

BIRDING ACROSS AMERICA BY TRAIN

MAY 22 – JUNE 4, 2010

LEADERS:

VICTOR EMANUEL AND BARRY LYON

COMPILED BY: BARRY LYON

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As our only domestic tour of its kind, Birding Across America by Train offers an immensely interesting and patriotic means to experience a broad swath of these United States. In combining two traditionally great pastimes, birding and train travel, this tour presents an unmatched opportunity to see some of America's most alluring birds amid some of its most majestic landscapes, and all while completing a national traverse from New York to Washington state aboard Amtrak trains.

The 2010 edition of Birding Across America by Train was a splendid endeavor, and one that saw our tour set new high marks for the numbers of bird and mammal species recorded. We enjoyed mostly good weather throughout the tour, but the Northeast baked under an early and especially intense heat wave. This, in combination with the later start date of this year's tour, meant that migration was largely over and the spring breeding season further along than we've observed on past tours. North Dakota and Washington were milder by comparison, but shared the same characteristics of a mostly concluded migration period and breeding activity among the nesting birds in full swing.

The new record of 226 bird species included a comprehensive representation of birds of the northeastern forests, the Great Plains, and the Pacific Northwest. In New York, a wonderful first day in the leafy Carolinian forest southwest of Albany produced colorful dandies such as Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, and Hooded warblers along with Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, and Baltimore Oriole. Moving to the Adirondack League Club, a private facility set amid 53,000 acres of mountains, forests, and lakes, we spent more than two days entertaining ourselves on the club property and outlying parts of Adirondack Park. Highlights included Common Loons and Hooded Mergansers on Little Moose Lake; Scarlet Tanager and Blackburnian Warbler at East Lake; and Black-backed Woodpecker, over a dozen species of warblers, and a variety of northern plants in and around Ferd's Bog.

In North Dakota, we spent three days in Big Sky Country at the height of the breeding season. Pothole marshes, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs were filled with pageants of pelicans, cormorants, waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, and terns; and the native grasslands contained a mix of some of our most emblematic prairie birds. This segment of the trip included visits to many excellent birding areas, but our trip to McHenry County east of Minot on the first afternoon was incredible for its richness. Sharp-tailed Grouse, Marbled Godwit, Upland Sandpiper, Ferruginous Hawk, Sprague's Pipit, Baird's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, and Bobolink headlined a list of sensational birds seen that day.

The final leg of our journey included two memorable days on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, and featured visits to Olympic National Park and the shoreline on the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The highlights were many and included sightings of supreme Harlequin Ducks and Black Oystercatchers at Ediz Hook, and Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Varied Thrush, Olympic marmot, and

black bear in the national park. Below Hurricane Ridge we were treated to the unforgettable sight of a Sooty Grouse in full display by the side of the road! Victor later proclaimed that event as one of the top birding experiences of his life!

For a serendipitous grand finale, an unscheduled coffee stop in the town of Quilcene turned into a birding extravaganza upon discovery of six species of finches clustered around the bird feeders at a nearby residence. From a distance of 10 yards, we watched transfixed as Evening Grosbeaks, Red Crossbills, American Goldfinches, Pine Siskins, House Finches, and Purple Finches gorged themselves on sunflower seeds.

On an entirely different level, one of the joys of this trip is its varied pace. After several days of serious birding in New York and North Dakota, it was fun to board a train and relax while concurrently absorbing the memories of our last destination and anticipating the adventures to be had at the next. Special memories from our times aboard include:

- *Boarding Amtrak's "Lakeside Limited" in Albany, and waking up the following morning along the south shore of Lake Erie, bound for the Windy City.*
- *Riding the "Empire Builder" from Chicago to Minot, North Dakota on an afternoon many of us deemed among the most pleasurable of the trip. Traversing southern Wisconsin, we laid eyes on a sublime countryside rife with farms, forested hills, and myriad rivers. The Mighty Mississippi appeared alongside of us late in the day, and was followed, soon after dark, by the lights of Minneapolis glowing on the horizon.*
- *The scenic splendor we experienced while traveling aboard "Empire Builder," across western North Dakota and Montana. This was a day that carried us from the rolling rangelands and prairie lakes of North Dakota, by the Missouri River in Montana, through the high plains, up into the forested Rockies, and finally down to the banks of the Flathead River.*
- *Crossing the state of Washington in a single morning, with such landmarks and landforms as the Columbia Plateau, Columbia River, Wenatchee River, Cascade Mountains, and Puget Sound all visible.*

Birding Across America by Train is, in fact, a journey that celebrates the wildlife, landscapes, and people of our homeland. The variety we observe from one state to the next, the sense of adventure that fills us daily, and the uniqueness of purpose that lends this program its true meaning, effectively combine to deliver an unforgettable look at what is one of the world's most diverse, beautiful, and fascinating countries.

ITINERARY

May 22 – Participants for our tour, Birding Across America by Train, arrived in Albany, New York throughout the day. This evening we gathered in the hotel lobby for a trip orientation and welcome in which the tour leaders, Victor Emanuel and Barry Lyon introduced themselves and trip participants had a chance to meet one another.

May 23 – Today was our first day in the field together, and we kicked off our birding adventures with visits to several areas around the Helderberg Escarpment southeast of Albany. The Escarpment, a lengthy uplift of 500-million year-old limestone, is the defining feature of the landscape of the Albany area. At 500 feet above sea level at its base, the escarpment tops out at 1,300 feet elevation at its high point. Below the plateau, and extending to the east, lies the Hudson River Valley, while the Helderberg Plateau exists atop the uplift and runs to the west. Because the area is home to pronounce elevation differences, a variety of habitats exist here that are not encountered anywhere else on our tour route. Deciduous Carolinian forests form the typical botanical community of the region and differ from the forests of the Adirondacks for its lack of conifers. As a result, many birds are found here, particularly below the escarpment that does not breed higher up in the mountains.

Our first order of business was meeting Chris Keefer, a local birder who provided access to a wonderful nearby birding area. We met Chris at the start of Fiddlehead Road, about 10 miles southwest of Albany, where we immediately began logging our first birds of the trip. Willow Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, Yellow Warbler, and Baltimore Oriole provided a perfect introduction to the region's varied birdlife. Our first major stop, however, was at a private facility known as the Helderberg Workshop that lies tucked away at the base of the escarpment. Here, where the forest grows tallest and is at its most lush, we spent a couple of hours enjoying outstanding birding as well as the post-breakfast snack provided by Chris! Among the many highlights were Hooded Warbler (at its northern range limit), Wood Thrush, Indigo Bunting, Ovenbird, and Chestnut-sided and Blue-winged warblers. Departing the workshop, we visited a nearby wetland (with singing Veeries!) before working our way on top of the escarpment and over to Thompson Lake State Park for lunch.

Thompson Lake State Park is a lovely place that features a lakeside nature center, excellent facilities, and a patchwork of habitats that includes a mix of forests and fields. A picnic lunch on this gorgeous springtime day was followed by a very successful birdwalk.

The remainder of the day was spent driving to the Adirondack League Club. The drive took several hours and saw us pass through the Mohawk River Valley, past a segment of the Erie Canal, and then on to Utica before we turned north and headed into the mountains. Our arrival in Old Forge was later than anticipated; nevertheless, we were happy to get into our accommodations and settle in for a good meal at the lodge.

May 24 – Situated on the shores of Little Moose Lake in the heart of the central Adirondack Mountains, the Adirondack League Club, or ALC, is a woodsy retreat designed for weekend recreationists and summertime vacationers. The League Club is a beautiful place in which visitors may explore miles of roads, forests, and lakes amid the Club's vast private holdings. Just outside the property, the towns of Old Forge, Inlet, and Racquette Lake offer quaint towns that beg for exploration, in addition to offering more access to the vast Adirondack Park.

We were met this morning by Gary Lee, a retired Adirondack Park ranger and a superb naturalist. Gary lives in the nearby town of Inlet and traditionally escorts us to various birding areas in and around the Adirondack League Club. His knowledge of the natural history of the Adirondacks makes him a valuable asset to our time here.

Today we spent the entire day exploring the grounds of the League Club. We began with an introductory birding walk in the vicinity of the lodge and cabins and getting a feel for the common birds of the area. We followed this up with a trip around the east side of Little Moose Lake (and to East Lake) where we encountered a number of birds that were new for us (including glorious Blackburnian Warblers and a Scarlet Tanager) as well as a variety of interesting plants.

After lunch at the lodge, we traveled the opposite direction and worked our way out to Woodhull Lake and back.

May 25 – While yesterday was dedicated to experiencing the ALC, today was spent "off the reservation." Joined once again by Gary, we departed the lodge after breakfast and headed a short distance east to explore different areas of the Adirondack Park. Our day's itinerary included a short hike into Ferd's Bog, where we had

fabulous looks at a Black-backed Woodpecker and a Palm Warbler; birding at Brown's Tract Right-of-Way and nearby Lake; looking for Alder Flycatchers at Racquette Lake; lunch at Arrowhead Park in the town of Inlet; an afternoon visit to Gary's house for feeder watching; and, finally, a walk back to a wonderful freshwater marsh in search of Northern Waterthrushes and Black-throated Blue Warblers.

May 26 – Our day began with an optional pre-breakfast run back out to East Lake in an attempt to find more warblers and other birds before departing the ALC later in the morning. After breakfast, we spent our time loading the vehicles and preparing for the return trip to Albany. Leaving the League Club in the mid-morning, our route took us east, rather than retracing our steps west. We had lunch at a delightful park near Indian Lake before continuing back to Albany. We arrived at the train station late in the afternoon, at which time we checked ourselves in, checked baggage, and readied ourselves to board the Lakeshore Limited. The train was only a little late in arriving, and, after a short period of time in which the staff prepared the train, we boarded, settled into our rooms, ate dinner, and watched darkness descend on the world as the train rolled into western New York.

May 27 – During the night the train made an emergency stop to remove a passenger (not one of ours!) who was apparently in medical distress. The delay meant that our scheduled arrival in Chicago the next morning was put off by about three hours. The good news is that we saw more of the country east of Chicago than we typically do on this morning when the train is running on time. By breakfast, the train was still in Ohio as we rumbled westward along the south shore of Lake Erie. Those who were watching from their rooms noted a number of birds along the lakeshore, some of which (Great Egret and Northern Mockingbird) we've never before recorded on this tour!

Arriving in Chicago in the early afternoon, we found ourselves moving at a brisk pace to catch the Empire Builder, the cross-country train connecting Chicago to Seattle. With everyone safely aboard, we had the remainder of the afternoon to settle into our cabins. Many of us headed to the sightseeing car where we witnessed, in sequences, the cityscapes of Chicago and Milwaukee before spending most of the rest of the day traveling across southern Wisconsin. The scenery was wonderful all afternoon and the weather was perfect. We crossed several major rivers, including the Mississippi, and observed a countryside invigorated by the greenery of fresh, springtime vegetation.

May 28 – Compared to the forests and farms of the East and the big cities of the Midwest, the spaciousness and unlimited vistas of North Dakota presented a striking contrast. Awakening in central North Dakota we were greeted to a classic Great Plains sight, with pothole marshes, farms, and remnant prairie stretching to the horizon on all sides, punctuated only by low rolling hills.

Empire Builder arrived in Minot, North Dakota right on time this morning. Waiting for us was Ron Martin, a local birder who is also a vitally important asset to this portion of our tour. Beyond being an outstanding birder and naturalist, Ron knows his home state of North Dakota intimately. He possesses a reservoir of knowledge that always greatly enhances our experiences here.

After loading the vehicles, we traveled to Oak Park, where we made our customary first stop in North Dakota. Oak Park is the main city park of Minot, but also a high plains oasis that attracts a wonderful variety of nesting and migratory birds. A forest of cottonwoods, willows, and various shade trees give the park a natural feel while a small lake occupies the park's center. We spent a couple of hours sampling the birdlife and dodging a rain shower before going to lunch.

We had heard that unstable weather could be headed our way over the next couple of days, and knew, therefore, that the possibility of wind and rain could present problems in light of the fact that we would be searching for a number of difficult-to-find birds. In order to maximize our chances for finding some of the key species, we decided to head east of Minot after lunch for some afternoon birding in McHenry County. The results were impressive as Ron led us to sites that proved excellent for seeing such desired species as Sharp-tailed Grouse, Ferruginous Hawk, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Baird's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, and many others. It was a spectacular afternoon by all accounts, and the weather, though windy, stayed favorable.

May 29 – In following with the superb birding we enjoyed the previous afternoon, we decided to return to McHenry County this morning in pursuit of a variety of other birds that also occur here. Like most places where native prairie is found, the grasslands of North Dakota have undergone massive conversion to agriculture to the point that less than 1% of the native grasslands remain. It is these grasslands, however, that support the remaining populations of so-called obligate species like prairie grouse, Upland Sandpipers, certain sparrows, longspurs, and other birds. Outside a system of national parks and national wildlife refuges, precious little remains of the once vast grasslands that covered most of the middle part of our country. Within North Dakota, McHenry County is a place where remnant patches of native habitat persist.

Arriving in the morning, we were greeted by the weather front we knew was coming. Increased wind and overcast were the prevailing conditions, although we were blessed by not having to deal with rain. Much of our birding was done from the vehicles this morning, but we managed to find a host of birds that were new for the trip. Among the more interesting places we visited today was a so-called forest preserve that was actually a long-time experimental station for growing different types of trees. Many native trees are also found here and the entire site was really a shelter belt in the middle of the prairie. Great-crested and Least flycatchers and Orange-crowned Warbler were some of the highlights of our time here.

From McHenry County it was on to J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge, which lies about an hour northeast of Minot. We made more time for the national wildlife refuge than we had allowed for the two previous times this tour operated. In so doing, we explored more of the refuge than ever before and logged a bird, Black-billed Cuckoo that we finally recorded for the first time on this tour. As for the cuckoo, it is worth pointing out that this spring was an unusually warm one, and the effect on the birds, in both New York and North Dakota, was that most of the migrants had already pushed through while all the summer birds were back on territory. The cuckoo is a late-arriving species, and it is likely that the warm conditions allowed us to locate a territorial bird along a riparian belt on the edge of the national wildlife refuge.

The remainder of this excellent day was spent checking roadside ponds and pothole marshes for waterfowl, shorebirds, Black Terns, and a variety of other prairie-nesting species.

May 30 – Today started with an optional early morning drive about an hour west of Minot to the tiny community of Palermo for a chance to view displaying Sharp-tailed Grouse. With the weather front from the previous day having passed, today dawned crystal clear and beautiful. The rain and wind that dogged us at times on the 28th and 29th cleared the atmosphere so thoroughly that the greenery of the landscape was extraordinarily vivid and matched only by the blue of the sky and the white of the passing clouds. It was a glorious morning in North Dakota and our success with the birds and the weather portended an exciting day ahead. Returning to Minot for a late breakfast, we then headed back to Oak Park to see if any late migrant birds were around. Several Broad-winged Hawks were notable, as was a difficult-to-see Blackpoll Warbler, and, most interesting of all, a hybrid Rose-breasted - Black-headed Grosbeak. From the park it was on to the Minot Sewage Lagoon, where we enjoyed nice views of an impressive collection of waterfowl and, most especially, a swirling feeding flock of Red-necked Phalaropes. A drive down the western periphery of the property produced a territorial Piping Plover, which is also a rare nesting species in this part of the state, in addition to several shorebird species. We enjoyed lunch back in Oak Park, which was followed by the day's final activity, a trip to Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge.

Between Minot and the refuge, our route took us through a couple of river valleys and a beautiful landscape that included rolling hills, wooded draws, and pothole marshes—all under an endless cloud-studded sky. Upper Souris is an expansive refuge that protects a major wetland created by the Souris River. It is a large place and also a special one where a host of waterbirds breed and where migrating birds seek sanctuary.

May 31 – After two-and-a-half wonderful days birding the plains of North Dakota it was time to say goodbye to the city of Minot and our friend Ron Martin. We arrived at the train station before 9 a.m. and waited for the Empire Builder to arrive and sweep us away to our next adventures.

Like clockwork, the train pulled into the station at the scheduled time and we boarded for the trip west. Of the three train-rides of this tour, the trip from Minot to Seattle (Edmonds) is the longest, during which time we spend twenty-four hours on the transit. The route took us through western North Dakota in the morning hours followed by the remainder of the daylight hours crossing the east-west width of Montana.

Through the mid-day hours the train swept alongside the Missouri River, the watery highway used by Lewis and Clark as they forged their way westward. Through the afternoon we rumbled through the high plains, home of the Blackfoot Indian Reservation, stopping in one small town after another. Those watching the countryside most intently were treated to sightings of Pronghorn, white-tailed deer, and a variety of birds. Continuing on, the darkened profile of the Rocky Mountains finally appeared on the western skyline. High, wide, and handsome, this is a region known locally as the “Eastern Front,” where the mountains meet the plains, and the Big Sky, for which Montana is nicknamed, is scraped by the mountains that form the rugged Continental Divide. From the viewing car we could see the first forest we had seen since New York, with stands of quaking aspen and whitebark pine carpeting the lower foothills. Rivers appeared, flowing east of course, and a few Black-billed Magpies and Common Ravens were noted as well. Farther on, we came to Marias Pass, highpoint of the route and a place of substantial beauty. Forest covered the mountains around us, except where the mountains towered above treeline. The weather conditions were mixed on this day, as mid-level overcast allowed for only partially clear skies. When visible, the higher slopes still retained a fair amount of the winter snowpack. Elk were seen by a number of us, including several groups seen from the dining car. Descending the pass, we soon found ourselves alongside the Flathead River, a mighty drainage whose translucent waters were colored a milky blue-green due to the presence of glacial “flour” in the water.

The ride across western Montana, at all times interesting at the least, was often spectacular. Witnessing the Flathead River flowing through a rugged canyon, while the train was directly alongside it, was an unforgettable experience. Skirting the edge of Glacier National Park at sundown, we eventually rolled into Whitefish, our last daytime stop in Montana, before the night took over.

June 1 – Sunrise on the Columbia Plateau. Peering out the windows of the train we found ourselves in completely new surroundings: the high desert, volcanic landscape of east-central Washington. Traveling across the semi-arid landscape revealed massive landforms created by ancient, long dead volcanoes subsequently scoured by prehistoric floods and today’s Columbia River.

This morning marked the end of our time on the train, and the trip across Washington provided a highly scenic and diverse ending to our time aboard. Reaching the western edge of the Columbia Plateau, we entered the foothills of the eastern flank of the Cascade Mountains. Deciduous cottonwoods mingled with firs, cedars, and spruces at the lower elevations while views from the train provided excellent vistas of the impressive Wenatchee River below. Climbing, we reached higher into the Cascades, and the forest closed in tight around us. Now, a wall of greenery abutted the tracks, with the darkened, fern-laden understory visible at close range. Up and up we continued until finally the granite peaks of the high Cascades became visible. Even on a partially overcast day such as this one we were treated to views of bare, storm battered peaks and patches of remnant snow dotting the crevices and slopes where the sun’s rays can’t reach.

Now descending the mountains, we arrived on the verdant west slope, where the trees were largest and the forest thickest. Dropping down, the coastal plain became visible, followed by the tranquil waters of Puget Sound. Then the tracks came down to sea level, where the train then brought us alongside the ocean, with harbor seals and Bald Eagles visible from our rooms.

Arriving in Edmonds, we gathered our baggage, disembarked the train, and prepared for the ferry across Puget Sound. Working our way west, we enjoyed a brief, but very productive stop at Salisbury Point County Park in which we tallied Hutton’s Vireo, Swainson’s Thrush, Spotted Towhee, and other birds before heading off for a delicious lunch at the Fireside Restaurant in Port Ludlow.

Continuing on to the Olympic Peninsula after lunch, we made a number of productive stops en route to Port Angeles. Cruising around the end of Discovery Bay, we drove out to Diamond Point to search for Tufted Puffins (unsuccessfully) and other alcids (very successfully), before enjoying a birding stop alongside the highway on the return route. We arrived in Port Angeles in the late afternoon.

June 2 – For the first time in the three years we’ve operated this tour, we encountered overcast skies and dodgy weather on the Olympic Peninsula. In some ways this should not come as a surprise (this IS Washington after all), yet, the forecast of mixed sun, overcast, and rain caused us to recalibrate our plans with regard to our visit to Olympic National Park. In other years we have spent a full day in the National Park, but this year it appeared that our best chances for seeing the park when the weather was best was by visiting the essential places over the course of two days.

We awoke this morning to partly cloudy skies interspersed with periods of brilliant sunshine. Loading up after breakfast, we headed into Olympic National Park for a morning of birding in the Heart O’ the Hills Campground.

Heart O’ the Hills is an exquisite place to experience an old growth forest. Giant Douglas firs, western red cedars, and western hemlocks form an ancient, living cathedral in which the moss-draped trees that grow here tower to almost two hundred feet in height. Under the forest canopy exists a world of dogwoods, thimbleberries, ferns, wood sorrels, and a profusion of other plants, grasses and shrubs. The birdlife is somewhat limited, yet is represented by a range of woodpeckers, flycatchers, kinglets, warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, and finches. Strolling through the campground, we encountered some exciting birds, with the likes of Pacific-Slope Flycatcher, Winter Wren, Wilson’s Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Western Tanager among the highlights.

Departing the campground, we decided to leave the national park as a heavy cloud bank settled on the mountains above. Those clouds meant rain, and we knew this could be the case. So, we headed for the coast where it appeared to be clearer. The peculiar hook-shaped spit of land known as Ediz Hook was our post-lunch destination.

Arriving at the “hook,” we spent the early afternoon searching for waterfowl, shorebirds, alcids, and a variety of gulls. The weather held for the duration of our stay and the birding was excellent. Regal Harlequin Ducks swam amid the booms just offshore; Marbled Murrelets and Rhinoceros Auklets fished the shallows a little farther out; and Black Oystercatchers balanced on floating logs.

Upon leaving Ediz Hook, the skies finally opened up on us and we were met with heavy rain. A proposed drive west of Port Angeles was cancelled and we returned to the hotel for a break and to wait out the storm. We reconvened around 4 p.m., but found that even though the rain had stopped, a low cloud ceiling hung ominously above. Since we knew it could begin pouring again at any time, we offered an optional outing to the pastoral lands north of Sequim. About two-thirds of the group chose to go along, and, despite the fact that the weather remained ominous; we did not encounter any more precipitation. California Quail and Band-tailed Pigeon were the spoils of our time spent driving around the area.

With the end of the day approaching, we returned to Port Angeles for dinner, after what had been a decidedly successful day in the field.

June 3 – The last full day of the tour began like the previous one. Under mixed sun and clouds we returned to Olympic National Park, but this time heading for the high country at Hurricane Ridge. Several stops along the highway on the way up produced some fabulous panoramic scenery, fine looks at the Canadian zone forests of the higher elevations, and views of a black bear.

At road's end, Hurricane Ridge, we were in a world of snow fields, snow-crowned summits, and alpine meadows. The weather was excellent and the sky sparkling with the bright light of a sun-drenched morning. American Pipit was the only new bird of the morning, but views of "Roosevelt" Elk and an Olympic Marmot (first time ever for this tour) were highlights.

On the way down the mountain we had an extraordinary experience with two male Sooty Grouse displaying on the side of the road. With all of us out of the vehicles, we were able to approach to within twenty feet of the grouse. Those with cameras enjoyed supreme photographic opportunities.

By the time we reached the bottom of the mountain, the clouds had returned and a steady light rain was falling. We spent a few minutes in the park visitor center, but as it was time for lunch, we departed Port Angeles in an easterly direction in an attempt to get away from the poor weather. The Olympic Mountains form a rain shadow in which clouds coming off the Pacific Ocean drop huge amounts of moisture on the west facing slopes of the range, but much less on the eastern and northeastern slopes. Port Angeles lies just outside the rain shadow and is capable of receiving large amounts of rain (although May and June tend to see better weather), but the region east of Port Angeles is typically treated to much drier and better weather. Accordingly, by the time we reached John Wayne Marina on the shores of Sequim Bay, the weather had greatly improved, which allowed us to enjoy a fine picnic lunch.

After lunch we embarked on the transfer back to Seattle. Our route took us to the edge of the Olympic Peninsula, at which time we deviated to the community of Quilcene, where we intended to search for American Dippers at the national fish hatchery. Its funny how circumstances can quickly change and how a simple coffee stop can turn into a sensational afternoon of feeder watching.

While in line at a drive-through coffee stand, we noted some Evening Grosbeaks calling from a nearby neighborhood. With all of us "coffeed up" and ready to go, we took a few minutes to seek those birds out. What we came upon was a seed feeder in the yard of a Quilcene resident that was brimming with birds! All of the area finches were represented and we spent over an hour simply watching the procession of birds come and go. Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches, House Finches, Pine Siskins, American Goldfinches, and Red Crossbills were all studied well at close range. Backtracking to the highway that carried us to the Olympic Peninsula two days before, we hung a right turn and made the lengthy drive down to Bremerton. Late in the afternoon we boarded a ferry bound for Seattle, positioned ourselves on the outside viewing deck, and watched the Emerald City come into view. With Seattle and its waterfront in front of us, the outline of the Cascade Mountains visible to the east, and Bald Eagles fishing over Puget Sound around us, it's small wonder that so many people love this city. From the ferry terminal, we arrived at the hotel after a drive of about 30 minutes.

A tour that started in New York state, more than two thousand miles away, was now at its conclusion on the Pacific Coast. A final dinner and checklist session signaled the end of a wonderful tour across America.

June 4 – With the tour now ended, participants were free to depart Sea-Tac at any time today.

BIRDLIST

The checklist order and common and scientific names of the birds that appear in this list are those given by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU). The AOU is a scientifically based ornithological society that serves as the official source on the taxonomy of birds found in North and Middle America, including adjacent islands. This compilation is based on the seventh edition of the **Check-list of North American Birds** through the 9th supplement.

DUCKS, GEESE, & SWANS (*Anatidae*)

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) – An individual on Blue Mountain Lake in the Adirondacks on May 26 was initially given short shrift, but John, steadfast in his insistence, proved to be correct, and we did indeed have brief views of a Mute Swan that day. Another was seen from the train on the morning of May 28 before

we arrived in Minot. The Mute Swan is an introduced species to the Midwest and parts of the East. Though beautiful, it is also a spreading pest whose feeding habits damage freshwater marshes and whose aggressive behavior is often hard on other waterfowl species. This year marked the first time we've ever recorded this species on this tour.

- Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)** – Canada Geese were seen in Albany on the first day of the trip, not at all in the Adirondacks, and then every day of the trip starting on May 27.
- Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*)** – We saw this species only in North Dakota, where it breeds in Oak Park in the center of Minot. Excellent views for all.
- Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)** – This is a common breeder in pothole marshes of North Dakota; others were seen in freshwater situations in Washington, such as at Diamond Point.
- American Wigeon (*Anas americana*)** – We saw wigeons in low numbers on the lakes, ponds, and marshes of North Dakota.
- Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)** – Mallards were located every day of the trip except the first one, indicating how common and widespread a bird this is. It was most numerous in North Dakota.
- Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*)** – We saw this species in low numbers on pothole lakes, ponds, and marshes of North Dakota.
- Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*)** – The Cinnamon Teal is a breeding species of western North America. In eastern and central North Dakota, it is uncommon to rare, but increases in abundance as one moves west. We departed Minot aboard the train on May 31. Those of us who were watching for birds from our cabins or observation car, noted a few of this species from eastern Montana all the way across to the base of the Rocky Mountains. There were probably half a dozen seen.
- Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)** – This is a common breeding species of pothole lakes, ponds, and marshes of North Dakota and the Great Plains. Many were seen.
- Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)** – Several were seen on the pothole lakes, ponds, and marshes of North Dakota.
- Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*)** – Canvasbacks are widespread, but not common, breeders of pothole lakes, ponds, and marshes of North Dakota and the Great Plains. We had dazzling looks at one particularly close drake near Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge on May 30.
- Redhead (*Aythya americana*)** – A common and widespread bird in North Dakota, we had many of them on prairie lakes, ponds, and marshes throughout.
- Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*)** – This was a common freshwater-breeding duck that we saw from North Dakota all the way across to Washington.
- Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)** – Approximately 30 were seen along the waterfront of Ediz Hook outside Port Angeles, Washington on June 2. This species is among the most dazzling of all North American waterfowl and we had outstanding scope views of many males and females at close range as they fed in the shallow water not far from the roadside. Harlequin Ducks breed at low-to-middle elevations on rivers in the Olympic and Cascade ranges, and spend their winters along rocky coasts. As is the case with most waterfowl, the males depart the breeding range soon after mating, leaving the female to rear the young. So it makes sense that we saw more males than females on our visit to Ediz Hook as they had already probably finished with their roles in the reproductive cycle.
- Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*)** – One or two birds were seen by the ferry terminal in Edmonds, Washington on June 1. These birds probably represented non-breeding individuals that were over-summering in the area. The occurrence of scoters in the late spring and early summer period is unpredictable in Washington and probably varies from one year to the next. Over the long term, the number of scoters summering in the offshore waters of Washington has declined.
- Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*)** – Buffleheads are regular breeders on the pothole lakes, ponds, and marshes of North Dakota and the Great Plains. We saw a few, but not a lot, in North Dakota, and at least a couple others in Washington.
- Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)** – This is another especially elegant waterfowl, and one that is found widely across the northern tier of North America during the breeding season. Our first ones were a beautiful pair along the shore of Little Moose Lake at the Adirondack League Club; a pair was seen from the train on May 26 en route to Chicago by at least one sharp-eyed observer; and then several more were on the small lake in Oak Park, Minot, ND. The Minot birds were seen on May 29 and 30.

- Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*)** – In similar fashion to where we saw the Hooded Merganser, we had a pair of Common Mergansers on Little Moose Lake in the Adirondacks; one or two from the train on May 26, and a female on Upper Souris Reservoir in North Dakota on May 30.
- Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)** – This is a very common breeder of pothole lakes, ponds, and marshes of North Dakota. We saw them every day between May 28-31; others were seen from the train and another in Washington.

PHEASANTS, GROUSE & ALLIES (*Phasianidae*)

- Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)** – Introduced from Europe to the United States beginning in the latter end of the 19th century, the Ring-necked Pheasant has become a widespread resident of agricultural areas and native grasslands across the continent. Our first birds were actually spotted from the train on May 27; many were seen well in the farms and fields of North Dakota from May 28-30; more from the train on May 31; and at least one bird north of Sequim, Washington on June 2. Several striking males were noted.
- Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*)** – The Ruffed Grouse is a common and widespread bird of the northern woods, but a species that can be maddeningly difficult to see. We made repeated attempts to see this species in the Adirondack Mountains by watching carefully along the sides of the various back roads we traveled when going from one birding area to another. May 27 was the day we departed the League Club for the train station in Albany. We decided to have a picnic lunch at a campground near Indian Lake along Highway 28 east of Blue Mountain Lake. Pulling into the picnic area parking lot, a Ruffed Grouse was unexpectedly seen by a few of us briefly along the side of the road before it scurried off into a densely vegetated draw. Victor made a courageous effort to flush the bird so that all of us may see it, but alas, the feathered rascal evaded detection and only a few of us had anything more than a fleeting look.
- Sooty Grouse (*Dendragapus fuliginosus*)** – Until about 5 years ago, North American field guides featured a bird called the “Blue Grouse” among our other grouse species. Ornithologists have long known that two populations exist: a group that occurs largely in the interior west, such as those found in the Northern Rockies and Cascades; and those that occur in the far west, such as in the Sierras, western Cascades, and Olympic Mountains. These groups were differentiated partly by range (although they do overlap in the northern Rockies), subtle plumage differences, and DNA. A determination was made that the two groups were sufficiently different from one another that each warranted separate species status. The change was adopted and the name “Blue Grouse” disappeared. The interior population became known as Dusky Grouse and the birds of the far west became known as Sooty Grouse.

Late in the morning on June 3, our tour group was in Olympic National Park and descending the highway that led from Hurricane Ridge. We had already enjoyed an exciting morning to this point, with excellent weather to start, and mammal sightings of black bear, “Roosevelt” Elk, and Olympic Marmot. After taking in the scenery and visitor center at Hurricane Ridge for the morning’s finale, we knew it was time to head on. A couple of miles below the ridge, and back in the heavy coniferous forest, Barry’s van was in the lead when John began shouting that he had seen something above the far shoulder of the road. Backing up, we were electrified by the sight of a male Sooty Grouse displaying on a hillside at a distance of about 30 feet. In excited voices we began shouting into the radio that a Sooty Grouse had just been seen on the side of the road. Victor’s van was only a short distance behind. Driving quickly past the site we launched down the highway to the closest turn-around area, flipped a u-turn, and went cruising back up the mountain to a parking area above where the grouse was originally seen. With everyone now out of the vehicles, we made a slow walk back down the road toward the site where the bird was still thought to be. By now, a second grouse had appeared near the road edge another 30 or so yards beyond where the first bird was thought to be, and a car was pulled over and a guy was out taking pictures from only feet away.

Approaching the area, we were astonished when the original bird suddenly flushed from the hill above the road and flapped across the highway and landed only 20 feet in front of us along the near shoulder! We simply stood there transfixed as the beautiful male grouse “boomed” and strutted along the road

shoulder. Undoubtedly a female grouse was watching from some unseen perch, but we continued to watch this elegant bird as it inflated its neck air sacks, pivoted on its feathered feet, and occasionally pecked at a piece of gravel or the bud of a plant.

Standing there in silence, we could see every feature of the bird, every field mark, and even the iris of its eye. Those with cameras could fully satiate themselves with shot after shot as the bird remained practically in place for almost half an hour. It was a mesmerizing experience and one we will not soon forget. Victor described the event as one of the top birding experiences of his life. A special thanks goes to Tom Lawler for providing us with a fabulous photo of the bird which appeared with the introduction to VENTFLASH #109: <http://www.ventbird.com/news/2010/07/02/ventflash-109>.

Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) – Seeing a Sharp-tailed Grouse is one of the high points for any birder travelling to the prairies where this bird still occurs. With their bold markings and wonderful foot-stomping courtship displays, there is always something special about seeing these birds that are emblems of our native grasslands. Because the weather was reputed to be terrible at Lostwood NWR, where we typically go to see this bird, we chose to visit a lek in McHenry County on our first afternoon in North Dakota. Despite the time of day, there were many birds in the area and all of us enjoyed fairly distant views through the telescope. Victor and Ron led the majority of the group into the pasture where the birds were so that all who wanted were able to obtain closer studies. A few were seen in flight here and there on May 29. May 30 was our last full day in North Dakota, and Ron suggested we make an early morning run out west of Minot to see a roadside lek near the town of Palermo. The day dawned crisp and clear, with white puffy clouds dotting an impossibly blue sky. The atmosphere, washed by the recent wind and rain, was sparkling! Arriving at the site, we offloaded the vans, set up the scopes, and enjoyed wonderful views of approximately 10 birds clustered on a hilltop engaged in the customary courtship display.

Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – A few were seen briefly around the town of Inlet in the Adirondacks on May 25; others seen from the train to Chicago on May 27; others in North Dakota over the next several days and still more from the train on May 31.

NEW WORLD QUAILS (*Odontophoridae*)

California Quail (*Callipepla californica*) – On the dark and stormy afternoon of June 2, we were driving around looking for this species in the more open country north of Sequim, Washington. I believe it was Tom who finally spotted a single male in the front yard of someone's house. The California Quail was introduced to Washington state from its native California haunts and is now firmly established here.

LOONS (*Gaviidae*)

Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) – This trip places more attention on studying Common Loons than perhaps any other VENT tour. The reasons for this are that a significant number of the loons that occur in the lower 48 during the summer months breed in the northeast; late May is the best time to see the birds in their stunning breeding dress; Little Moose Lake is an excellent place to hear the loons offering their signature yodels, bugles, and whails on warm spring nights; and lastly, our local guide, Gary Lee, bands loons as a part of an ongoing loon study program.

We had exceptional views of loons on Little Moose and Woodhull lakes at the Adirondack League Club and a few other individuals on some other area lakes. This is a bird that most birders see during the winter, when they are a rather unremarkable gray and white. But up here, during the spring, when birds are back on territory for the summer do they sport the fancy, silky black plumage with white spots and a dark head that emits a deep forest green sheen. The common loon is surely one of North America's most elegant birds.

GREBES (*Gaviidae*)

Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) – The Horned Grebe has declined as a breeding bird in North America across most of the southern fringe of its expansive breeding range. Once common from Montana to North Dakota, the bird is now found only sparingly in places from one year to the next. Ron Martin remarked that they have been absent from North Dakota for several years during the breeding season but that some had been seen this year. We considered ourselves fortunate that we saw three birds this year, and all on May 30. The first was seen briefly by a few on a roadside pond near Palermo during the optional Sharp-tailed Grouse outing. Because that bird flew soon after it was found, that sighting paled in comparison to the very excellent study we had of an active pair later the same day on another roadside pond near Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge. With its brick-red neck, black head, and yellow head combs, this is among the most attractive of our grebes.

Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – This is a fairly common bird on prairie ponds, lakes, and marshes during the breeding season. We saw multiple birds on May 29 and 30.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophus occidentalis*) – On the afternoon of May 30, we had a wonderful time viewing “dancing” Western Grebes on the reservoir at Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge. This was our last great birding experience in North Dakota and a classic North American wildlife spectacle. We saw pair after pair committing the elaborate courtship-bonding display in which the birds rear up on their haunches in unison and “run” across the water with their necks extended and crowns flattened. Scope views were enjoyed by all.

PELICANS (*Pelecanidae*)

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – One of the familiar summertime sights of the prairie is that of white pelicans circling high over a pothole marsh or reservoir. White Pelicans breed across the northern plains and we saw groups of these birds every day from May 28-31. On May 28, we noted our first group circling over the grasslands in McHenry County, while on May 29 others were seen circling over Salyer National Wildlife Refuge and still more resting on a mudflat at Upper Souris NWR.

CORMORANTS (*Phalacrocoracidae*)

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – This is a very common nester around larger lakes and reservoirs in many parts of North America. Our first birds were seen from the train along the edge of Lake Erie on May 28, but others were seen in subsequent days around pothole lakes and reservoirs during our time in North Dakota.

Pelagic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) – This species was surprisingly scarce this year in Washington. We typically have few problems finding them around Port Angeles, but whatever the reason, they were definitely in short supply in 2010. We managed one or two on Puget Sound late in the day of June 3.

HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERNES (*Ardeidae*)

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*) – The GBH was seen sparingly throughout the trip from May 27, along the shore of Lake Erie, to June 1 along the waterfront in Puget Sound.

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) – Several of this species were seen along the Lake Erie waterfront on the morning of May 28. The only reason we saw it at all is because of the fact that the train was running three hours behind schedule today. This was a good thing, actually, because it allowed us to see far more of Lake Erie than we ever previously had. Perhaps half a dozen were seen.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) – A single bird near Woodhull Lake in the Adirondacks on May 26 was the only one seen (and not seen by more than a few of us).

Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – One in the Adirondacks on May 26 and one in North Dakota on May 29 were the only ones seen.

NEW WORLD VULTURES (*Cathartidae*)

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) – Widespread and common, we saw this species across the continent from New York to Washington.

HAWKS, EAGLES & KITES (*Accipitridae*)

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Two birds in the Adirondacks on May 24 and 25 were the only ones seen.

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Although Bald Eagle is a bird that could appear any time during this tour, it is safe to say that Washington is THE place to see our national bird. We enjoyed good views of adult birds along the Puget Sound waterfront from the train and at the train station on May 31.

Individuals were seen every day thereafter, including a spectacular and dramatic flyby of an adult bird that was seen from the Bainbridge ferry on the final afternoon.

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) – Harriers were seen on six different days this year and in every major region we visited. As is to be expected, most of our sightings occurred in North Dakota.

Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) – A single bird flying over the Heart O' the Hills Campground in Olympic National Park on June 2 was the only one seen. This is a hard bird to find on this tour and possibly the first time we have recorded it.

Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Individuals on May 28 and 30 were the only ones seen. The May 28 sighting was significant because it involved an adult female bird sitting on a nest in Oak Park in Minot. She was difficult to see, but with the aid of a scope we all did okay.

Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) – About 8 individuals, all immatures, over Oak Park on the afternoon of May 28 represented late migrants. According to local authority Ron Martin, this was a remarkably high number for this area at this time of year.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) – Individuals were seen from the train on the morning of May 28 while coming across North Dakota. The best sightings occurred over the ensuing days when we excellent studies of flying birds on May 29 and 30.

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – This bird was never “common” per se, yet we recorded it almost everywhere we went. Individuals were noted in all three regions we visited.

Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) – The afternoon of May 28 was a spectacular one in which Ron Martin guided us to McHenry County where we recorded a number of highly sought birds. Among them was Ferruginous Hawk, the classic predator of the native prairie and one of the largest hawks in North America. We had scope views of an adult bird at a nest site. The key field marks were visible even at a distance. It seems like we never see more than one or two of these scarce birds on the trip and this year was no different.

FALCONS (*Falconidae*)

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) – A declining species over parts of its range, the American Kestrel is a bird we only see a few of in North Dakota. This year was no different as we saw no more than three or four birds on May 28 and 29.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) – An immature that strafed the waterbirds at Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge on the afternoon of May 30 was the only one seen.

RAILS & COOTS (*Rallidae*)

Sora (*Porzana carolina*) – At least one bird was seen extremely well by all at Salyer National Wildlife Refuge, North Dakota on May 29. Others heard that day and the next.

American Coot (*Fulica Americana*) – This is a common nesting bird of the Great Plains and far West. We saw lots in North Dakota and more in Washington.

CRANES (*Gruidae*)

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) – Several individuals and family groups were seen from the train on the afternoon of September 27 when we were passing through southern Wisconsin. That part of the state holds high quality wetlands and pastures, which provide suitable nesting locations for this species.

PLOVERS & LAPWINGS (*Charadriidae*)

Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) – A single bird at the Minot Sewage Lagoons on May 30 was the only one seen. Piping Plover is a very localized nesting species in North Dakota and the bird we found, in the place we found it, was cause for considerable excitement. The aggressive behavior displayed by the bird suggested a territoriality that, in turn, suggested that it might be breeding at the site this year. Only one

bird was seen so it was impossible to know for sure if the bird might be trying to defend territory. We had good scope views. A trip highlight!

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) – A common and widespread bird throughout North America, we had birds on a total of five different days.

OYSTERCATCHERS (*Haematopodidae*)

Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*) – The oystercatchers are among the most elegant of the world's shorebirds. We found two of this species on the log boom at Ediz Hook outside Port Angeles on the afternoon of June 2. The black plumage, flesh-colored legs, and red bill are the key field marks for instant recognition of this species.

AVOCETS (*Recurvirostridae*)

American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) – Though avocets were recorded on four different days, we had marvelous studies of a couple of adult birds in a roadside ditch on May 29 while en route to Salyer National Wildlife Refuge.

SANDPIPERS (*Scolopacidae*)

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*) – A total of three were seen: one at the Adirondack League Club on May 24; one along the Hudson River in the Adirondack Mountains on May 26, and another in North Dakota on the 30th.

Willet (*Tringa semipalmata*) – A single bird at the Minot Sewage Lagoon on May 30 was the only one seen.

Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia haemastica*) – We enjoyed spectacular views of Uplands on May 28 and 29 while cruising the fields of McHenry County and nearby areas. These handsome birds of the prairies had recently returned from their wintering grounds in Argentina. They were noted performing their impressive aerial displays in which the males cruised through the air on fluttering, black-tipped wings, and emitting their piercing calls to announce their presence.

Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*) – In North Dakota, Long-billed Curlews are found in the far western part of the state and from there, on into eastern Montana. The morning of May 31 was the morning we departed Minot aboard the Empire Builder. This was also the only point of the trip where we have a shot at seeing this bird. Some of the more sharp-eyed observers among us noted several curlews from the train in the vicinity of the North Dakota/Montana border country.

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) – A couple of calling, territorial pairs were noted on May 28 and 29. The pair at the Baird's Sparrow site in McHenry County on the afternoon of the 28th was studied very well. Despite their wintertime affinity for the coast, this species is an inland bird during the breeding season.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) – A few late migrants were present at the Minot Sewage Lagoon with other shorebirds on May 30.

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*) – Several of these were also noted at the Minot Sewage Lagoon, and later in the day at Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge, on May 30. This species, along with the next, are typically among the latest-to-be-recorded species.

White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) – We saw a few of these dandies as well at Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge on May 30. This is another shorebird remarkable for the fact that it migrates all the way from southern South America to the Arctic, where it breeds. Late May is a good time to catch this species during migration.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) – Several were seen among the other shorebirds at Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge on May 30.

Stilt Sandpiper (*Callidris himantopus*) – A small flock of this species was well-studied at the Minot Sewage Lagoon on May 30. The barred undersides and rich chestnut face pattern were seen well in the scope.

Long-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – The small group of dowitchers that was discovered on the dock at Little Moose Lake in the Adirondack Mountains on the morning of May 26 was quite a surprise. These birds were clearly migrating, but seeing them on a mountain lake offered testimony to the strange sightings one may experience during the migration period. None of these birds were in high plumage, which caused Barry to initially misidentify them. Closer inspection by Victor corrected the error. Long-billed they were, and another tour first!

Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*) – We saw this bird every day we were in North Dakota. Unlike the mouse-like creatures they often seem to be during the winter months, the late spring is a time when they fly like kites, often soaring and fluttering high over the prairie marshes calling and displaying. The curious sound made by the bird's tail feathers was heard well. It may not have been a snipe hunt that we were on, per se, but we sure couldn't miss seeing lots of 'em this year.

Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – We saw this species every day from May 28-31, and this should not come as a surprise since they nest commonly on the pothole ponds, lakes, and marshes of North Dakota. What was so memorable, however, was the amazingly close views we had of a couple pairs of birds in a roadside pond on May 29 while en route to Salyer National Wildlife Refuge. This is a gorgeous bird whose palette of pastel-colored feathers includes silk gray, rust red, delicate peach, and jet black.

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – Seeing this bird was high on the list of a number of our participants, and the Minot Sewage Lagoons are an excellent place to do this. The thing to know is that Red-necked Phalarope has a curious migration pattern in which they are not easily found in the states that surround North Dakota. For some reason, the birds fly across most of the continent and stage in the largest numbers right here in North Dakota. The flock of a couple hundred we observed was a little smaller than flocks we have seen in years past, but then again, this trip operated later this year than in the past as well. Still in all, we had wonderful views of them as they swirled in the impoundment near us. Scope views for all!

GULLS & TERNS (*Laridae*)

Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) – Franklin's Gull is a fairly common and widespread breeding bird of pothole lakes and marshes of the Great Plains and Great Basin. The species tends to form enormous breeding colonies on some of the larger area refuges, such as at Salyer NWR northeast of Minot. This year, because the refuge management had burned off some of the vast stands of invasive cattails that were clogging the refuge's largest lakes, the large gull colony had not formed the way it does in most years. As a result, we saw fewer Franklin's Gulls this year than on previous visits. Still in all, we had good looks at a number of birds in various places. We recorded the bird on four consecutive days, from May 28-31.

Bonaparte's Gull (*Larus philadelphia*) – Prior to this year, Bonaparte's Gull had never been recorded on this tour. By late May, the entire population is further north on its Canadian breeding grounds, so the two basic-plumaged adults at Upper Souris NWR, North Dakota on May 30, and another similarly plumaged bird along the waterfront in Edmonds, Washington on June 1 were pleasant surprises.

Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) – This is a fairly common breeding species of the lakes and reservoirs of the Great Plains. We recorded Ring-billeds every day from May 27-31.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*) – The majority of California Gulls breed on lakes and marshes of the Great Basin. The entire population then moves to the Pacific Coast starting in late summer, with numbers then building rapidly through the fall. We always seem to find a few individuals on the Olympic Peninsula that likely are birds that won't breed this year and will not migrate inland. We had several birds on June 1 and 2, from Discovery Bay to Sequim Bay to Ediz Hook, with key field marks seen well.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) – Herring Gulls breed on the mountain lakes of the Adirondacks, and we saw multiple pairs over the first several days of the trip.

Western Gull (*Larus occidentalis*) – Western Gulls breed on the outer Pacific Coast and are generally uncommon to rare within Puget Sound during the summer months. The only place we visit that gives us a realistic chance of locating this species is Ediz Hook outside Port Angeles. Here, on the Straits of Juan de Fuca, we are just far enough out to attract a few Western Gulls along with the hordes of more common Glaucous-wingeds. Because Western and Glaucous-winged are notorious for their extensive hybridization tendencies, it is not always easy to discern what we would like to call "pure" Western Gulls. Conversely, the same is true for Glaucous-winged. We had two birds at Ediz Hook this year, June 2 that appeared to show all the appropriate field marks for pure adult Western Gulls. The dark mantle, the white head, the dark eye, and the black wing tips all added up to our satisfaction.

Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucesis*) – This is THE gull of the Puget Sound region. It is known to breed extensively through the Puget trough and is also known to hybridize freely with Western Gull. We saw hundreds of these birds, which is to be expected, but we also had to be on guard for hybrids, which tend to show darker wingtips than would be expected from “pure” Glaucous-wingeds.

Caspian Tern (*Hyproprogne caspia*) – Caspian Tern is an uncommon non-breeding wanderer to the bays and lakes of western Washington. The head of Discovery Bay, east of Sequim is often a good place to find Caspians resting on exposed mudflats. We found about a half dozen birds this year in the place where we have seen them in the past. Crisp in their springtime plumage, these birds presented a striking sight.

Black Tern (*Chidonias niger*) – This species is well-suited for life on the prairie. Indeed, it has evolved to breed around the pothole lakes and marshes of our continent's interior and may be found from the High Plains and Great Basin far up into northern Canada. As its numbers seem to be in a slow but steady decline, I always emphasize the beauty and grace of this bird whenever I encounter it. We did not see lots of them, but the ones we saw were seen well.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) – Common Tern was essentially a missed species this year. We typically run into a few of them on pothole lakes and marshes while in North Dakota, but there simply weren't any around this year, which was possibly due to the later date of our visit. On May 31 we were back aboard the train heading west from Minot to Edmonds. That morning, while passing through eastern Montana, Victor, Barry, and a couple of other participants who were in the observation car noted a couple of Common Terns over an extensive marsh that was an offshoot of the Missouri River. The birds flew close enough to the train so that the diagnostic features (why they weren't Forster's Terns) could be noted.

Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) – This is a fairly common to common breeding resident of the marshes, lakes, and ponds of North Dakota. We recorded birds on May 29 and 30, with the important field marks seen well.

AUKS & MURRES (*Alcidae*)

Common Murre (*Uria aalge*) – Common Murres breed in small to moderate numbers on Protection Island, a national wildlife refuge in Washington's Puget Sound. Because the species is less numerous than in the past, seeing it is never guaranteed these days. We managed to put the scope on a couple of fairly distant swimming birds off Diamond Point on June 1, but our best sighting occurred on June 3 when we spotted a flying bird in front of the Bainbridge ferry while en route to Seattle.

Pigeon Guillemot (*Cephus columba*) – The Pigeon Guillemot is the most frequently encountered of Washington's alcid species. Their predilection for near-shore waters, in combination with their striking plumage, makes them easy birds to identify and study. We had outstanding looks at guillemots in several places along the Olympic Peninsula, including Diamond Point, Ediz Hook, and from the drawbridge that leads from the Olympic Peninsula to the Kitsap Peninsula.

Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) – A federally designated endangered species, the Marbled Murrelet breeds in old growth forests and feeds in shallow, nearshore waters. The species never seems numerous, yet we typically manage to get good looks eventually. This year, our best views were of a swimming, diving bird at Ediz Hook. Scope views for all.

Rhinoceros Auklet (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) – This bird nests by the thousands on Protection Island in Washington's Puget Sound. It disperses widely around the Sound in its quest for food but is most numerous in areas of current convergences. We typically find small flotillas around Diamond Point (which we did this year) and at Ediz Hook (which we also did this year). Excellent scope views for all.

DOVES & PIGEONS (*Columbidae*)

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) – A very common species around cities and towns throughout our travels.

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*) – On an overcast, windy, and rainy day, those of us who went to the rural area north of Sequim on the afternoon of June 2 were rewarded with high quality scope views of a pair of Band-tailed Pigeons. This is a lovely bird of the Pacific Northwest that is always a treat to see. A couple others were noted the next day in Quilcene.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – A fairly recent invader to the Olympic Peninsula, the Eurasian Collared-Dove can be found in small numbers around Sequim, Dungeness, and surrounding areas. While we could have encountered the species anywhere along our tour route, it wasn't until June 2 that we finally caught up with it.

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) – Seen almost every day of the trip from New York to North Dakota, but not recorded in Washington.

CUCKOOS (*Cuculidae*)

Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) – On both previous Birding Across America by Train tours we have searched without success for Black-billed Cuckoos in the Minot area of North Dakota. Cuckoos are among the last of the summer resident birds to migrate in for the season, and in previous years I believe our efforts were fruitless because we were either too early or because the weather was too bad. The spring of 2010 was noteworthy for its early arrival in many places and for its above-normal temperatures (especially in the northeast). Perhaps this is why we finally recorded this bird for the first time. At any rate, we located a territorial male along a riparian belt on the edge of Salyer NWR on May 29. Everyone had excellent views of the bird as it perched conspicuously in a tree along the roadside.

TYPICAL OWLS (*Strigidae*)

Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) – A Great Horned Owl flew down the road in front of Victor's van at Salyer NWR in North Dakota on May 29. Another tour first!

SWIFTS (*Apodidae*)

Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) – We saw Chimney Swifts on three different days in New York, three different days in North Dakota as well as from the train between Chicago and Minot. A couple of pair even nested in the chimney of the lodge house at the Adirondack League Club.

Vaux's Swift (*Cheatura vauxi*) – This is the western replacement of Chimney Swift and may be found in a variety of mature forest types. This bird proved surprisingly scarce this year, but we finally caught up with small group of actively foraging birds near the little coffee house in Quilcene on the final afternoon, June 3.

HUMMINGBIRDS (*Trochilidae*)

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) – Several individuals were seen over the first three days of the trip in the Albany region and in the Adirondack Mountains.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) – Rufous Hummingbirds breed in northwestern Washington so it wasn't too big of a surprise to have recorded a few individuals here and there on June 1 and 2. Because they are so small, however, and their exact occurrence unpredictable, seeing this species is never a sure thing.

KINGFISHERS (*Alcedinidae*)

Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – Our first sighting was a brief one and occurred in the Adirondacks on May 24. The best views were obtained in North Dakota on May 28 and 29, with the highest quality sightings taking place in Oak Park.

WOODPECKERS (*Picidae*)

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – This is a fairly common breeding species in the northern woods. We repeatedly had good views of birds on three of the four days we were in the Albany region and nearby Adirondack Mountains. Our first sightings took place at Thompsons Lake State Park on May 23. Others were seen daily at the Adirondack League Club on May 24 and 26.

Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*) – This is a common breeding species in New York, and we saw several birds in the Albany/Adirondack region. The best views were probably at Thompsons Lake State Park, but others were seen around the League Club. We also recorded Downys on two days in North Dakota.

Hairy Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus*) – We saw Hairy Woodpeckers in several places this year, more so in fact, than in previous years, but the pair at Gary Lee’s feeders in Inlet, New York were seen so amazingly well that the other sightings were largely footnotes.

Black-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*) – Black-backed Woodpecker is one of the premier birds of the Adirondack region, and a species that I feel we have a 50-50 chance of finding. It is known to occur widely through the park, but most birders gravitate to Ferd’s Bog and the surrounding region as this is the area that has traditionally proven the most reliable for locating woodpeckers. In 2005 we dipped; in 2007 we were successful; and in 2010 we were successful yet again. This year, while stationed along the boardwalk at Ferd’s Bog on the morning of May 25, we had stunning looks at a female bird as she worked a dead tree at remarkably close range. And speaking of remarkable, a male bird seen later in the day in a dead tree at the start of the Brown’s Tract “Right-of-Way,” was cause for further excitement. This was a banner year for seeing this species.

Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) – As is to be expected, we had little trouble locating this bird. We saw the “Yellow-shafted” in New York and the “Red-shafted” in Washington.

Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) – The Pileated Woodpecker is a bird that can be remarkably easy to find, or remarkably difficult to find. This year, this bird trended toward the latter. Most of us had reasonably good looks at a fly-by individual on the first morning out, southwest of Albany, but after that we mostly struck out until the end of the trip. We certainly heard Pileateds calling in the forest around the Adirondack League Club, but never gained that spectacular view that many of us craved. In Washington, we had repeated, but distant looks, at a flighty individual in the old growth forest at Olympic National Park on June 2.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS (*Tyrannidae*)

Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) – We found Olive-sided Flycatchers in two places this year: one in New York and one in North Dakota. The first bird, a distant individual that appeared briefly in Ferd’s Bog was not seen well, and the second, a conspicuously perched bird in Oak Park, Minot, ND, was seen exceptionally well. The species winters at middle elevations on the east slope of the Andes Mountains in South America and then migrates to the forests of the United States and Canada where it breeds.

Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*) – A single individual was found at the experimental forest in McHenry county, North Dakota, on May 29.

Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*) – This was our best year ever for this species, and there’s really no wonder considering how warm the northeast was this spring. Alder Flycatcher is among the latest of neotropical migrants to return to summertime haunts, but the early spring in the northeast apparently allowed for the right conditions for the bird to return in numbers. We had good looks at two calling birds at Racquette Lake in the Adirondacks on May 25, while others were heard calling in similar habitat elsewhere that day. Scope studies for all.

Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) – We had little trouble finding this bird this year, but as it would turn out, the only place we got it was southwest of Albany on May 23, our first morning out.

Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*) – This bird was recorded in the Adirondacks on May 24, but without question, the best sighting occurred on May 29 at the experimental forest in McHenry County, ND. On a partially overcast and windy day, we eventually managed to enjoy outstanding looks at a pair of calling, flighty individuals.

Pacific-slope Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*) – Pacific-slope Flycatcher is a west coast specialty bird. We had excellent views of a perched and calling individual in the depths of the fabulous old growth forest at Heart-O’-the-Hills Campground in Olympic National Park on June 2.

Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*) – Our first look at Eastern Phoebe was probably our best. On the morning of May 23, while birding at the Helderberg Workshop southwest of Albany, we came across a lively Eastern Phoebe flitting around an old barn where the bird was apparently nesting. Though this species is common and widespread, it was fun to see it near a nest site. Others were seen in North Dakota on May 28 and 29.

Say’s Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) – Say’s Phoebe, a characteristic bird of the prairie and Great Plains, is a fairly common, but localized breeding bird in the western part of North Dakota. We saw only one this year: a single individual flycatching around a house between Minot and Upper Souris NWR.

Great-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – A pair of calling birds were seen well in the experimental forest in McHenry County, North Dakota on May 29.

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) – This is a common summertime bird in parts of North Dakota. We had our best views of the species in McHenry County.

Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – We found several of these birds on the first morning of the trip southwest of Albany, and plenty of others in North Dakota.

SHRIKES (*Laniidae*)

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Loggerhead Shrike is a declining bird on the Great Plains and no longer a species we can be sure of finding. Still, we did locate a couple of birds over the two-day period of May 29 and 30.

VIREOS (*Vireonidae*)

Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) – Yellow-throated Vireo is wonderful little bird that ranks among our most colorful songbirds. We had to wait until we arrived in North Dakota before we saw any, as is always the case, but our consecutive trips to Oak Park in Minot remedied that situation. We had astonishing views of a curious individual that was right over our heads on our visit on May 28.

Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*) – A calling bird discovered at the head of the Brown's Tract Right-of-Way in the Adirondacks on May 25 was the only one seen. However, the views we had were so good that it didn't matter that the bird was recorded as "heard only" the next day and not seen again!

Hutton's Vireo (*Vireo huttoni*) – Upon reaching Washington State on June 1, one of the first birds we found was a single Hutton's Vireo at Salisbury Point County Park. This was somewhat remarkable in that we have struggled to find this bird on past trips. Though the species is a fairly common resident, it seems to call less in the late May period, which lends to the inconspicuousness of its presence.

Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) – Individuals were seen well in Oak Park on May 28 and 30. This is a rather inconspicuously marked bird whose powerful voice is its greatest strength.

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) – Red-eyed Vireos are a common and widespread bird throughout the East and Midwest. We detected this species, by song and by sight, throughout our time in the Adirondacks as well as in North Dakota.

CROWS, JAYS & MAGPIES (*Corvidae*)

Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*) – For the second consecutive trip, we managed to miss this species in the Adirondack Mountains in New York, before catching up with it in Washington. We had superb views of a curious group of jays at a roadside pullout while searching for Varied Thrushes in Olympic National Park on June 2. The birds were seen again on June 3 while traveling to Hurricane Ridge. The race *obscurus*.

Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) – A couple of birds were detected in the Heart-O'-the-Hills Campground in Olympic National Park on June 2.

Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – The familiar Blue Jay was seen and heard commonly in New York.

Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*) – The only ones seen this year were spotted from the train west of the community of Browning, Montana, where the plains meet the mountains. This bird was probably not seen by all.

American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – This bird was common and seen every day of the trip.

Northwestern Crow (*Corvus caurinus*) - Though we saw some birds on the Olympic Peninsula that we called Northwestern Crow, particularly around Port Angeles, it may be impossible to say if they truly were Northwesterns and not some type of Northwestern/American Crow intergrades. Here's why—The Birdfinding Guide to Washington (2003) said this about Northwestern Crow:

“After lengthy discussion it is pretty well settled that the Crow of the northwestern sea-coasts is merely a dwarfed race of [American Crow], and that it shades perfectly into the prevailing western type whenever that species occupies adjacent regions” (William Leon Dawson, *The Birds of Washington*, 1909). True a hundred years ago, still true today. Northwestern Crow originally inhabited Puget Trough shoreline [and the] outer coast from Gray's Harbor north, isolated by uncut, deep forests from American

Crow populations along streams in Eastern [and] southwestern Washington. Deforestation by settlers [and] commercial loggers fostered interbreeding along south Puget Sound by [the] late 1800s, with [the] result that Dawson found it “impossible to pronounce with certainty upon the subspecific identity of Crows seen near shore in Mason, Thurston, Pierce, or even King County.” With continuing development American Crow invaded [the] whole Puget Trough, swamping indigenous Northwestern populations. Phenotypically pure Northwestern Crows [are] still recognizable along [the] outer Olympic Coast (ex. La Push), [and] in the San Juan Islands.

So what does this mean for the crows around Port Angeles? Are there any pure Northwestern Crows here? Probably not, but possibly. Their much lower pitched calls are very different than those of typical American Crows found around the U.S., suggesting a major difference; however, the vocalizations of American Crows in the Puget Sound region are also lower-pitched than those of their widespread brethren, and I can't say that I can recognize a difference in the calls of the Puget Sound Americans versus true Northwesterns. Local birders have traditionally suggested that the birds from Port Angeles west are more likely Northwestern, but with the ongoing American Crow invasion, that line has likely continued pushing west. Can you count Northwestern Crow? It's up to you. The birds we saw on Ediz Hook are almost certainly at least part Northwestern. Apparently, to be 100% sure of seeing NW Crow, one must go all the way out to the outer Olympic Coast or the San Juan Islands. The crows of Vancouver Island are also Northwestern.

Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) – The first Common Raven we saw was a bird along the side of Highway 28 while we were departing the Adirondacks on May 26. More were seen from the train in west-central Montana on May 31; and still others were seen in the Olympic Mountains on June 2.

LARKS (*Alaudidae*)

Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) – Most of us enjoyed scope views of a couple of elusive individuals at the Minot Sewage Lagoons on May 30. The fact that not more people got to see this bird was due to the excitement of the shorebird diversity nearby. Still, I would have expected to have seen a few more.

SWALLOWS (*Hirundinidae*)

Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) – Most of us know Purple Martin as a widespread spring and summertime bird across a broad portion of the U.S. New York and North Dakota lie at the northern limit of the bird's range, where the species becomes more localized and far less common. We found martins in North Dakota at several places where our local guide, Ron Martin (not related) took us, including one improbable stop at a nursery that happened to have an active martin house.

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – The Tree Swallow is a surprisingly beautiful bird that displays snow-white underparts against a glossy-blue back. We had many opportunities to enjoy this bird at close range in New York, North Dakota, and Washington.

Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – This is a common western bird, however, seeing the violet and green upperparts is the real challenge. We saw Violet-greens every day in Washington, but our best views were of a perched bird on a wire at Diamond Point on June 1. Nice comparisons with Tree Swallows as well.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – We saw several in New York and North Dakota, but nowhere did we see lots of them.

Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*) – We saw a number of these in North Dakota on the days of May 29 and 30.

Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – While we saw lots of these birds in North Dakota, the colony at the Minot Sewage Lagoon took the cake for its numbers.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) – One of the most numerous swallows in North Dakota.

CHICKADEES & TITS (*Paridae*)

Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*) – This is a common bird across the entire northern tier of the United States. We saw the species well in New York, North Dakota, and Washington.

Chestnut-backed Chickadee (*Poecile rufescens*) – This smart-looking sprite was seen in Washington on June 1 and 2. Our first encounter with this species was the best, when we had a pair of inquisitive individuals at close range along the highway near Diamond Point. All the diagnostic field marks were seen well, including the rich chestnut coloration of the back and sides.

Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*) – The hanging feeders at Thompsons Lake State Park is the only place we travel on this tour where we have a chance of picking up this widespread bird. This year was successful in that regard as we noted a couple coming into the aforementioned feeders at the park's nature center.

LONG-TAILED TITS (*Aegithalidae*)

Bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*) – This species, though fairly common in western Washington, was essentially missed this year. A couple of birds were heard on the afternoon of June 1 during our roadside birding stop between Sequim and Diamond Point. The problem we experienced is that we were trying so intently for several species of warblers that we knew were around us that we weren't able to make time to seek the pair of nearby calling Bushtits. A couple of the group members who were standing at the edge of our "pack" did sidle away to view them.

NUTHATCHES (*Sittidae*)

Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta Canadensis*) – We enjoyed dandy views of this confiding little bird near East Lake in the Adirondack Mountains on May 24 and another the next day at the Brown's Tract Right-of-Way. Other individuals were seen in Washington in Olympic National Park on June 2 and 3.

White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) – This bird proved fairly common in New York and North Dakota, with several individuals seen in both places.

WRENS (*Troglodytidae*)

Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) – We enjoyed superb views of a family group along the roadside near Diamond Point, Washington on the afternoon of June 1.

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) – This bird is actually fairly scarce on this trip. We saw a couple individuals between New York and North Dakota.

Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) – In the summer of 2010, the American Ornithologists' Union authorized an official split of the eastern and western populations of the bird we had always known as Winter Wren. The birds of eastern North America retain the original name, "Winter Wren," while the birds of the Pacific Coast take the name "Pacific Wren." Because I knew this split could happen at some point, our tour groups have made an effort on each of the three years we have operated this trip to see both forms. The two forms are distinguished by vocalization and appearance. Eastern birds have a more musical quality to their song, and differ visibly in being a little paler on the throat and more distinctly barred on the sides.

This year we had prolonged scope views of a "Winter Wren" on the morning of May 24 near East Lake in the Adirondacks. The bird was singing and seemed perfectly content to hold its position while each of us took turns at the scope. We enjoyed fine views of a "Pacific Wren" (after a lot of patience and repositioning) in the Heart-O'-the-Hills Campground in Olympic NP on the Morning of June 2.

Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*) – We saw Pacific Wren in Washington. Please see the notes on this species above.

Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*) – Sedge Wrens are actually fairly common summertime residents of the northern plains, but their tiny size and habit of staying hidden makes them seem less numerous than they are. We had excellent views of a singing bird in McHenry County on the first afternoon we were in North Dakota.

Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) – On a windy, rainy afternoon at Salyer NWR, North Dakota, we located a somewhat furtive, but highly vocal individual in the cattail expanse on a roadside reservoir.

KINGLETS (*Regulidae*)

Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*) - This is North America's smallest passerine, and we found it in two widely spaced places. The first one was a flighty individual at the Brown's Tract Right-of-Way in New York's Adirondack Mountains that was probably never seen by all; the second sighting occurred on the other side of the continent in Washington, where we had spectacularly close views of a male kinglet flitting around a fir tree at eye level.

THRUSHES & ALLIES (*Turdidae*)

Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) – We saw Eastern Bluebirds in New York and North Dakota. But our highest quality sightings occurred southwest of Albany on the first day of the tour. We enjoyed scope views of a pair at Thompsons Lake State Park.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) – We found Mountain Bluebirds in a part of the Salyer NWR we have not visited on previous tours. We had wonderful views of at least two stunning azure males.

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) – Another tour first, we had superb views of a bird perched below one of the roadside overlooks in Olympic National Park. Townsend's Solitaire is a lovely inhabitant of the mountain west, and a species whose occurrence is unpredictable.

Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*) – The Veery and related *catharus* thrushes are some of the continent's greatest avian songsters. The scope view we enjoyed of a singing male southwest of Albany on May 23 was a delight for this tour. Veeries typically are not easy to see, which lent extra significance to our sighting.

Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) – A shy and flighty individual at Salisbury Point County Park in Washington was the only one seen this year.

Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) – Hermit Thrush was recorded only one day this time—at Ferd's Bog, New York on May 25. A single bird, issuing its beautiful rising song, was located amid the maples and beeches just down from the boardwalk parking area. It was a good thing that we all heard the bird, but I'm pretty certain not everyone was able to see it.

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – We enjoyed high-quality scope views of a singing bird at the Helderberg Workshop southwest of Albany on May 24. Our sighting of this bird marked another “first-time” for this tour.

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) – This is among our most common birds, and one that was seen every day of the tour.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) – This is one of the premier birds of the Pacific Northwest, and we were fortunate to find a pair along the highway in Olympic National Park on our last morning together. Unlike the somewhat similar American Robin, Varied Thrush is a shy forest species that prefers the darkened understory of an old-growth forest to wide open settings. One strategy for locating the species is to drive a road through appropriate habitat early in the morning as this is when they emerge from the forest to forage in the open. The opportunity to see them this way is usually over by 8 a.m., once the sun chases away the remaining shadows and vehicle traffic begins to build.

MOCKINGBIRDS & THRASHERS (*Mimidae*)

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) – This was the first year we've ever recorded this species on this tour. Though common and widespread across much of North America, its numbers quickly thin out in the northern tier of the U.S. The train delay we experienced between Albany and Chicago allowed us to spend more of the daylight hours than we normally have riding along the south shore of Lake Erie. Mockingbirds are apparently common in northern Ohio because we saw a dozen or so on the powerlines that paralleled the tracks.

Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – We enjoyed good looks at an active pair of Catbirds at the start of Fiddlehead Road southwest of Albany on May 23. At least one more was seen in Minot on May 29. Even though this is a common and widespread bird in the East and Midwest, there are not many places we travel on this route where we have opportunities to find it.

Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) – We saw several thrashers this year spread between New York and North Dakota. Some of us got to see birds very well, while others of us only caught glimpses. One bird attending the feeder at Thompsons Lake State Park provided great views for those who happened to be watching when the bird appeared.

STARLINGS (*Sturnidae*)

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – As one might expect, we saw starlings every day of the trip except for the two full days we were in the Adirondacks.

PIPITS (*Motacillidae*)

Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*) – The afternoon of May 28 was an excellent day for grassland birding in North Dakota. Good weather conditions and the appearance of many “high caliber” birds made for a spectacular time afield. Ron Martin took us out into a pasture for Baird's Sparrows and other birds when we noticed a territorial pipit displaying high overhead. This is a small bird, and against a blue sky, was almost invisible at times. It finally plummeted back down to the sanctuary of the tall grass, thereby allowing us a chance to spot it on the ground. After repeated efforts to get close to the bird, we finally had good scope views as it worked its way inconspicuously through the pasture. Sadly, this bird is on its way to becoming an endangered species, thanks to ongoing destruction of its native prairie habitat.

American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*) – On the morning of June 3 we were standing in the snow-fringed parking lot of Hurricane Ridge in the Olympic Mountains. Scanning the alpine meadow in front of us, we found a couple of pipits working the edge of the retreating snow in search of insects and windblown seeds. American pipits are typically encountered around the shore, lakebeds, bare fields, and pastures of the lowlands during the non-breeding season. In the summer they fly to the tops of the highest mountains and nest on the alpine tundra where few other birds are found.

WAXWINGS (*Bombycillidae*)

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – Individuals and pairs were seen across the entire tour route, from New York, to North Dakota, to Washington. The bird perched in the bare tree on Fiddlehead Rd. in New York on May 23 was probably our “best” sighting.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS (*Parulidae*)

This tour has never failed to record fewer than twenty one species of warblers. We feel that Birding Across America by Train is one of our top domestic tours for providing opportunities for enjoying one of the world's most captivating bird families. Just for fun, I have chosen to list the warblers we saw in the order in which they were first seen (as opposed to standard taxonomic arrangement).

1. **Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*)** – Several dazzling males were seen by the little marsh at the start of Fiddlehead Road southwest of Albany on May 23. This was the first of many we would see in New York and North Dakota.
2. **Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichis*)** – First seen in the marsh across the street from Fiddlehead Road on May 23; a beautiful male was seen well by some of the group later that day outside the nature center at Thompsons Lake State Park. Others were noted in the Adirondacks and also in North Dakota.
3. **Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Dendroica pensylvanica*)** – Moving from Fiddlehead Rd. to the Helderberg Workshop (still on the morning of the 23rd), we found at least two male Chestnut-sideds on territory along the entrance road. This is a spectacular little bird whose combination of yellow crown, black-and-chartreuse striped back, black-and-white face pattern and rich chestnut wash on the sides is unlike that of any other warbler. Strangely, we did not see any others after that first morning in the field outside Albany.
4. **Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*)** – We enjoyed fantastic views of two birds southwest of Albany on May 23rd. The first was a singing, and somewhat wary bird at the Helderberg Workshop; the second was a close individual at Thompsons Lake State Park that foraged at eye level in a field-side tree belt. Our views of the second bird were especially superb.
5. **American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*)** – Redstarts were recorded in New York on two different occasions—southwest of Albany on May 23 (awesome views) and at the Brown's Tract Right-of-Way on the 25th—and once in North Dakota: Oak Park on the 29th.

6. **Hooded Warbler (*Wilsonia citrina*)** – This year was the first time that we’ve ever recorded this species on this tour. Hooded Warbler reaches the northern limit of its range in southern New York, and prefers the deciduous Carolinian forests that reach the Hudson Valley. Finding this bird has as much to do with locating good habitat as much as anything. We located a singing male in the deep forest at the base of the Helderberg Escarpment on May 23.
7. **Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*)** – Our encounter with Ovenbird was memorable: scope views of a perched and singing bird at Thompsons Lake State Park on the afternoon of May 23.
8. **Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*)** – Several seen well in the Adirondacks, including one beautiful male along the road to East Lake on May 24, and others the next day in the vicinity of the Brown’s Tract Right-of-Way.
9. **Black-throated Blue-Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*)** – Our first B. T. Blue was seen near East Lake on the morning of the 24th, however, the individual we found was elusive and difficult to spot as it stayed back in the woods from where our group was positioned. The next day, while returning to the vehicles after birding the Brown’s Tract Right-of-Way, we located another male bird that was foraging in a tree beside the trail. We were spread out a bit, but those who saw this bird were treated to a very satisfying show.
10. **Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*)** – We enjoyed nice views of a Magnolia Warbler near East Lake in the Adirondacks on May 24; a couple of others were noted the next day near the Brown’s Tract Right-of-Way.
11. **Blackburnian Warbler (*Dendroica fusca*)** – We had wonderful views of a dazzling male bird near East Lake (after considerable effort) on the morning of May 24; others were seen in the region of the Brown’s Tract Right-of-Way the next day.
12. **Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*)** – Several individuals were seen in the Adirondacks on May 24 and 25, but not in the numbers of previous years. The reason for this was clear: the early spring in the northeast meant that most of the Yellow-rumpeds had already migrated through. This was the “Myrtle” race.
13. **Palm Warbler (*Dendroica palmarum*)** – In recent years, Palm Warbler has extended its nesting range to scattered locations in the Adirondack Mountains. Up until this year, we have never recorded the species on this tour, so the discovery of a territorial bird at Ferd’s Bog on the morning of the 25th came as quite a surprise. Our bird was a “Yellow” Palm Warbler, which is the eastern-most nesting population of the species.
14. **Northern Parula (*Parula americana*)** – A male bird seen near East Lake on May 25 was seen well by all; others were seen the following day at the Brown’s Tract Right-of-Way in the Adirondacks, including one male bird that was foraging on the ground!
15. **Nashville Warbler (*Vermivora ruficapilla*)** – Most of us had quality views of this bird in the forest at the Brown’s Tract Right-of-Way on May 25.
16. **Pine Warbler (*Dendroica pinus*)** - A sharp looking male bird was eventually seen by all at Arrowhead Park in the town of Inlet of May 25. Interestingly, this site, with its grove of white pines, has proven fairly reliable for this bird through the years. Pine Warbler is really not that uncommon in the Adirondacks, but one must be sure to be in appropriate habitat if this bird is to be found.
17. **Northern Waterthrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis*)** – Following lunch at Arrowhead Park on May 25, we took a walk on a boardwalk that extended into a marsh on the Brown’s Tract Right-of-Way. The result was

good looks, eventually, at a territorial male waterthrush. Another was seen in northern North Dakota along a river near the Salyer NWR.

18. **Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*)** – It took us longer to pin down this bird this year than I would have expected. We eventually had nice looks at a male Black-and-white in Oak Park in Minot, ND on the morning of May 28. At least one was heard southwest of Albany on our first morning out.
19. **Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*)** – Several individuals were flying through the tops of the tall shade trees in Oak Park, ND on May 28. Tennessee Warblers migrate through the region in big numbers, and Oak Park is typically a reliable place to see them. The thing is, not everyone saw the bird well; furthermore, Tennessee is not a strikingly marked bird, which makes it both harder to see and harder to fully appreciate.
20. **Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*)** – We had excellent looks at Orange-crowns in North Dakota on May 29 and in Washington on June 1. The ND bird was located at the experimental forest in McHenry County while the WA bird was seen at a roadside birding stop near Diamond Point. The ND bird was of the gray eastern variety, while the WA bird was one of the colorful western subspecies.
21. **Blackpoll Warbler (*Dendroica striata*)** – A single bird, singing high up in a tree, was located in Oak Park, Minot, ND on the morning of May 30. This individual proved very challenging to spot, despite the fact that it seemed positioned directly overhead. The bird was not seen by more than a couple of us, and, frankly, we began to lose interest in it after about 30 minutes of fruitlessly staring up into the boughs of the giant deciduous tree.
22. **Wilson’s Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*)** – Most of us had good looks at an elusive and sometimes singing bird during a roadside birding stop near Diamond Point, WA on June 1. Another individual was seen by some the next morning at Heart-O’-the-Hills Campground in Olympic National Park.
23. **MacGillivray’s Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*)** – A single bird seen during the roadside birding stop near Diamond Point was the only one we recorded. The bird came in to the area where we were positioned on several occasions, issuing its song with some regularity, but gaining good views was not easy. Like other members of the genus *Oporornis*, this bird is a skulking species that is often difficult to see. Still, a number of us got it well.
24. **Townsend’s Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*)** – This bird was “heard only” this year. For some reason, Townsend’s Warblers were difficult to pin down this year. We had one or two birds singing in the coniferous forest on the way to Hurricane Ridge on June 3.

TANAGERS (*Thraupidae*)

Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) – One near East Lake in the Adirondacks on May 24 was the only one seen. We had wonderful scope views of a richly-colored male bird singing from a couple of exposed perches that were clearly within its territory. This is one of the most beautiful birds in North America.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) – An orange-headed male was seen at the Heart-O’-the Hills Campground on June 2. This was an orange-headed male that was probably in its first adult year. Older birds have a rosier orange-red wash to the face that is typically a little brighter than on the bird we saw.

BUNTINGS, SPARROWS & ALLIES (*Emberizidae*)

Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) – We had good looks at one or two birds at Salisbury Point County Park, WA on June 1.

Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) – The conspicuously perched male in the pasture near Thompsons Lake State Park on May 23 was not only the only individual we saw, but the also the first one we’ve ever had on this tour! As this bird occurs at lower elevations than in the Adirondacks, we have typically not spent enough time in appropriate habitat on previous tours looking for it.

Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) – This bird was common in New York and North Dakota. We saw it in both states every day we were there.

Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) – We saw a couple of these on the 29th of May, which was the morning we were birding McHenry Country, North Dakota. Several were seen well from the vehicle on a cool, windy, and partly gray day.

Vesper Sparrow (*Poocetes gramineus*) – This is a fairly common to common nesting species where native grassland intermingles with brush and small plants. We saw this bird every day we were in North Dakota.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) – An individual along the road at Salyer National Wildlife Refuge, North Dakota, was seen well. This was the only one seen, in addition to being the first one ever for this tour.

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – One or two were seen in North Dakota and another one in Washington.

Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) – This species was recorded in the same field that we had the Baird's Sparrow (McHenry County, North Dakota on May 28). The high-pitched buzzing call is barely audible at times, but our bird sang often enough that we could finally locate it perched atop a small shrub at a distance of about 50 yards. Scope views for most of us.

Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*) – The Baird's Sparrow is one of the most sought-after birds in North America. It is a declining species whose native prairie habitat seems to shrink year by year. This year, we had wonderful views of a singing male in a pasture of native grass in McHenry County on May 28. The rich beige-rust coloration, black "necklace," and characteristic facial marks were all seen well. Finding this bird is always a big deal for the tour, and this year we sure weren't disappointed.

Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelson*) – The individual that perched briefly in the grass in McHenry County, North Dakota on May 28 was the only one seen. Nelson's Sparrow is one of the last of the passerine migrants to appear on its summertime breeding grounds. This bird has never been recorded before this year, which was testament to the fact that this spring was a warmer than average one.

Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) – This is a very widespread and common bird in appropriate habitat. We saw individuals in New York and in Washington.

Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolni*) – A shy individual in Ferd's Bog in the Adirondack Mountains was the only one seen. Despite its fairly furtive behavior, most of us were able to see this bird well.

Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*) – This species was recorded in New York and North Dakota. Our best experience was with the active, singing pair in Ferd's Bog in the Adirondack Mountains on May 25.

White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) – We enjoyed great views of a pair of birds along the shore of East Lake in the Adirondack Mountains on May 24. This bird is as memorable for the sweetness of its song as it is for its fancy black and white head pattern.

White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) – The only one seen was a handsome male singing its song at Diamond Point, Washington on June 1. Unlike the eastern birds that display a pink bill and black lores, this bird was of the Pacific Northwest, coastal nesting race "pugetensis" that has an orangier bill and gray lores.

Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) – This bird was seen in New York and in Washington. The New York birds were "Slate-colored" Juncos while the birds from Washington were "Oregon" varieties.

Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) – The afternoon of May 28 was a spectacular one. That was the day we visited McHenry County, North Dakota to search for a range of exciting native prairie species. We had excellent views of Chestnut-collared Longspurs here, including a couple of very handsome males that perched on the roadside fence.

CARDINALS & ALLIES (*Cardinalidae*)

Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Northern Cardinal is a lowland bird, so it shouldn't be a surprise that we saw it on only one day. On our first day in the field together we had several around the bird feeders at the Thompsons Lake State Park nature center.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – We saw this bird on the first three days of the trip, from Albany into the Adirondack Mountains. The best views were of the singing male southwest of Albany the first morning out, and the bird that was coming into the feeders at Gary Lee's house in Inlet.

- Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)** – We enjoyed great views of a singing adult male in Oak Park, Minot, ND on May 30. The field guides show the range of this species to extend into North Dakota only in the southwestern-most corner; however, the Minot bird proved that it ranges a little farther east than that. Of considerable interest to us was a second bird in Oak Park that was clearly an adult male Rose-breasted x Black-headed Grosbeak hybrid. The bird had the head pattern and plumage coloration of a Black-headed, but the breast plumage pattern of a Rose-breasted (except that the rose coloration was replaced by orange-yellow). Others were seen in Washington on June 1 and 2.
- Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)** – Adult male birds were well-studied, at length, on the grounds of the Helderberg Workshop on the morning of May 23 and in Oak Park on May 28. The Oak Park bird was seen especially well.
- Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*)** – This bird reaches the northeastern-most corner of its range in the Minot area of North Dakota. We had scope views of a foraging pair high in a tree in Oak Park on May 28. The well-marked male bird was seen by all.

BLACKBIRDS & ALLIES (*Icteridae*)

- Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)** – A displaying male was seen pretty well at Thompsons Lake State Park southwest of Albany on May 23; then we had very nice studies of birds in North Dakota every day from May 28-31. Few birds capture the essence of springtime on the prairie like this one.
- Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)** – This species was seen often and well in North Dakota; others seen on the first day in New York.
- Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)** – We had excellent views of this species on a daily basis in North Dakota.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)** – This is a common nesting species in reed-fringed marshes, lakes and ponds of the Great Plains and Great Basin. In North Dakota it is found with ease around marshes of all sizes. We recorded birds on a daily basis.
- Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)** – Brewer's Blackbirds are fairly common summertime inhabitants of the high plains, yet they seem restricted as breeders to areas of native prairie. We enjoyed nice studies of the species in McHenry County, North Dakota on May 28 and 29.
- Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*)** – A common and widespread bird, we recorded grackles across a great swath of the country from New York to eastern Montana.
- Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*)** – We saw this bird in all three major regions of the country. Not surprisingly, most were in North Dakota.
- Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*)** – Our smallest oriole, the Orchard Oriole reaches the shelter belts and isolated groves of trees on the high plains of North Dakota. We saw birds on May 28 and 29 in the Minot area, McHenry County, and possibly elsewhere.
- Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*)** – We enjoyed stunning looks at a remarkably bright male at the start of Fiddlehead Road southwest of Albany on our first morning in the field. Others were seen in North Dakota on a daily basis from May 28-30.

SISKINS, CROSSBILLS & ALLIES (*Fringillidae*)

- Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*)** – Excellent views of a pair visiting Gary Lee's feeders in Inlet, New York on May 25. Other vivid males seen well at Linda Finley's seed feeders in Quilcene, WA on June 3.
- House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*)** – Seen at the bird feeders at Thompsons Lake State Park, NY on May 24, and around Diamond Point, WA on June 1; and at Ediz Hook on June 2, and at Linda Finley's seed feeders on June 3.
- Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*)** – Outstanding views of male and female birds attending Linda Finley's seed feeders in Quilcene, WA on June 3. This sighting represented the "first-time-ever" for this tour.
- Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*)** – Several of these small forest finches were also visiting Linda Finley's seed feeders in Quilcene, Washington on June 3.
- American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*)** – We didn't actually catch up with this bird until we made it to Washington. We had a few around Diamond Point on June 1 and others at Linda Finley's seed feeders in Quilcene on June 3.

Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) – The “famous” seed feeders at Linda Finley’s house in Quilcene, WA were only discovered because we heard a group of grosbeaks calling about two blocks away! You will all recall the spontaneous coffee stop at the drive-through in the small town of Quilcene. While out of the vehicles we heard grosbeaks calling at what seemed a distance of a couple hundred yards. Following the voices down the street, we came to the home of Linda Finley, who happened to have a feeding station that was chock-full of birds. A prolonged feeder watch ensued in which six of our native finch species were recorded in one area. The remarkable show was a wonderful way to end our tour.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS (*Passeridae*)

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) – Seen easily in all major regions we visited.

TOTAL = 226

MAMMAL LIST - Total: 19

SQUIRRELS & MARMOTS (*Sciuridae*)

Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Tamias carolinensis*) – Seen only at the seed feeders at Thompsons Lake State Park on May 23.

Douglas’s Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus douglassii*) - A forest animal of the Pacific Northwest, this is a regional replacement of the Eastern Red Squirrel. Seen on June 2 in Olympic National Park.

Richardson’s Ground-Squirrel (*Spermophilus richardsonii*) – A colony was seen in the front yard of a farm house in North Dakota on May 30 while en route to Upper Souris NWR.

Thirteen-lined Ground-Squirrel (*Ictidomys tridecemlineatus*) – Spectacular studies of a lone animal outside the visitor center at Salyer NWR, ND, on May 29.

Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*) – Seen commonly on the grounds of the Adirondack League Club, including one animal in particular that had gotten inside the main lodge.

Townsend’s Chipmunk (*Neotamias townsendii*) – A couple seen in the old growth forest at Olympic National Park on June 2.

Woodchuck (*Marmota monax*) – One or two seen along the side of the road in New York.

Olympic Marmot (*Marmota olympus*) – Olympic Marmot is similar in appearance to a woodchuck, but is only found around the alpine meadows of Olympic National Park. We had superb scope views of an animal sunning itself on the slope below the visitor center at Hurricane Ridge in the national park.

MUSKRATS (*Cricetidae*)

Muskrat (*Cricetidae*) – Several muskrats were seen swimming in roadside ponds at Salyer National Wildlife Refuge, ND on May 29.

HARES & RABBITS (*Leporidae*)

Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – This widespread animal occurs half way across the continent from New York to North Dakota. Introduced populations occur in Washington. We saw it in all three states.

White-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus townsendii*) – One or two were seen by a few of us from the train.

BEARS (*Ursidae*)

Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) – An adult animal foraging by the roadside in Olympic National Park on the morning of June 3 was a rather astounding site. Of course, as these things go, that we were in a national park seemed to mandate the obligatory bear jam, with people out of their vehicles trying to photograph the animal at a range that would not be considered safe. Still, it was quite a sighting, and this is an animal that always adds robustness to any trip’s mammal list.

DOGS (*Canidae*)

Coyote (*Canis latrans*) – One or two seen

Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) – We typically see this animal on the property of the Adirondack League Club, and this year was no different. We saw foxes on two different days, May 24 and 26.

DEER (*Cervidae*)

White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – New York and North Dakota

Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – Seen on the Olympic Peninsula north of Sequim, WA on June 2. This is the animal sometimes referred to as “Columbian Black-tailed Deer” because of its wide, black-tipped tail. This regional form of the widespread Mule Deer is deceptively similar to White-tailed Deer and identification should be made with care.

Elk (*Cervus canadensis*) – Elk were seen from the train on the evening of May 31 as we rolled through the Northern Rockies, in the vicinity of Marias Pass, Montana. This was the “Rocky Mountain” subspecies. The “Roosevelt Elk,” Pacific Northwest subspecies, was seen well in Olympic National Park.

PRONGHORN (*Antilocapridae*)

Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) – At least a dozen were seen from the train while we were rolling through eastern and central Montana.

SEALS (*Phocidae*)

Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) – A small number of seals were hauled out on the log booms in Ediz Hook off Port Angeles on the afternoon of June 2.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

American Toad (*Bufo americanus*)

Great Plains Spadefoot (*Scaphiopus bombifrons*)

BUTTERFLIES

Canadian Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio canadensis*)

Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*)

Clouded Sulphur (*Colias philodice*)

Pink-edged Sulphur (*Colias interior*)

Spring Azure (*Celastrina ladon*)

Silver-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria selene*)

American Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*)

Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)

Arctic Skipper (*Carterocephalus palaemon*)

Hobomok Skipper (*Polites hobomok*)