for a variety of ducks, shorebirds, and other migrants. Afterwards, we'll make another stop along the lakeshore where there are typically numerous loafing gulls and terns. After driving south to Romulus and checking into our hotel, we will have a great farewell dinner.

*-Overnight: Hampton Inn & Suites Detroit/Airport-Romulus, Michigan*

### **May 24: Departure from Detroit, Michigan**



*Bay-breasted Warbler*



*Dickcissel*

## **Trip Details:**

### **Cost:**

Price per person (double occupancy), from Cincinnati, OH to Detroit, MI: \$3,899

Single Supplement: \$1000

Minimum Participants: 4

Maximum Participants: 6

### **Price Includes:**

Expert Guide

Ground Transportation

All Lodging

All Meals

Park Entrance Fees

### **Price Does Not Include:**

Airfare to Cincinnati, Ohio (CVG) and from Detroit, Michigan (DTW)

Airport Taxes

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 14, 2026).

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

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