

# **MINNESOTA & NORTH DAKOTA**

**JUNE 19-27, 2006**

**LEADERS:  
KIM ECKERT AND DAVID WOLF**

**COMPILED BY:  
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**Leaders: Kim Eckert and David Wolf**

After adding them all up, it seems we had a surprising total of 192 species, one of the highest counts ever for this tour. I do have a vague recollection of reaching 200 once or twice in the past, but this would have been when the tour was a day longer and when some early “fall” migrant shorebirds were already on their way south. Remarkably, though, all but three of the birds we found (both yellowlegs and a surprising Whimbrel) were summer residents, and I have to wonder if any other U.S. tour can be said to include around 190 breeding species.

I have to admit, though, that I have never considered a raw species total to be a true measure of a tour’s success. What’s more important is what those species were and how well they were seen. Consider, for example, that our list includes both Great Gray Owl and Sharp-tailed Grouse, always among the most highly sought—but elusive—birds looked for on this trip. Both were seen by some but missed by others, and our views were brief.

On the other hand, our great looks at some of the other specialties far offset the marginal ones. Especially close and cooperative were the Black-billed Cuckoo at Felton, Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and Boreal Chickadees in the Sax-Zim Bog, a Sprague’s Pipit standing (and singing!) in a Kidder County road, almost all of the 20+ species of warblers, all five of the *Ammodramus* sparrows, and Chestnut-collared Longspurs at Felton and elsewhere. Perhaps all of these deserve to count twice?

Among these good-looking birds, the warblers we saw deserve special mention. Just as 190 breeding species may be unmatched by any other U.S. tour, I wonder if any other VENT tour can expect to see over 20 species of nesting warblers? Some of these are among the most highly sought of them all, especially the Connecticut and Mourning, which were seen at close range at essentially the same place in the Sax-Zim Bog. (Also found at this very same spot were Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Gray Jays, Boreal Chickadees, a male Golden-crowned Kinglet displaying its orange crown, and our first Golden-winged and Blackburnian warblers!) Other memorably close warblers were Northern Parula, Cape May, Black-throated Blue, and Canada.

Consider, as well, how well we saw those *Ammodramus* sparrows, among the most elusive of all the sparrows. All five possibilities were most cooperative, especially that lone singing male Baird’s near Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge, the out-of-range Henslow’s (and one of our two Le Conte’s) at Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge, and a couple of Nelson’s Sharp-taileds (plus numerous Grasshoppers) in North Dakota.

June is the time of year when at least some of all those breeding birds start bringing young into the world, and some of those observed were definitely among the tour’s highlights: the Ruffed Grouse chicks crossing a Superior National Forest road, two prairie-chicken chicks on their mother’s back along a Felton prairie roadside, all those Western Grebe young (plus two Clark’s chicks) on Pearl Lake in North Dakota, and two young Peregrines at a downtown Duluth nest

**box. And an Eared Grebe nest, though still without young, was especially entertaining, as the adults copulated there and vigorously chased off another pair of curious grebes.**

**Overall, the weather was quite good (never too hot, minimal prairie winds, and hardly any rain delays), just as the mosquitoes and wood ticks were pretty bad at times—especially on the last full day of the tour, as we found that Henslow's Sparrow and Yellow Rail (and the rail we finally saw in flight was about as close as they ever get!). It was certainly more than enough to help us forget about uncooperative owls of a week ago!**

**Itinerary:**

June 19 - meet in Duluth for early dinner and semi-successful evening Great Gray search along Arkola Rd. in Sax-Zim Bog.

June 20 - all day in the Sax-Zim Bog, especially along Arkola and Owl avenues, McDavitt, Stone Lake, and Admiral roads.

June 21 - all day in Lake Co., especially Forest Rd. 122, Co. Rd. 2, White Pines Wayside, Stoney River Forest Rd. and Trout Lake Rd. in Superior National Forest, and Knife River; optional evening return to Sax-Zim.

June 22 - morning at Douglas Co. (Wisconsin), Interstate Island, and a Peregrine nest; afternoon drive to Detroit Lakes via the Rabey Tree Farm.

June 23 - morning in the Felton prairie area in Clay Co.; afternoon drive to Jamestown via some Barnes County wetlands west of Valley City.

June 24 - Baird's Sparrow and Pearl Lake roads (Stutsman Co.); pipit area south of Tappen, DeWald Slough, Lake Isabel, and Lake Etta (Kidder Co.).

June 25 - eastern Kidder Co. back roads, Chase Lake NWR & vicinity, Pettibone, and Tappen; evening option to rail-less marsh near Tappen.

June 26 - return to Minnesota via Barnes County side road and Hamden Slough NWR; afternoon drive to McGregor and evening option in the McGregor Marsh.

June 27 - final morning at Tamarack & Rice Lake NWR, and return to Duluth.

**Key:**

Mb = seen/heard in Minnesota boreal forest habitats (east of Detroit Lakes; June 19-22 & 26-27)

Mp = seen/heard in Minnesota prairie habitats (west of Detroit Lakes; June 23 & 26)

W = seen/heard in Wisconsin (June 22)

N = seen/heard in North Dakota (June 23-26)

y = young seen

**Bird List:**

Canada Goose MbMpWN (y)  
Wood Duck MbN  
Gadwall N (y)  
American Wigeon N  
American Black Duck Mb  
Mallard MbMpWN (y)  
Blue-winged Teal MbMpN (y)  
Northern Shoveler N (y)  
Northern Pintail N (y)  
Green-winged Teal N  
Canvasback N (y)  
Redhead N  
Ring-necked Duck N  
Lesser Scaup N  
Bufflehead N  
Common Goldeneye MbN (y)  
Hooded Merganser MpN  
Common Merganser Mb  
Red-breasted Merganser Mb  
Ruddy Duck N  
Ring-necked Pheasant N (y)  
**Ruffed Grouse** Mb (9 y with adult crossing Hwy. 1 near Isabella)  
**Greater Prairie-Chicken** Mp (2 y on adult's back at Felton)  
Sharp-tailed Grouse N (brief view by some of 2 fly-bys)  
[Wild Turkey N (wild?)]  
Common Loon Mb  
Pied-billed Grebe N (y)  
Red-necked Grebe N (y and nests)  
**Eared Grebe** N (incl. copulating pair defending nest)  
Western Grebe N (many y with adults at Pearl Lake)  
**Clark's Grebe** N (2 y on adult's back at Pearl Lake)  
American White Pelican N  
Double-crested Cormorant MbN (y at nests)  
American Bittern MbN  
Great Blue Heron MbMpN  
Great Egret N  
Snowy Egret N  
Cattle Egret N  
Green Heron MbMp  
Black-crowned Night-Heron N  
Turkey Vulture Mb  
Osprey Mb (y in nest with adult)  
Bald Eagle Mb  
Northern Harrier MbWN  
Broad-winged Hawk MbW (y in nest with adults)  
Swainson's Hawk N  
Red-tailed Hawk MbMpN (y in nests)  
Ferruginous Hawk N (appropriately named *regalis*)

American Kestrel MbMp  
 Peregrine Falcon Mb (2 y with adult at downtown Duluth nest)  
**Yellow Rail** Mb (excellent view in flight at McGregor)  
 Virginia Rail N  
 American Coot N  
 Sandhill Crane Mb (2 y with adults)  
 Piping Plover N (Lake Etta)  
 Killdeer MbMpWN (y)  
 American Avocet N  
 Greater Yellowlegs N (“fall” migrant)  
 Lesser Yellowlegs N (migrants)  
 Willet N (y)  
 Spotted Sandpiper Mb  
 Upland Sandpiper MbMpN (y)  
**Whimbrel** W (quite unexpected at Interstate Island)  
 Marbled Godwit MpN  
 Wilson's Snipe MbMpN  
 Wilson's Phalarope N  
 Franklin's Gull N  
 Ring-billed Gull MbMpWN (y on Interstate Island)  
 California Gull N  
 Herring Gull MbW (y on Knife Island)  
 Common Tern MbWN (best at Lake Louise)  
 Forster's Tern MpN  
 Black Tern MpN  
 Rock Pigeon MbMpWN  
 Mourning Dove MbMpWN  
**Black-billed Cuckoo** Mp (cooperative adult at Felton)  
**Great Gray Owl** Mb (uncooperative adult at Sax-Zim)  
 Common Nighthawk WN (incl. 2 displaying males defending territory)  
 Chimney Swift Mb  
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird MbW  
 Belted Kingfisher MpW  
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker MbW  
 Downy Woodpecker MbWN  
 Hairy Woodpecker Mb  
**Black-backed Woodpecker** Mb (responsive male in Sax-Zim)  
 Northern Flicker MbMpWN  
 Pileated Woodpecker MbW  
 Olive-sided Flycatcher Mb (White Pines Wayside)  
 Eastern Wood-Pewee MbMp  
 Yellow-bellied Flycatcher Mb  
 Alder Flycatcher MbW  
 Willow Flycatcher MpN  
 Least Flycatcher MbMpWN  
 Eastern Phoebe MbMpW  
 Great Crested Flycatcher Mb  
 Western Kingbird MpN (incl. nests)  
 Eastern Kingbird MbMpWN

Loggerhead Shrike Mp (y at Felton)  
 Blue-headed Vireo MbW  
 Yellow-throated Vireo Mb  
 Warbling Vireo MbMpN  
 Red-eyed Vireo MbW  
 Gray Jay MbW (y)  
 Blue Jay MbW  
 American Crow MbMpWN  
 Common Raven MbMpW (incl. one out-of-range at Hamden Slough)  
 Horned Lark MpN  
 Purple Martin MbN (incl. nests)  
 Tree Swallow MbMpWN (incl. nests)  
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow Mb  
 Bank Swallow MbMpN (incl. nests)  
 Barn Swallow MbMpWN (incl. nests)  
 Cliff Swallow MbMpN (incl. nests)  
 Black-capped Chickadee MbW  
**Boreal Chickadee** Mb (unusually cooperative pair in Sax-Zim)  
 Red-breasted Nuthatch MbW  
 White-breasted Nuthatch Mb  
 Brown Creeper Mb  
 House Wren MbMpN  
 Winter Wren Mb (heard-only)  
 Sedge Wren MbMpWN  
 Marsh Wren N  
 Golden-crowned Kinglet Mb  
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet Mb (both kinglets displaying crown colors)  
 Eastern Bluebird MbWN  
 Veery MbMpW  
 Hermit Thrush MbW  
 American Robin MbMpWN (y in nest)  
 Gray Catbird MbMpW  
 Brown Thrasher MpWN  
 European Starling MbMpWN  
**Sprague's Pipit** N (standing and even singing in the road)  
 Cedar Waxwing MbMpW  
 Golden-winged Warbler MbW (2 close & cooperative birds)  
 Nashville Warbler MbW  
 Northern Parula MbW  
 Yellow Warbler MbMpWN (incl. nests)  
 Chestnut-sided Warbler MbW  
 Magnolia Warbler Mb  
 Cape May Warbler Mb (again at Rabey Tree Farm)  
**Black-throated Blue Warbler** Mb (after the rain on Trappers Lake Road)  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler MbW  
 Black-throated Green Warbler Mb  
 Blackburnian Warbler MbW  
 Pine Warbler MbW  
 Palm Warbler Mb

Black-and-white Warbler MbW  
 American Redstart MbW  
 Ovenbird MbW  
 Northern Waterthrush Mb (our 21<sup>st</sup> warbler species)  
**Connecticut Warbler** MbW (especially cooperative on Arkola Rd.)  
 Mourning Warbler MbW  
 Common Yellowthroat MbMpWN  
 [Wilson's Warbler Mb (leader-only, heard-only)]  
 Canada Warbler Mb (White Pines Wayside)  
 Scarlet Tanager W  
 Eastern Towhee W  
 Chipping Sparrow MbMpWN  
 Clay-colored Sparrow MbMpWN (y)  
 Vesper Sparrow WN  
 Lark Bunting N (displaying males with 1 female)  
 Savannah Sparrow MbMpWN  
**Baird's Sparrow** N (close singing male near Chase Lake NWR)  
 Grasshopper Sparrow MpN  
**Henslow's Sparrow** Mp (great find at Hamden Slough; voted #1 favorite bird)  
**Le Conte's Sparrow** MbMpN (best look at Sax-Zim)  
 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow MbN (2 very close south of Tappen)  
 Song Sparrow MbMpWN  
 Lincoln's Sparrow Mb  
 Swamp Sparrow MbMpN  
 White-throated Sparrow MbW  
 Chestnut-collared Longspur MpN (best views at Felton)  
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak MbMpW  
 Indigo Bunting MpW  
 Dickcissel MpWN (unusually common)  
 Bobolink MbMpWN (y)  
 Red-winged Blackbird MbMpWN (y)  
 Eastern Meadowlark MbW  
 Western Meadowlark MpN  
 Yellow-headed Blackbird N (y)  
 Brewer's Blackbird MpWN  
 Common Grackle MbMpWN  
 Brown-headed Cowbird MbMpWN (y)  
 Orchard Oriole MpN  
 Baltimore Oriole MbMpW  
 Purple Finch Mb  
 House Finch MbMpN  
 Red Crossbill Mb (brief view of pair in Lake Co.)  
 Pine Siskin Mb (heard-only)  
 American Goldfinch MbMpWN  
 House Sparrow MbMpWN

**Also seen:**

Snowshoe Hare  
Eastern Cottontail  
Eastern Chipmunk  
Richardson's Ground Squirrel (a.k.a. Flickertail)  
Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel (a.k.a. Minnesota Gopher)  
Red Squirrel  
vole, sp.  
Muskrat  
Coyote  
Raccoon  
Mink  
Striped Skunk  
White-tailed Deer  
Painted Turtle  
Mink Frog  
Wood Frog

**Plant List / courtesy of Rachel Lawson:**

Wild Bergamot  
Wild Strawberry  
Blue-eyed Grass  
White Campion (a.k.a. Catchfly)  
Campion, sp.  
Fireweed  
Blue Flag Iris  
Indian Paintbrush  
Common Yarrow  
Buttercup  
White Sweet Clover  
Yellow Sweet Clover  
Wild Columbine  
Orange Hawkweed  
Common Milkweed  
Bunchberry Dogwood  
Tall Meadow Rue  
Canada Hawkweed  
Ox-eye Daisy  
Virginia Bluebell  
Cotton Grass  
Wild Calla  
Marsh Cinquefoil  
Sensitive Fern  
Rubus  
Spreading Dogbane  
Turk's-Cap Lily  
Solomon Seal, sp.  
Red Clover

Self-heal (a.k.a. Heal-all)  
Fly Honeysuckle  
Common St. Johnswort  
Common Mullein  
Twinflower  
Canada Anemone  
Wood Lily (a.k.a. Prairie Lily)  
Prairie Wild Rose  
Goat's Beard  
Lead Plant  
Hoary Puccoon  
Harebell  
Prairie Smoke  
Gaura  
Needle-and-thread Grass  
Long-headed Coneflower  
Crown Vetch  
Prairie Larkspur  
Nodding Thistle  
Thistle, sp.  
Evening Primrose  
Showy Milkweed  
Aster, sp.  
Alfalfa  
Yellow Water Lily  
Large-leaved Aster  
Purple Coneflower  
Swamp Milkweed  
White Clover  
Bluebead Lily?  
Field Bindweed  
Bird's-foot Trefoil  
Black-eyed Susan  
Dock  
Golden Alexanders  
False Lily-of-the Valley (a.k.a. Mayflower)  
Dogwood  
Prairie Plum  
Gaillardia  
Chickory  
False Sunflower