

BIRDING ACROSS AMERICA BY TRAIN

MAY 19 – JUNE 1, 2007

LEADERS:

VICTOR EMANUEL AND BARRY LYON

COMPILED BY:

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In May 2005, VENT inaugurated a new kind of trip entitled “Birding Across America by Train.” It was a bold idea; no trip like this had ever been offered by any company. That pioneer trip was such a great success that we decided to offer it again in 2007. It sold out and was again a marvelous and memorable experience.

What made this trip so memorable? First, there were the three biologically rich areas in which we spent time: the forests and lakes of the Northeast; the prairies, potholes, and marshes of the northern Great Plains; and the mountains and rocky seacoast of the Pacific Northwest. We spent three days in each of these regions. Each had its own set of birds, wildflowers, and trees. Each was radically different. And each had its own special experiences.

After assembling in Albany we began our adventure in Upstate New York, based at the lovely Adirondack League Club and surrounded by 53,000 acres of private club-owned land. The forests of the northeastern United States are the home of a wonderful array of warblers and other songbirds. Our tour was timed to be there just as the trees were budding out, making it easier to see birds. In three days of birding we saw 20 species of warblers, including Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Canada, and the stunningly beautiful Blackburnian. All these warblers were in high breeding plumage and most were seen several times at close range, giving all of us the opportunity to savor each one. On our last morning we returned to Ferd’s Bog, where we saw Black-backed and Three-toed woodpeckers on the same tree!

*We boarded Amtrak’s “Lakeside Limited” in Albany and traveled to Chicago where, between trains, we visited the Field Museum and met with Tom Schulenberg, a staff ornithologist who has led VENT tours and is one of the principal authors of the forthcoming and long awaited, *Birds of Peru*. Then we boarded Amtrak’s “Empire Builder” and continued west to Minot, North Dakota. Our three days of birding around Minot coincided with the height of the breeding season. We saw displaying Sprague’s Pipits, Chestnut-collared Longspurs, and Bobolinks, as well as many other prairie birds. One of the delights was seeing familiar birds on their breeding grounds in high plumage. This was especially true of the Black Terns, which were a marvelous study in black, gray, and white. Another treat was seeing hundreds of both Red-necked and Wilson’s phalaropes, two of the world’s most handsome shorebirds. One morning we watched 21 Sharp-tailed Grouse perform their bizarre stop-and-start dance, which was followed by superb looks at a Baird’s Sparrow.*

The train journey from Minot to Edmonds, Washington was the most wonderful of the entire trip. We traveled for hours through the plains of North Dakota and Montana, sometimes right alongside the Missouri River. In the late afternoon we saw the snow-covered Eastern Front of the Rockies. As we ate dinner we passed through the mountains and over the Continental Divide, enjoying some of the most dramatic scenery of the trip.

Our time in the Pacific Northwest was spent on the Olympic Peninsula, where we experienced the majesty of the towering trees of old growth forest, inspiring views of the Olympic Mountains, and Puget Sound—a study in blues, greens, and whites. We saw a superb set of birds that included Varied Thrush, Harlequin Duck, a male Red-breasted Sapsucker, Townsend’s and Hermit warblers, Marbled Murrelets, and Rhinoceros Auklets.

In each region we saw beautiful wildflowers—trilliums in the Northeast and the Northwest, prairie smoke and pasque flowers in North Dakota, and glacier lilies above treeline in the Olympic Mountains. We also identified the characteristic trees of each region and saw an assortment of mammals, butterflies, and other marvelous creatures.

Second, there was the train trip itself. From a train you experience landscapes in a unique way. We traveled along and crossed many rivers: the Hudson, the Mohawk, the Fox, the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Flathead, the Columbia, and finally the Wenatchee. Almost all of them played a role in American history. We saw the rich woodlands and marshes of Wisconsin, awoke to the plains and potholes of North Dakota one morning, and on another morning awoke to the lava country of eastern Washington. From the train we saw 58 species of birds including flocks of White Pelicans, many waterfowl, Sandhill Cranes, Bald Eagles, and American magpies. We also saw two moose feeding in a lake, pronghorn antelope, and a coyote. From a train you do not see billboards, gas stations, or convenience stores. You see country, varied and often magnificent country.

Finally, there were the people—the wonderful, appreciative group of participants and the excellent local guides we had arranged to work with: Gary Lee in the Adirondacks and Ron Martin in North Dakota. Their local expertise and great knowledge added immensely to our experience. We couldn’t have asked for a better group for this trip, especially Stephen Lalor and Louisa Edwards. They are from Dublin, Ireland and had never been to America. They saw our country as few visitors ever see it. They were almost overwhelmed by the vastness and beauty of America. Seeing our own country through their eyes was a treat for all of us. At our final dinner, Stephen, speechwriter for the president of Ireland, made a speech. He talked about the “jaw-dropping” experiences they had had, the male Scarlet Tanager, the Rockies, the Olympic Mountains, the wildflowers, and the train journey itself. He concluded by telling us, “You Americans should be proud of the marvelous country you have.” Indeed we are proud and thankful that we had the opportunity to see it as few people ever have.

ITINERARY

May 19, Day 1 – Today marked the start of our “Birding Across America by Train” tour, with four participants arriving in Albany, NY. We began with an early evening gathering in the hotel lobby followed by dinner. During dinner, the tour leaders, Victor Emanuel and Barry Lyon offered a formal introduction to the tour.

May 20, Day 2 – Our first day of birding began under overcast skies with cool temperatures and light rain. Heading southwest from Albany, our destination was a series of fields and forest patches in the vicinity of Voorheesville. Our first stop was the head of Indian Ladder Road. To our delight the rain tapered off and we were greeted by a chorus of birdsong. Chestnut-sided and Black-and-white warblers were easily seen here along with a number of other resident birds and migrant songbirds. Our next destination was the private farm outside Voorheesville, at the base of the Helderberg Escarpment. The property is owned by a woman who is partial to birds and who welcomed our group. We spent considerable time on her property, birding the fields, forest edge and dense undergrowth in search of

several species of birds we were not likely to find elsewhere. The birding was outstanding, as we enjoyed a colorful suite of such recently arrived migrants as Prairie and Blue-winged warblers, Indigo Bunting, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Bobolink. Toward late morning we loaded up and headed up on top of the Escarpment for lunch and birding at Thompsons Lake State Park. With the exception of Barry getting his van stuck in the mud, our time at this lovely state park was rewarding. We spent time watching the feeders at the visitor center, observing several species we would not see again, and enjoyed a delicious picnic outside. Following lunch, Victor led a short forest walk while Barry waited for the van to get extracted from the mud. We spent the remainder of the afternoon driving to the Adirondack League Club, via a scenic route through the Mohawk River Valley and the Adirondack highway north of Utica. We arrived at the lodge in the late afternoon for check-in, which was soon followed by dinner.

May 21, Day 3 – We spent the entire day today exploring the grounds and roads of the private Adirondack League Club. We were joined (for this day and the next) by retired Adirondack Park ranger Gary Lee, whose presence was a major addition to the quality of the trip. Gary’s knowledge of the land, birds, and botany of the region was instrumental in our gaining a deeper understanding of the Adirondack Mountains. We began the day with a post-breakfast stroll around the grounds of the lodge and the edge of spectacular Little Moose Lake. The remainder of the morning was spent birding along the road to East Pond. The quality of birding was particularly high, with Black-throated Blue, Magnolia, Canada, and Nashville warblers all readily found. This outing also produced our finest Scarlet Tanager sighting of the trip. Gary was particularly impressive with his plant and flower interpretation. Following lunch at the lodge we made a mid-afternoon run out the Bisby Lake Road, going as far as Woodhull Lake, with yet another spectacular warbler show. This evening Gary provided a slide show documenting his work with the Common Loons of the Adirondacks.

May 22, Day 4 – Where yesterday was spent entirely on the property of the League Club, today was spent entirely away from the club. The Adirondacks are truly beautiful and this day was dedicated to birding and exploring the lakes and forests south of Old Forge in the vicinity of the town of Inlet. Starting with a walk into Ferd’s Bog (the site of a sensitive but protected natural area), we would ultimately spend the entire morning birding the forest along Uncas Rd. north of Inlet. Following lunch at a beautiful lakeside campground, we proceeded to scenic Raquette Lake and then on to an obscure, but large forest bog for Northern Waterthrush. Though mid-afternoon was upon us, we made a run to the Moose River Plain for a final round of birding. The day finished with a trip to Gary Lee’s home, where we bade him farewell. Following dinner we offered a short, but successful search for Barred Owl.

May 23, Day 5 – Today was an interesting one in which we began the day in relax mode at the League Club, but finished in earnest at the Amtrak train station back in Albany. In between were several birding stops, a beautiful drive by numerous mountain lakes and the Hudson River, and an unfortunate traffic tie-up due to road construction north of Albany. The winds of fortune blew with us (Blackpoll Warblers discovered in the trees over the van while packing, and a Pine Warbler and Purple Finches attending a feeder in town) and against us (dipped on Morning Warblers outside Old Forge), yet generally we enjoyed a beautiful day with a plethora of gorgeous mountain scenery. We boarded the “Lakeside Limited” after 7:00 p.m., where we settled into our rooms and enjoyed dinner in the dining car.

May 24, Day 6 – We awoke this morning in western Ohio, only a few hours from Chicago. It was fun experiencing the rumble of the train as it rocked and swayed from one town to the next. Eventually we crossed into Indiana for a short spell before rolling into Chicago around 10:00 a.m. As we had

approximately 4 hours before boarding the train for Minot, N.D., it was decided that we would make a short outing to the world famous Field Museum for lunch, followed by time exploring the museum. We returned to Union Station in comfortable time, before boarding the “Empire Builder” around 2:00 p.m. Once on board, everyone settled into our rooms and took advantage of the train’s amenities, including the Viewing car and Club car. Many simply chose to relax in the privacy of their rooms. In the late afternoon and early evening we witnessed the beautiful landscapes of central and western Wisconsin, passing through forested hills and over several major rivers. Toward sundown, with great anticipation, we finally laid eyes on the mighty Mississippi.

May 25, Day 7 – We awoke this morning to entirely different surroundings. Gone were the big forests of the Northeast and upper Midwest; absent were the large tributaries of the Mississippi River; nowhere to be seen were the aging buildings that so characterize many of our northern cities. Instead, we found ourselves nearly alone in big sky country, amid a land punctuated by rolling farmland and native prairies, and all of it peppered with waterfowl-filled pothole ponds and lakes. Our arrival in Minot, N.D. occurred around 9:30 a.m. Unlike the bustling train stations of Albany, and particularly Chicago, Minot presented a scene of comparative tranquility. Upon detraining we were greeted by Ron Martin, who would accompany us during our time in North Dakota. Departing the station, we immediately headed for Oak Park, a local oasis for migrating birds. As luck would have it, our visit coincided with a passing weather front and we soon found ourselves in cold windy conditions with a smattering of rain. It was definitely uncomfortable for many, but the birding was very good anyway. Highlights included numerous Alder Flycatchers and a Yellow-throated Vireo on a nest. Following lunch and check-in at the hotel, an optional afternoon field trip to the local water treatment facility proved incredibly rewarding. Birds were everywhere! In driving the levees around the large impoundments we were treated to the sublime site of hundreds of Wilson’s and Red-necked Phalaropes, Buff-breasted and White-rumped sandpipers, American Golden-Plovers, and Black Terns.

May 26, Day 8 – Again the weather was a bit on the inhospitable side for the first part of the day. A trip to the city park in Velva saw us traipsing about in wind and light rain. Though we saw a few new birds, including a striking male Black-headed Grosbeak, we decided to beat it back to the local mini-mart for restrooms and hot drinks. From there our fortunes began to improve. An off-the-highway drive took us by several ponds and marshes where Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Marbled Godwits shared space with a variety of nesting waterfowl, including Canvasback, Redhead, and many others. Male Chestnut-collared Longspurs at another stop were terrific. A mid-afternoon trip to Salier National Wildlife Refuge was just wonderful, with thousands of nesting Franklin’s Gulls, Black Terns, Double-crested Cormorants, and American White Pelicans filling the air. By late afternoon the sun was out and we were basking in the warmer weather. We celebrated by visiting a Ferruginous Hawk nest. Other highlights were close, roadside views of Upland Sandpipers.

May 27, Day 9 – Today dawned cool and slightly cloudy, but promising nonetheless. Our destination was Lostwood NWR, a beautiful native prairie sanctuary. Arriving early, we enjoyed some of the best wildlife viewing of the entire trip. The birding was exceptional, with lengthy views of Sharp-tailed Grouse, Sprague’s Pipit, and Baird’s Sparrow. Ron’s wildflower interpretation was also very good, and we spent time identifying such native plants as prairie smoke, pasque flower, and wolfberry. From Lostwood we moved on to Tasker’s Coulee for lunch. Though only a few new birds were added, we could not have picked a more inviting setting for a mid-day meal. Spotted Towhees and Eastern Phoebes serenaded from the nearby brush while a Veery called intermittently. The second half of the day was spent exploring parts of Des Lacs and Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuges, in search of other waterbirds and waterfowl. The day concluded with close views of Red-necked and Western grebes and a Burrowing Owl at the local cemetery.

May 28, Day 10 – This day was one of fond farewells and westward travel by train. We began with a return trip to the train station and a hearty round of good-byes to Ron Martin. In reboarding the “Empire Builder” around 9:00 a.m., we prepared ourselves for a full day and night aboard, with an expected arrival in Edmonds, WA around the same time the following day. Many felt that this leg of the journey was the most interesting. Departing Minot, we spent the next couple of hours passing through western North Dakota, a lonely land and sparsely populated, yet undeniably beautiful. Rolling grasslands and sculpted badlands characterized this section of the Northern Plains. Entering Montana, we found ourselves in Lewis and Clark country. Fort Union, one of our first stops, marked Audubon’s “farthest west.” Off to the south the Missouri River flowed tranquilly by. Some spotted Pronghorn, while other spotted more White Pelicans. The open plains of eastern and central Montana are a combination of prairie, cropland, and Indian reservation. This mosaic added certain dynamism and kept us all watching intently. Sudden changes in the landscape were noted by many. Finally the Rockies were in sight. High, wide, and handsome, the Rocky Mountain Eastern Front beckoned to us like a siren. Rugged, snow-capped, and supreme in the afternoon light, we were like spectators at the theatre with front row seats. Rising up off the prairie, “Empire Builder” carried us into the flank of the mountains. Fresh snow gleamed on the surrounding peaks and ridges while streams and rivers pulsed with ice-cold rushing water. In the heart of the mountains, in the vicinity of Marias Pass, we traversed the edge of Glacier National Park. Here the scenery reached a crescendo. Magnificent mountain forests swept down from treeline, broken only by lush meadows and glacier-fed rivers. The mighty Flathead River, in fact, was our constant companion for much of the journey through the mountains. Arriving in Whitefish, Montana, the light finally faded away, leaving us to contemplate what wonders awaited us on the ’morrow.

May 29, Day 11 – Daybreak! A sunrise! Columbia River! These images were our first of central Washington; and what a contrast to the preceding day. This IS Great Basin country—dry stark, and bold. Central Washington is certainly scenic and the Columbia River is the defining feature of this ancient volcanic landscape. Thanks to its erosive forces over the millennia, we looked out on dramatic scenes of towering cliffs and lengthy escarpments. Before long we said goodbye to this landscape as well as the train kept rolling westward. Soon we were back in the forest, this time in the Wenatchee Mountains, front-range to the east side of the Cascades. Up and up we went, first along the Wenatchee River for many miles until we found ourselves in the lush mountain forests of the Cascades. Eventually we were looking up at the snow-capped spires and ragged peaks of the Cascade-range, while thick, wet forest and rushing streams closed in on both sides of the train. What a beautiful trip through the mountains this was. Finally we hit the western slope and descended the flank of the mountains, right down to the waterline of stately Puget Sound. After 24 hours the train finally pulled into the station in Edmonds, Washington. After working through a delay in acquiring the vehicles we would use for the next few days, we boarded a Washington ferry for a trip ’cross the Sound. For many this experience was a lifetime first. To boot, we could not have picked a more beautiful day for our short ferry ride. With the peaks of the high Cascades towering up behind us to the east, we were able to enjoy unobstructed views of Mounts Baker and Rainier, two of Washington’s most visible landforms. Arriving on the Olympic Peninsula, we were surrounded by trees brandishing their fresh leaves of the year. Every shade of green imaginable was represented in these lush forests, and when contrasted to the deep blue waters of Puget Sound, and the rugged Olympic Mountains, we experienced a visual feast of glorious panoramic scenery. Our first Washington birding, at Salisbury County Park, netted a few new ones. Stopping at Diamond Point we hoped for puffins, but settled for Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, and Pigeon Guillemots. We arrived in Port Angeles late this afternoon.

May 30, Day 12 – On a continent replete with dramatic scenery, Olympic National Park offers some of the finest in the lower 48. Ragged peaks crowned with mountain glaciers accentuate this unpeopled land of giant old-growth forests, plunging river valleys and deep coniferous forest. Our goal today was to experience the park, from near sea-level all the way to Hurricane Ridge above treeline. By all accounts we had a spectacular day, wandering through the old-growth forest at Heart-O'-the-Hills, birding our way up the scenic drive, identifying trees and wildflowers at every stop, admiring two half-grown black bear cubs along the roadside, and finally eating lunch at eye-level with rising, snow encrusted mountains. Glorious would be one way to describe our day in Olympic National Park. A carpet of Glacier Lillies atop the ridge was exciting for many. In the afternoon, an optional trip to Ediz Hook was just what the doctor ordered for those hoping for Harlequin Duck. Many stunning males were easily found in the protected waters of the bay. Closer inspection of the log booms revealed Black Oystercatchers and a rare summering Greater Scaup. We concluded the afternoon with a trip to the mouth of the Elwha River, where we spent time with lots more Harlequins and a majestic soaring Bald Eagle.

May 31, Day 13 – Our final day together was a remarkable one as we had good luck locating several highly desirable birds as well as receiving more immersion in the fantastic scenery of the Pacific Northwest. An optional early morning Varied Thrush search in Olympic National Park proved successful as we located a female bird foraging on the roadside in the early morning hours. Later, after departing the hotel, we made a swing through the scenic farm country north of Sequim to the Dungeness NWR. After a short walk on one of the forest trails, we returned to the vehicles and headed south, paralleling the Dungeness River and eventually winding up at the John Wayne Marina. The marina is a beautiful place and offers fine views of Sequim Bay. The bluff overlooking the bay offers excellent seawatching, as evidenced by the many alcids we located just offshore. Continuing west, a final check for puffins at Diamond Point proved fruitless, but a surprise find of a singing Willow Flycatcher was highly enjoyable. Heading southeast from Sequim, and approaching mid-day, a tip from our Washington-based tour leader Bob Sundstrom led us to the shores of Crocker Lake for a last-ditch effort for Red-breasted Sapsucker. A stunning series of events ultimately led to the sight of 16 birders huddled on the side of Hwy. 101 watching in amazement at a sapsucker flycatching over the road! Lunch was taken at an incredibly beautiful roadside campground. Following lunch we continued south to the Quilcene National Fish Hatchery for a search for Dippers, which failed. We concluded our birding with an afternoon trip up Mt. Walker. The drive to the turnoff was equally as beautiful as the views from atop the mountain. The highway ran the length of a narrow river valley completely lined with towering conifers, while mountains loomed upon all sides. On top of Mt. Walker we had great views of Gray Jays, Townsends's Warblers, and an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Hermit Warbler was our most hoped-for bird, but the best we could do was an obviously hybrid Townsends x Hermit cross, although the bird did display the golden head so characteristic of Hermit Warbler. For a grand finale, we made the short walk out to the viewpoint that offers commanding views of Puget Sound far below. The drive to the hotel consumed the remainder of the afternoon, but in approaching Sea-Tac from the southwest, we were treated to majestic views of Mt. Rainier. Our final dinner was held at the Marriott Hotel in Sea-Tac.

June 1, Day 14 – This morning marked the conclusion of the tour, with most participants transferring to the airport for departing flights.

BIRDLIST

This birdlist is arranged in accordance with the A.O.U. Checklist of North American Birds, Seventh Edition. The A.O.U. is the official source on the taxonomy of birds found in North and Middle America, including adjacent islands. This list incorporates all Supplements to the Seventh Edition.

Ducks, Geese & Swans – Anatidae

Canada Goose (*Branta Canadensis*) – Especially abundant in N.D.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*) – A lone bird northeast of Minot was a surprise find. This bird was apparently either summering locally or a very late spring migrant. Seen by only half the group before it got up and flew away.

Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) – One skittish individual near Woodhull Lake in the Adirondacks was seen only by a few; others at Oak Park in Minot were viewed with far greater ease. Certainly one of our more attractive waterfowl.

American Wigeon (*Anas Americana*) – Widespread, but not plentiful, at pothole lakes and ponds in North Dakota.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) – One of the most abundant waterfowl in N.D. Common and seen daily.

Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*) – Only a couple; found the final afternoon while scanning the reservoir at Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – An abundant breeding duck of pothole lakes and marshes in N.D.

Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*) – Seen in low numbers throughout prairie pothole ponds, lakes, and marshes; N.D.

Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*) – Another of the more common nesting waterfowl species in N.D.; lots of nice males.

Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) – Reasonably common in N.D. at pothole ponds, lakes, and marshes.

Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*) – While certainly not common, we had little trouble finding several nice pairs in N.D. on pothole ponds, lakes, and marshes.

Redhead (*Aythya Americana*) – A fairly common breeding duck in N.D.

Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) – Decidedly uncommon on this trip. We had a pair near Woodhull Lake in the Adirondacks and another pair at Salier NWR in N.D.

Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*) – One of the more abundant nesting waterfowl in N.D.; pothole lakes, ponds, and marshes throughout.

Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*) – While birding log booms at Ediz Hook in WA, Victor spotted an adult male bird swimming and foraging by itself in a pocket of protected water. Normally a winter resident, this species is only rarely encountered in the summer as they are typically on their breeding grounds much further north.

Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) – Found with ease among the log booms and along the shoreline at Ediz Hook, WA. This bird is, in the opinion of most, one of the most beautiful of North American waterfowl.

With ease we noted many pair swimming and foraging out in the harbor, and on several occasions we had them swimming by at distances of only a few yards. The bird's richly colored plumage is so immaculate as to make an observer feel he was viewing some kind of oil or airbrush painting.

Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) – Not many scoters around this summer in coastal WA; however, we did see some in flight from our vantage point at Diamond Point; a few others seen well at Ediz Hook.

Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) – Seen on two occasions in N.D. The first was a female bird spotted by David McNicholas at Oak Park in Minot; the second was a nice looking drake on roadside pond northeast of Minot.

Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*) – Thanks to David's keen eyes, we found a female merganser asleep on a rock in the Hudson River near the eastern terminus of the Adirondack Highway.

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Common and easy to find on its N.D. nesting grounds. We enjoyed many "blue-billed" males and also one individual at the Minot water treatment facility that displayed a mostly black head.

Pheasants & Partridges, Grouse, Turkeys, and Guineafowl – *Phasianidae*

- Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) – Another reward for getting up early; those who participated in the early morning outing to Ferd's Bog were treated to an elusive, but clearly visible male grouse walking on the forest floor.
- Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) – OUTSTANDING would be one word for describing our experience with this distinctive bird of the prairie. Upon arriving at Lostwood NWR west of Minot, ND, we proceeded straight to a lek that contained a couple dozen dancing, displaying, foot-stomping Sharp-taileds. Though late in the season, the birds put on a super show for us.
- Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – In New York we had a distant group of birds in a pasture while looking way down from atop the Helzberg Escarpment. In N.D. several more were seen from the windows of the vehicle while in transit.
- Gray Partridge (*Perdix perdix*) – While returning to the hotel in Minot on our final afternoon in N.D., Ron told us to keep a sharp eye out for Gray Partridge. So we did. The result: good views of two birds running/flying across an open field.
- Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Numbers of individuals found throughout the fields of North Dakota, including several showy males.

New World Quail – *Odontophoridae*

- California Quail (*Callipepla californica*) – Though non-native to Washington, California Quail is a firmly established resident of lowlands and foothills both east and west of the Cascades. Its presence in the state is the result of a long history of releases meant to improve gamebird options for hunters. We saw two males very well north of Sequim en route to Dungeness NWR.

Loons – *Gaviidae*

- Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) – A single bird at considerable distance off the south side of Diamond Point was the only one seen. Undoubtedly this bird was summering locally. Even with the scope this bird was difficult to see well, but the red throat was noted by some.
- Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) – Our experiences with this bird could not have been better. Gary Lee set the stage with his in-depth presentation one evening at the Adirondack League Club, in which we learned about the life cycle of the Common Loon in the Adirondack Mountains. Gary has worked on a loon banding project ever since retiring as a ranger for the Adirondack Park. He told us about his work with the loons, in addition to practically anything anybody could want to know about them and their nesting habits. We had many excellent studies of a loon pair on Little Moose Lake and another on a nest just outside Old Forge. On a couple of the nights at the lodge, the loons began yodeling, which was a great delight to those who heard them.

Grebes – *Podicipedidae*

- Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*)
- Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*) – One of our last new birds for N.D., we had prolonged scope views of at least two pair at close range at Upper Souris NWR.
- Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – Handsome in their breeding dress, we had encountered this species commonly at pothole lakes and ponds and in the National Wildlife Refuges.
- Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – Seen on the first and third days in N.D.; best was the single bird at close range at the Minot water treatment facility; another more distant bird at Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge.

Pelicans – *Pelecanidae*

- American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – Seen the first afternoon in flight at the Minot water treatment facility, but the best views were had the final afternoon at Des Lacs NWR, when a large group swam and fed in the large reservoir below us.

Cormorants – *Phalacrocoracidae*

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Abundant at breeding colonies on the larger reservoirs in N.D.; also seen in good numbers in Puget Sound, WA.

Pelagic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pegagicus*) – Several seen in flight, but well, at Diamond Point and Ediz Hook on the Olympic Peninsula.

Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns – *Ardeidae*

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) – This bird becomes less common in the northern tier of states, as evidenced by our total for the trip at less than 6 six individuals, one or two seen in each of the three states we visited.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Several white egrets spotted from the train in the vicinity of Devil’s Lake, N.D. were apparently this species.

Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – A couple at Salier NWR, N.D. were the only ones seen; another bird decidedly more scarce this far north.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) – One in flight over Fiddlehead Rd. outside Albany the first morning out was the only one seen.

Ibises & Spoonbills – *Threskiornithidae*

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) – Several at Salier NWR, N.D.

New World Vultures – *Cathartidae*

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

Hawks, Eagles & Kites – *Accipitridae*

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Individuals in New York and North Dakota.

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – An immature along Uncas Rd. in the Adirondacks, but much better views were had of adult birds at several locations around Puget Sound in WA. Among the better sightings were two perched on pilings outside the Amtrak train station and one soaring overhead at the mouth of the Elwha River.

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) – Seen daily in N.D., with many fine views of low-flying male and female birds.

Cooper’s Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) – One on a nest in Oak Park in Minot, ND was the only one seen.

Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) – In total, we probably saw half a dozen birds during our time in the Adirondacks and Minot. Nearly all sightings were of soaring birds.

Swainson’s Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) – Many good views of soaring birds throughout our time in N.D. Probably best were the two soaring overhead along the highway east of Minot our first morning out. Despite the wind and cold temperatures, we had an amazing experience with these birds.

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Scattered sightings in both New York and North Dakota.

Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) – Distant but diagnostic views of an adult bird on a nest south of Salier NWR, N.D.

Caracaras & Falcons – *Falconidae*

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) – A couple in N.D. were the only ones seen. This species has declined significantly across portions of its range.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) – One over the train station in Minot short after our arrival was a harbinger of good things to come!

Rails, Gallinules & Coots – *Rallidae*

Sora (*Porzana Carolina*) – Heard only; Salier NWR, N.D.

American Coot (*Recurvirostra Americana*)

Cranes – *Gruidae*

Sandhill Crane (*Grus Canadensis*) – A couple seen from the train while passing through central Wisconsin were the only ones seen.

Plovers & Lapwings – *Charadriidae*

American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*) – A group of about 30 birds in a bare field at the Minot wastewater facility were an exciting discovery. Though the weather was pretty bad we all enjoyed prolonged scope views of these breeding plumaged dandies.

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*) – Common in N.D.

Piping Plover (*Pluvialis melodus*) – distant views of a nesting bird on the shores of an alkali lake at Lostwood NWR, ND.

Oystercatchers – *Haematopodidae*

Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*) – Great scope views of a couple birds on the log boom at Ediz Hook, WA.

Avocets & Stilts – *Recurvirostridae*

American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) – Seen daily around prairie marshes in N.D., where it breeds. This species is surely one of the world's most elegant shorebirds.

Sandpipers & Allies – *Scolopacidae*

Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*) – A couple in N.D. en route to Salier NWR.

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) – We had wonderful experiences with several pairs of these prairie breeders. On at least one occasion we viewed birds flying and belting out their piercing disturbance calls.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) – An uncommon migrant in May, we were fortunate to discover a single bird on the mud flats while scoping Caspian Terns at the end of Discovery Bay, WA.

Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*) – Seen daily during our time in N.D.; We felt fortunate to have such high quality looks at several pairs right next to the road; One pair foraged literally only yards away from Barry's van while en route to the Ferruginous Hawk nest. This species is a classic springtime symbol of the Northern Plains and we milked our time with these birds for all it was worth.

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa solitaria*) – Seen only in N.D., with the best looks had at Des Lacs NWR.

Willet (*Tringa semipalmata*) – Uncommon, but not hard to find, in wetter prairie situations in N.D.

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) – Individuals scattered through the various roadside ponds and canals in N.D.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) – A few late migrants found in N.D. were a little late; since they were still in various stages of molt, these individuals were probably non-breeding birds simply taking their time moving north.; Minot wastewater facility and Des Lacs NWR.

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*) – A few in the bare field at the Minot wastewater facility and a couple more at Des Lacs NWR, N.D.

Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) – Des Lacs NWR, N.D. only.

White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*) – One or two in the bare field at the Minot wastewater facility.

Sightings of this species normally generate considerable excitement, but due to the cold, rainy weather, we didn't spend as much time viewing them as we might ordinarily have.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*) – Several in the same field as the other shorebirds.

Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*) – A few spotted by Victor at Des Lacs NWR, N.D.

Stilt Sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*) – Des Lacs NWR, N.D. Decent, but fairly distant, views.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) – Despite the rain and cold, nobody passed up a chance for excellent scope views of a single bird at the wastewater facility outside Minot, N.D. This shorebird, among North America's most beautiful, is always high on everybody's wish list. Late May is getting late for this species, so we felt fortunate to have even seen one.

Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – Wonderful views of this species and the next at the Minot wastewater facility. The overcast skies actually worked to our advantage, as viewing conditions were superb. We were able to study at length all the important field marks, in addition to observing their

interesting “spinning” foraging behavior. But more than that, we gained an appreciation for the subtle beauty and delicacy of this Great Basin/Great Plains nesting species.

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – Side-by-side with the former species and equally wonderful. Smaller and darker than Wilson’s, the Red-necked is an exquisitely patterned and colored bird.

Interestingly, this bird is much harder to find in the plains states outside N.D., revealing the importance of prairie ponds and reservoirs in this state as important staging stops for this species.

Gulls & Terns – *Laridae*

Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) - THE springtime gull of N.D.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*) – A few immatures and non-breeders along the Puget Sound coastline. Later in the summer thousands more will appear as part of the post-breeding dispersal of this species.

Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucescens*) – Easily the most common gull in the Puget Sound area. The problem with identifying this species is that it frequently hybridizes with Western Gull and intergrades showing field marks of both species are common—the so-called “Puget Sound” Gull. Pure Glaucous-wingeds were noted, however, in such places as John Wayne Marina and Ediz Hook.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) – Several on the larger lakes of the Adirondacks.

Franklin’s Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) – Seen by the hundreds, and even thousands, over the larger lakes and impoundments in North Dakota. North Dakota is a major nesting region for this species, so the impressive numbers we recorded are to be expected. Many individuals were adorned with a pinkish cast to the breast, which is typical of breeding adults.

Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*) – About 30 birds on the mudflats at the end of Discovery Bay, WA. We enjoyed excellent scope views of numerous breeding plumaged adults.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) – Clear, but distant views, of 2 or 3 birds on the mudflats at Des Lacs NWR, N.D.

Forster’s Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) – A couple at Des Lacs NWR, N.D. were the only ones seen.

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) – Like many other birds associated with water and marsh, the Black Tern arrives in North Dakota by the thousands each spring for the breeding season. We had many great views, some through the scope, of this beautiful and elegant species. Most memorable were the dozen flying just over the surface of the water on one of the impoundments at the Minot wastewater facility, and the dozens resting on the auto tour road at Salier NWR.

Auks, Murres & Puffins – *Alcidae*

Pigeon Guillemot (*Cephus columba*) – Abundant and seen with ease at several coastal locations in WA. First seen at Diamond Point, then at Ediz Hook, and finally, at John Wayne Marina, where our best views were had. Several birds were flying in close proximity to us, allowing for views of their red feet.

Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) – We saw this bird at a couple of coastal locations in WA, but their small size made seeing them well a challenge. A pair at Diamond Point was seen well in the scope by all.

Rhinoceros Auklet (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) – Outstanding views of swimming birds at Diamond Point and Ediz Hook, WA.

Pigeons & Doves – *Columbidae*

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*)

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*) – A perched bird seen briefly at Salisbury County Park, WA.

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*)

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – One in N.D. was the only one seen.

Typical Owls – *Strigidae*

Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) – Ron Martin showed us a nestsite, with an adult nearby, at Salier NWR, N.D.

Barred owl (*Strix varia*) – An optional evening of owling outside the League Club in the Adirondacks finally produced a single bird. Interestingly it did not call and only stayed around for a short amount of time.

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) – A single bird at a cemetery near Upper Souris NWR, N.D., was the only one seen. Once more widespread in N.D., this bird represented one of the few and far between survivors of widespread changes in land use.

Swifts – Apodidae

Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) – A few over Albany while in transit to the train station were the only ones seen.

Hummingbirds – Trochilidae

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) – Seen daily during our time in New York.

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) – Several individuals mixed with the more numerous Rufous Hummingbirds at the feeder outside Salisbury Park, WA. Scope views of a male.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) – Probably a half dozen individuals of both sexes were visiting the same feeder as the Anna's.

Kingfishers – Alcedinidae

Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*) – Heard only twice in the Adirondacks; finally seen by most of the group along the Quilcene River by the national fish hatchery.

Woodpeckers & Allies – Picidae

Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – A gorgeous adult bird visited the suet feeder at Thompsons Lake State Park. Since we were at the northern edge of this bird's range, it isn't surprising that this individual was the only one seen.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – Seen daily around the Adirondack League Club, with good views of both males and females.

Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus rubber*) – The sighting of this species turned out to be one of the most exciting and fortuitous of the whole trip. After missing it at Salisbury County Park, WA, it appeared that we were completely out of luck, especially since this little park is where we DID see the bird the last time we operated this tour. In checking our options, a call to VENT tour leader Bob Sundstrom, who lives in WA, produced one last spot for us to try, tiny Crocker Lake along Hwy 101 southeast of Port Angeles. As fortune would have it, this site lay directly on our route back to Sea-Tac. Upon arriving at the lake, Victor left the highway for a look while Barry waited at roadside pullout. Almost miraculously, a Red-breasted Sapsucker flew out of the forest and perched on the side of a telephone pole directly in front of the vehicle. Amid excited shouting and pointing, we contacted Victor and got him and his group back up to the road. From there we all jumped out and within seconds were viewing the bird. What an experience! Not only did we get the bird on the phone pole, but we also watched it fly across the road onto an old fence post, then flycatch over the road, and finally landing on the road itself! Ultimately we had to just walk away from it. The sapsucker was one of the last new birds of the trip, but our finding it was one of the most exciting moments.

Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*) – New York and North Dakota.

Hairy Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus*) – Seen throughout the trip in all three regions where we spent time. The birds of the Pacific NW were of the typically dark local race.

Black-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*) – Another amazing woodpecker experience was our discovery of a pair of these seldom seen north woods inhabitants on our optional morning trip to Ferd's Bog. After missing this species the first time around, we offered an optional early morning departure on our last morning in the Adirondacks. The result was success! A beautiful pair was found from the boardwalk at the edge of the forest. Great looks for all! For part 2 of the story read on...

American Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides dorsalis*) – While viewing the Black-backed Woodpeckers in a dead tree, we noticed that a THIRD woodpecker had flown in to join the other two. Imagine our surprise upon realization that the third bird was actually a female THREE-TOED WOODPECKER. Incredible! Both species in the same tree!

Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) – The "Yellow-shafted" form in New York and the "Red-shafted" form in North Dakota.

Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) – “Smashing” good looks at a foraging bird outside the main lodge at the Adirondack League Club. This powerful beast is always an attention-getter, and this one sure didn’t disappoint.

Tyrant Flycatchers – Tyrannidae

Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) – Scope views of a singing bird atop Mt. Walker the final afternoon in WA. Sadly, this species has declined precipitously, so it’s always nice to enjoy them when the opportunity presents itself.

Western Wood-Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*) – Heard only in WA on the final day.

Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*) – The only one seen was on the first morning at our first stop, Indian Ladder Road, southwest of Albany.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*) – A male on territory was located at Ferd’s Bog on the optional early morning trip.

Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*) – About a half dozen migrants were seen in Oak Park in Minot, ND on a cool, rainy morning. Excellent looks for all. This bird was much easier here this year than the last time.

Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) – After leaving Diamond Point, WA, on our way back to Sea-Tac, we heard a bird calling out in a regenerating field. After getting out of the vehicles, we promptly located our bird, followed by good scope views for all.

Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*) – Seen well in a variety of locations in New York and North Dakota.

Pacific-slope Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*) – Excellent views of a calling, perched bird in Salisbury County Park, WA. As the name implies, this is a Pacific coast specialty.

Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*) – Easy to find around the League Club in the Adirondacks.

Great-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – Superb views of a territorial male in Oak Park, Minot, N.D.

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) – Widespread over the prairie and farmland of N.D.

Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – Very abundant in N.D.

Shrikes – Laniidae

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Like last time, we saw only one bird; a flighty individual was spotted south of Salier NWR, ND, shortly after we left the Ferruginous Hawk nest. This bird has apparently been in steep decline in North Dakota for a number of years, sad to say.

Vireos – Vireonidae

Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) – Scope views of a bird on a nest in Oak Park, Minot, N.D. Nice going Mary on your ability to spot this stealthy individual.

Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*) – Eventually seen by all in the Adirondacks in N.Y.

Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) – We had singing birds of the eastern race in Oak Park, Minot, N.D. and another of the western race along the Quilcene River in WA. This species is a candidate for a future split.

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) – Great views of a male on territory in the Adirondacks.

Crows, Jays & Magpies – Corvidae

Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*) – We missed this bird in the Adirondacks, but caught up with it in Olympic National Park in Washington. Places where this bird was not only seen, but seen well, include Heart-O’-the-Hills campground, Hurricane Ridge, and atop Mt. Walker. The form of the Pacific Northwest is a darker subspecies (*P.c. obscurus*), which displays more black on the head than other subspecies.

Steller’s Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) – Only 1 seen this time. We had great looks at a bird in the Heart-O’-the-Hills campground in Olympic N.P.; the Pacific coast variety.

Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Abundant in the east.

Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*) – Though reputedly declining in N.D., we had many sightings in the valley paralleling Des Lacs NWR.

American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – 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 intergrade. Here's why. When I got home I consulted my Birdfinding Guide to Washington and it 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 they pure Northwestern Crow? 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 with certainty 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 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*) – A few briefly in the Adirondacks and another in N.D., but without question the best sightings were on Hurricane Ridge in WA. While strolling around the visitor center and eating lunch we had up close views of a large, hungry-looking individual peering at us from only a few yards away.

Larks – *Alaudidae*

Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) – Wonderful studies of birds in the road at the longspur field north of Velva, N.D. Others at Lostwood NWR.

Swallows – *Hirundinidae*

Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) – Though we recorded this species in N.D., it was WA where we had it best. For you eastern birders, Purple Martin is a much harder bird to find in the west than the east. Reintroduction projects along the Edmonds waterfront have been successful and we saw males and females hanging around the pilings outside the train station.

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Common and seen almost every day of the trip. In New York and North Dakota, we found this bird commonly around bluebird houses. This species is also very sharp looking.

Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Abundant in WA. We had many nice looks at this beautiful little bird from sea level all the way up to Hurricane Ridge.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Only a couple birds seen in WA.

Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*) – Many excellent looks at birds flying at eye-level over the impoundments at the Minot wastewater facility.

Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – A huge colony seen at the Minot wastewater facility.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) – Readily seen in all three major birding areas.

Chickadees & Tits – Paridae

Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapilla*) – Seen almost every day of the trip.

Chestnut-backed Chickadee (*Poecile rufescens*) – Very nice views of a couple of birds at Heart-O'-the-Hills campground in Olympic National Park, WA.

Boreal Chickadee (*Poecile hudsonica*) – Wonderful looks of a close, inquisitive individual in the Adirondacks along Uncas Rd.

Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*) – Like Red-bellied Woodpecker, this species is at the northern end of its range around Albany, N.Y. We had several at the seed feeders at Thompson Lake State Park.

Nuthatches – Sittidae

Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) – Seen daily, but in low numbers, on the League Club property in the Adirondacks. Another visiting a backyard feeder in Old Forge.

White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) – Seen nearly every day in N.Y. and N.D.

Wrens – Troglodytidae

Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) – The only one seen was found in the bushes outside the train station in Edmonds, WA. Apparently good looks were had by all.

Winter Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) – The eastern form was seen by a part of the group near Ferd's Bog in the Adirondacks, while everybody had outstanding views of the western form in Olympic National Park, WA.

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) – Seen only around the League Club in the Adirondacks.

Marsh Wren (*Troglodytes palustris*) – Heard only; Salier NWR, N.D.

Kinglets – Regulidae

Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*) – Nice looks at a curious male in the big forest at Heart-O'-the-Hills campground in Olympic Park, WA.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*) – Close looks for many at an agitated male just off Uncas Rd. in the Adirondacks.

Thrushes & Allies – Turdidae

Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) – Seen in several places in N.Y. and N.D.

Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*) – Though seen by a couple people, this bird was mostly heard only at Tasker's Coulee, N.D.

Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) – Several in the trees in Oak Park, N.D. were seen well by most; others heard only in WA.

Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) – A couple seen only by Gary and Don, in the lead vehicle, while returning to the League Club lodge from Woodhull Lake in the Adirondacks.

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) – Common and seen every day.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) – We were hoping to see this bird on the day we worked the length of the road going to Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park, WA. I was surprised that we missed it. So early the next morning we offered an optional trip back up the park road, but this time leaving early enough that we would likely be the first people on the road. Our efforts were rewarded. Though we only saw one female bird, the looks we had were outstanding. Since this species is a specialty of the west coast, it would have a shame to have missed it.

Mockingbirds & Thrashers – Mimidae

Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Seen with ease the first morning out in Albany, N.Y. while birding at Indian Ladder Road.

Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) - Seen only by half the group at an isolated grove of trees at Lostwood NWR, N.D.

Starlings – *Sturnidae*

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Wagtails & Pipits – *Motacillidae*

Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*) – Amazing looks at a flying bird at Lostwood NWR, ND. According to Ron, these birds were having a good year as there seemed to be lots of them around. Once of the more highly sought-after prairie-nesting birds.

Waxwings – *Bombycillidae*

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – Seen best in Oak Park, Minot, ND.

New World Warblers – *Parulidae*

Rather than organize the warblers we saw taxonomically, I have chosen, for fun, to list them in the order we recorded them.

- 1) Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*) – A beautiful singing male was well-studied at Indian Ladder Road southwest of Albany the first morning out.
- 2) Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Dendroica pensylvanica*) – A striking male in the same place as the Black-and-white put on an incredible show, singing from exposed branches only feet away. At one point it flew up onto a power line to broadcast from a more unlikely perch. Many others seen on the League Club property, Uncas Road and in the Moose River Plain.
- 3) Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) – First seen on the farm below the Helzberg Escarpment southwest of Albany on the first day was just the first of many we would see across the country.
- 4) Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*) – Getting this bird was a bonus because we weren't sure it even occurred along our tour route. Thanks to some pre-trip scouting and a tips from some local birders, we had excellent views of an active male on the farm below the Helzberg Escarpment. Another species near the limit of its range.
- 5) Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Just in case you didn't get enough yellow on the first day of the tour, a singing male of this species was in the same place as the Yellow, Blue-winged, and Prairie warblers!
- 6) Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*) – The only two of the trip were recorded the first morning southwest of Albany. First up was a singing male on Indian Ladder Rd. that was seen by most. Next up was a fantastic look at another singing male on the farm below the Helzberg Escarpment.
- 7) American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Our first redstart was found on the first day at Thompson Lake State Park on a post-lunch walk through the forest with Victor. Barry, unfortunately, was overseeing the extraction of the touring van from the mud. Others recorded on the League Club property along the Bisby Lake Rd. and a particularly handsome individual in the Moose River Plain.
- 8) Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*) – The eastern "Myrtle" race was fairly common in the Adirondacks, but remarkably we managed to miss the western "Audubon's" form. Nevertheless, seeing this species in bright plumage on its breeding grounds is a strong reminder that this species, though a common wintertime friend to most of us, is as handsome a bird as most of the other warblers.
- 9) Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*) – One of the commonest of the breeding Adirondack's nesting warblers. We had our first bird, a male, right around the cabins of the League Club. Others were found throughout the mountain forests.
- 10) Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*) – A great looking bird, we found our first along the road to East Pond at the Adirondack League Club. Many more around Ferd's Bog and still others at various forest locations.
- 11) Blackburnian Warbler (*Dendroica fusca*) – Our first was a snappy male in the big trees around East Pond. After that we went on to find this bird to be among the most common of the nesting warblers in the region. We ultimately saw many, many gorgeous males on territories.
- 12) Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia Canadensis*) – As Gary had predicted, East Pond wouldn't disappoint. Sure enough, a singing male Canada directly overhead and out in the open was proof-positive of the truth of that statement. At least one other male was noted foraging with other warblers around Woodhull Lake.

- 13) Nashville Warbler (*Vermivora ruficapilla*) – This rascal was really not very obliging. People’s experiences in seeing this bird ran the gamut from very well to not at all. The first bird was an elusive singing male in the trees near East Pond, while others were at Ferd’s Bog and further down Uncas Rd.
- 14) Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*) – We had many close views of this smart looking bird. Seen well around East Pond, Woodhull Lake, and along Uncas Rd.
- 15) Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – A somewhat nervous individual was actually seen through the telescope along Uncas Rd. across from Ferd’s Bog. Though normally a ground dweller, we got this particular bird up in a tree.
- 16) Northern Parula (*Parula Americana*) – Fairly common in the Adirondacks, although many more were heard than seen. Nevertheless, we did enjoy outstanding views of a couple of males along Uncas Rd.
- 17) Bay-breasted Warbler (*Dendroica castanea*) – A sharp-looking male spotted with other warblers along Uncas Rd. most likely represented a nesting individual, but we couldn’t rule him out as a late passage migrant. Bay-breasted nests in the area in low numbers, but the habitat was right. It took awhile but we all eventually got it.
- 18) Northern Waterthrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis*) – One in an out-of-the way bog between Raquette Lake and the town of Inlet was staked out by Gary. Good thing too ’cause we never would have known about him. Scope views for all.
- 19) Blackpoll Warbler (*Dendroica striata*) – Imagine this scenario. While packing the vans in preparation for our departure from the Adirondack League Club, a migrating group of Blackpoll Warblers flew into the trees over our heads while we were mostly just standing around. Sometimes dumb luck is just as important as skill. Good looks at several male birds.
- 20) Pine Warbler (*Dendroica pinus*) – A bird of the South, up here? You bet. Pine Warblers actually nest into southern Canada. We had a single male, and a beauty he was, coming to a feeder in the little town of Thendara.
- 21) Townsend’s Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*) – Several showy males seen at mid-elevation in Olympic National Park. Scope views for most.
- 22) Wilson’s Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*) – Heard only at Heart-O’-the-Hills campground in Olympic Park, WA.
- 23) Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*) – A singing male proved most obliging on our morning in Olympic National Park. After flitting around a bit, he simply perched atop a young hemlock and poured out his trilled song. This was one of the brighter races that feature a lot of yellow, as opposed to the grayer eastern population.
- 24) [Townsend’s x Hermit Warbler (*D. townsendi* x *D. occidentalis*)] – Long known as one of the most northerly locations for finding Hermit Warblers, Mt. Walker was targeted as our final stop of the tour before returning to Sea-Tac. The problem is that Townsend’s Warbler, a close relative of Hermit, also occurs here, and it seems that over time the Hermits are being genetically swamped by the apparently dominant Townsend’s. We found a single bird that at first glance appeared just right for Hermit—a bright golden head with a black throat. Below the head, however, the bird was very much like a Townsend’s, with a black-streaked yellow breast and green back. So clearly our bird, though very “Hermit” in appearance, was a hybrid showing about 50/50 of each.

Tanagers & Allies – *Thraupidae*

- Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) – On a continent full of beautiful birds, perhaps none is more captivating than the Scarlet Tanager. We had a stunning male along the East Pond Road on the grounds of the Adirondack League Club. Scope views were had by most as the bird flew back and forth along the road for about 15 minutes. The darn thing was actually sitting in the road when it was first sighted.
- Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) – One of the most attractive of western songbirds, we had a younger male (with medium orange head) at one of the lookouts in Olympic National Park, WA.

Buntings, Sparrows & Allies – *Emberizidae*

- Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) – Excellent views of a curious bird at Salisbury County Park, WA.
- Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) – Though found in both N.Y. and N.D., the birds around the Adirondack League Club easily offered the best viewing.

Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) – It took more work time than I expected, but we eventually had this species well at Lostwood NWR, N.D.

Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*) – Great views were had for most on the first morning out from Albany when we visited the farm below the Helzberg Escarpment.

Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*) – Though I detected this species in several areas in N.D., the only one we really saw well was at Lostwood NWR.

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Scope views for all at a continually singing bird at Lostwood NWR, N.D.

LeConte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*) – Due to moderately strong wind, cool temperatures, and intermittent rain, we essentially missed a species that we would ordinarily have seen. I say essentially because some people did get to see it briefly creeping through the grass on the side of the road. I believe only Don really saw it well, en route to Salier NWR, N.D., when a bird actually crept up onto the road and out it in the open before retreating into the grass. This behavior seemed very un-LeConte's like to us. Despite a dedicated effort and the patience displayed by our group, we had to leave this one behind.

Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*) – Fine views of a singing male on territory at Lostwood NWR, N.D. This species is probably one of the more sought-after passerines in North America and we did just fine with it. The presence of this species is determined by the availability of its native prairie habitat.

Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) – Scope views of several singing males on territory at Lostwood NWR, N.D.

Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) – Found in all three major regions we visited.

Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*) – Great looks at a very curious individual at Ferd's Bog, N.Y.

White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) – The only one seen was a handsome male singing his song right outside the Amtrak station in Edmonds, WA. 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.

White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) – Seen almost every day in New York. The first one was a young bird visiting the seed feeders at Thompsons Lake State Park; probably best though was the pair in the small red spruce at Woodhull Lake.

Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) – A couple in the woods around the League Club in the Adirondacks; the eastern "Slate-colored" race; another at Dungeness NWR in WA was of the "Oregon" race.

Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) – Splendid views of a couple of males on territory outside Velva, N.D. Scope views for everybody.

Saltators & Cardinals – *Cardinalidae*

Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Remarkably, seen only on our first day in N.Y.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – A couple of males were spotted the first morning out of Albany on the farm below the Escarpment. Eventually we were able to put a scope on a male bird.

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) – A brightly marked male coming to a seed feeder in Velva, N.D. was an interesting find, as this marked the eastern-most end of this bird's range. Another male in WA was well-studied in the forest at Heart-O"-the-Hills campground.

Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*) – Several good scope views of a singing male on the same farm as where we saw the grosbeak. Another at Oak Park in Minot, N.D. was noted, but certainly not seen as well.

Blackbirds, Orioles & Allies - *Icteridae*

Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) – Wonderful views the first morning on the farm southwest of Albany; many others were seen in N.D. On more than one occasion we were treated to birds delivering courtship flight displays and belting out their richly complicated songs. Our experiences with this bird were totally satisfying.

Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Especially abundant in N.D.

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) – A very abundant bird of the farmlands and prairies of N.D.; we enjoyed hearing them sing at close range in several locations and also put the scope on a couple of individuals.

Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – Many brilliantly colored males seen in N.D. in marshes surrounding the numerous lakes and ponds.
Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – Seen well in N.D. and WA.; in N.D. we saw more around the native prairie, while in WA we saw them in fields near the shore.
Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – Abundant from N.Y. to N.D.
Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) – N.Y., N.D. and WA.
Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) – Two birds total. The first was a nice bright male on the farm southwest of Albany seen the first morning; the second was a bird in Kenmare, N.D.
Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*) – Nice views of a pair in Kenmare, N.D.

Siskins, Crossbills, & Allies – *Fringillidae*

Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*) – Seen every day in New York, but clearly best was the vivid male hanging around the feeders in Thendara.
House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) – New York only.
Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*) – Great close views of a couple birds at a roadside pullout in Olympic National Park, WA.
American Goldfinch (*Caruelis tristis*) – Seen at all three major areas on the trip.

Old World Sparrows – *Passeridae*

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

TOTAL = 223

MAMMALS

Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)
White-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus townsendii*) – A couple spotted from the train in central North Dakota before we rived in Minot.
Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)
Douglas's Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus douglasii*) – The dark replacement for Red Squirrel in the Pacific Northwest.
Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)
Richardson's Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus richardsonii*) – A pale ground squirrel of the Great Plains.
Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*)
Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) – Excellent views of a pair of half-grown cubs along the roadside in Olympic National Park. These animals appeared completely unconcerned with our presence as they foraged for shoots leaves among the fresh springtime plants.
Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*)
Moose (*Alces alces*) – While traveling through the mountains in Montana, a few of us saw a cow moose standing in a forest-ringed lake in the early evening.
White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)
Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) - The mule deer of the Pacific Northwest is harder to separate from White-tailed Deer than one might think; after initially identifying the animals in Olympic National Park as White-taileds, it appears that those animals were in fact "Columbian Black-tailed" Mule Deer, whose tails are larger and fluffier than those of typical inland Mule Deer. Interestingly, these animals also display extensive black coloration on the upper side of the tail, which would seem to be a good field mark for separation from typical White-tailed Deer. The matter is not that simple, however, as coastal "Columbian" White-tailed deer also display some black on the upper side of the tail. Note that the amount of black is not as extensive as on the Mule Deer.
Harbor Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Green Frog (*Rana clamitans*)
American Toad (*Bufo americanus*)
American Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*)
Rough-skinned Newt (*Taricha granulosa*)
Northwestern Garter Snake (*Thamnophis ordinoides*)

BUTTERFLIES

Canadian Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio canadensis*)
Pale Swallowtail (*Papilio eurymedon*)
Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*)
Clouded Sulphur (*Colias philodice*)
Gray Hairstreak (*Strymon melinus*)
Brown Elfin (*Callophrys augustinus*)
Spring Azure (*Celastrina ladon*)
Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*)
Fritillary Sp. (*Speyeria sp.*) – Several fritillaries flying around at Tasker’s Coulee, in N.D. were probably
Aphrodite Fritillary (*Speyeria sp.*), however the complexity of fritillary identification prevented us from
ruling out at least one other species.
Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)

FLOWERS, SHRUBS, AND TREES (Compiled by Victor Emanuel)

I. New York (Northeastern Forests and Bogs)

Flowers and Shrubs:

Painted Trillium – On the most spectacular flowers we saw. Especially memorable was a patch of 21 at our
lunch spot on our second day in the Adirondacks.
Purple Trillium – Also spectacular.
Goldthread – A lovely tiny white flower. Gary showed us the golden roots from which the plant gets its name;
supposedly a cure for a sore throat. Maybe Barry should have tried it.
Garlic Mustard – An invasive plant of the roadsides; very hard to eradicate.
Foamflower – Another small white flower of the forest floor; the tiny flowers are in a cylindrical head.
Wild Strawberry – Common on the roadsides.
Trailing Arbutus
Indian Cucumber Root
Starflower
Sweet White Violet
Troutlilly – David spotted our first one at the entrance to Thompsons Lake State Park
Dandelion – Common on the Roadsides.
Beechdrops – We only saw the dead plants from last year.
Jack-in-the-Pulpit – Also at Thompsons Lake State Park
Forget-Me-Not – There was a big patch next to cabin #2; a beautiful shade of blue.
Bluets – Even smaller flowers than Forget-Me-Nots.
False Solomon’s Seal
Wild Geranium
Wild Oats
Labrador Tea – A common shrub in the bogs.
Pitcher Plant – Just starting to emerge in Ferd’s Bog
Bog Rosemary – Another shrub of the bogs
Shadbush (aka Juneberry/Serviceberry) – A shrub of the forest understory with showy white blossoms.

Hobblebush – A shrub of the forest edge with clumps of tiny white blossoms; very showy.
Leatherleaf – Common at Ferd’s Bog.
Speckled Alder

Trees:

American Beech – The most common tree of the forests of the Adirondacks.
Eastern White Pine
Red Maple – Very common. We saw some fine old specimens bedecked with red new leaves and red seed clusters.
Striped Maple
Mountain Maple
Northern White Cedar
Yellow Birch
Paper Birch
Red Spruce
Black Spruce
Eastern Hemlock
Shagbark Hickory
Eastern Red Oak
Tamarack (American Larch)
Balsam Fir
Black Cherry
Choke Cherry

II. North Dakota (Northern Plains)

Flowers and Shrubs:

Tall White Violet – Seen well in the park in Velva.
Purple Coneflower – We saw only last year’s dead plants, with their characteristic seed heads.
Bluebells
Prairie Smoke (aka Torch Flower) – Seen well on the prairies of Lostwood NWR; clumps of red plants covered with hair-like structures; Flowers were not open yet.
Prairie Chickweed
Pasque Flower – One of the most famous flowers of the prairie. Most had finished blooming and were in seed, but we saw one gorgeous blossom—blue with a yellow center; reminded us of crocus.
Missouri Milvetch – The common pea flower of the prairie.
Prairie Locoweed – Poisonous to cattle; another legume.
Juneberry (aka Shadbush/Serviceberry) – Only small fruits in this season; when ripe it is picked for pies; Ron Martin’s favorite pie filling.
Wolfberry (aka Snowberry)
Leafy Spurge – A yellow-flowered invasive plant.

Trees:

Plains Cottonwood
Bur Oak – Surprisingly, the only species of oak around Minot.
Green Ash
Box Elder – One of the most common trees at Tasker’s Coulee
Willow sp.
Quaking Aspen – Takes over the grasslands in the absence of fire.
American Elm

III. Washington (Pacific Northwest)

Flowers and Shrubs:

Glacier Lilly – Hundreds of these beautiful plants were blooming above treeline on Hurricane Ridge where the snow had recently melted; a great show.

Pioneer Violet – A lovely tall yellow violet.

Western Buttercup

Martindale's Lomatium

Yellow Skunk Cabbage – Huge green leaves.

Common Yarrow

Large White Trillium

Woods Strawberry

Unalaska Bunchberry

American Starflower

Ox-eye Daisy

Spreading Phlox

Pacific Bleeding Heart

Foxglove

Harsh Paintbrush

Broadleaf Lupine – The common blue lupine.

Sulphur Lupine – The Yellow lupine at Ediz Hook.

Yellow Water Lilly

California Poppy

Forget-Me-Not

Scot's Broom – An invader that is everywhere along roadsides.

Black Twinberry

Western Thimbleberry

Five-leafed Bramble

Pacific Blackberry

Western serviceberry

Sitka Mountain Ash

Pacific Rhododendron

Greenleaf Manzanita

Orange Honeysuckle

Deerbrush – A shrub covered with blue flowers.

Salmonberry – A blackberry-type bush with red flowers.

Trees:

Red Alder

Douglas Fir

Western Red Cedar

Alaska (Yellow) Cedar

Grand Fir

Pacific Silver Fir

Subalpine Fir

Pacific Yew

Tamarack (Western Larch)

Ponderosa Pine

Bigleaf Maple

Black Cottonwood