

BIRDING ACROSS AMERICA BY TRAIN

MAY 22-JUNE 4, 2010

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For those with an appreciation of American history, train travel is an undeniable part of the American spirit, an element of what we call Americana, that cultural term encompassing all objects and ideas considered distinctly American, like baseball, hot dogs, apple pie and '57 Chevys.

“Birding Across America by Train” is a one-of-a-kind tour offering an exciting opportunity to step back in history, to a time when train travel was the best way to go from one part of the country to another. On this remarkable 14-day adventure, participants will experience the excitement produced by a cross-country train trip, complemented by marvelous birding in some of the classic landscapes of North America. Our route will take us from the Northeast, through the Midwest, and across the northern tier of the United States all the way to the deep blue waters of the Pacific Northwest. En route, we will interrupt our journey for days at a time to experience a sampling of ecosystems: the northeastern forests, lakes, and bogs of upstate New York; the prairies, farmlands, and wide open spaces of the Great Plains of North Dakota; and the snow-capped mountains, evergreen forests, and rocky coastline of Washington’s Olympic Peninsula.

Our trip kicks off at the Adirondack League Club, a 52,000-acre private reserve in the Adirondack Mountains two hours from Albany, New York. This is a land of beautiful forests and deep bogs, peppered with lakes of all sizes and where several undammed rivers flow through. Numbers of songbird species nest here in the breeding season and the vibrant songs of warblers, thrushes, orioles, tanagers, and grosbeaks cascade out of the forest onto our welcoming ears. We will likely encounter an interesting mix of eastern and northern species, with Chestnut-sided and Magnolia warblers sharing space with Black-backed Woodpeckers and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. We will have three nights at this lovely location before boarding AMTRAK for a trip west to the plains of North Dakota.

The Great Plains of North Dakota hold some of the finest remaining grasslands and prairie potholes in North America. Unlike the confining forests of the Northeast, this is wide open big sky country, replete with spectacular birds and equally spectacular vistas. We will have most of three days to delve into this country in search of Swainson’s and Ferruginous hawks; Upland Sandpiper; Sprague’s Pipit; a fine variety of sparrows including Nelson’s Sharp-tailed, Baird’s, and LeConte’s; along with breeding waterfowl; Chestnut-collared Longspur; and Bobolink. As an added attraction, several of these species will be actively involved in their spring flight displays. We’ll then reboard AMTRAK for a trip west across the prairies and Rockies and on to the Pacific Northwest.

Washington’s Olympic Peninsula is an enchanting land of majestic mountains, darkened forests and scenic coastline. We will conclude our adventure by exploring several areas in and around Olympic National Park, experiencing a host of new birds, most of which are specialists of the Pacific coast. We should expect an impressive range of murrelets, puffins, auklets, guillemots, and murrelets near a critically important breeding colony, as well as a fine suite of birds adapted to the old growth forests of the Olympic Mountains.

“Birding across America by Train” is sure to be an unforgettable experience, a fascinating journey of discovery, and an ambitious traipse across the United States from forest to prairie to ocean. Welcome Aboard!

May 22, Day 1: Arrival in Albany, New York. Participants may plan to arrive in Albany, New York any time today and check in at the airport hotel where a room will be reserved in your name. Please schedule your arrival time early enough so everyone can convene in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. for a trip-welcome and orientation prior to going to dinner.

NIGHT: Marriott Airport Hotel, Albany, NY

May 23, Day 2: Birding from Albany to the Adirondack League Club. From Albany, the trip to the Adirondack League Club takes approximately two hours. Rather than simply making a bee-line for the League Club, we will kick off our birding in New York with some birding southwest of Albany. The major landform here is the Helderberg Escarpment, a geologic formation dating from the Paleozoic era (600-230 million years ago). The escarpment offers scenic thousand foot cliffs, in addition to several types of forest and a series of lakes and wetlands.

Half the day visiting select sites above and below the escarpment will produce an interesting variety of springtime songbirds, in addition to the more regularly occurring widespread eastern species. Among the possibilities are Eastern Bluebird; Gray Catbird; Eastern Towhee; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Indigo Bunting; Baltimore Oriole; Bobolink; and Common Grackle. This region is also a biological boundary, where a number of species breed at the northern limit of their ranges. As a result, we will be searching for birds that we will not likely encounter again on the trip. Prairie, Hooded, and Blue-winged warblers are some of our target species, but such beauties as American Redstart and Wood Thrush are equally appealing. Lunch at Thompsons Lake State Park provides a lovely mid-day setting and the feeders around the visitor center frequently host Red-bellied Woodpecker and Tufted Titmouse.

Following lunch, we'll make our way west from Albany through the beautiful Mohawk River Valley.

The Mohawk River Valley is a highly scenic part of New York that offers a rich mix of forest and farmland and a splash of human history. Our journey will see us traveling west through the length of the valley all the way to Utica, at which point we will turn north and enter the Adirondacks. Before turning off, however, we will view at least two segments of the famed Eerie Canal.

Heading north from Utica, our route to Old Forge, site of the Adirondack League Club, will be a forest-lined mountain highway that will see us passing several small towns along picturesque lakes. Time permitting, birding stops along the way will provide exposure to these lovely forests, and may turn up such prizes as Red-eyed Vireo and Scarlet Tanager.

The Adirondack League Club is a private property of 52,000 acres set amid evergreen and deciduous forest, several undammed streams and rivers, and myriad lakes and ponds. It abuts the famous Adirondack Park and holds some of the most extensive remaining habitat in the northeastern forests. The Mountain Lodge is rustic, yet offers comfortable, spacious accommodations and a full-service restaurant. It is truly a delightful destination, and the opportunity to explore the surrounding lakes (with calling Common Loons!) and forests in virtual privacy provides a most unique experience. We will take some time getting settled into our accommodations before beginning our exploration of the property. The remainder of the afternoon will be spent in the vicinity of the lodge, checking out the surrounding forests and viewing picturesque Little Moose Lake.

The natural beauty of the Adirondacks is readily apparent to all who visit. Time spent at a place like the League Club is a soothing departure from the bustle of our daily lives. The sound of automobiles and busy highways is largely absent, replaced by the cascade of singing birds and wind in the trees. Little Moose Lake is the most obvious natural feature of our surroundings, and we will want to spend time looking for birds from the well-vegetated shoreline. Common and Hooded mergansers are regularly seen, while Yellow Warbler and Song

Sparrow are downright abundant. Tree Swallows, resplendent in their immaculate blue and white plumage are often seen perched atop bare snags around the lake edge.

The surrounding woods truly are a woodpecker heaven, and the sounds of drumming woodpeckers will be heard often. We'll likely encounter such expected species as Downy and Hairy woodpeckers and Northern Flicker. The presence of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers speaks to our more northern locale, while the magnificent Pileated, also found here, hints at a more southern flavor that permeates these forests.

Late this afternoon and evening we'll want to pay close attention and listen for the sound of yodeling Common Loons. Perhaps no other voice is more ethereal or haunting than that of the loon. Hearing this bird at the height of spring on its northern breeding grounds is an experience that will put a charge into anybody. An encounter with the Common Loon after hours, when the moon is high, is an unforgettable experience.

NIGHT: Adirondack League Club, Old Forge, NY

May 24-25, Days 3-4: Exploring the Adirondacks. Over the next two days we will immerse ourselves in the beauty of our natural surroundings. Springtime in the Adirondacks is a glorious time of year. All the colorful songbirds have just arrived on their breeding grounds, the woods are alive with fresh new leaves of the season, and the sound of birdsong fills the air. By walking and driving the various roads and trails within the property, we are bound to encounter a nice variety of nesting birds, including numbers of warblers, with the likes of Magnolia, Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Nashville, Canada, Mourning and Chestnut-sided possible. Such colorful dandies as Blue-headed Vireo; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Scarlet Tanager; and Baltimore Oriole are likely as well. A trip out the Bisby Lake Road will bring exposure to another part of the property, and with it come chances for Least Flycatcher; Eastern Phoebe; and Hermit Thrush.

These great northern woods are also home to some of North America's most beautiful trees. Red spruce, balsam fir and eastern hemlock predominate among the conifers while beech, birch, and aspen are examples of the broad array of deciduous trees found here.

A morning trip to nearby Ferd's Bog will give us a taste of the boreal zone, where we will try for Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Boreal Chickadee and Gray Jay. With diligent searching we stand a good chance of spotting the rarely seen Black-backed Woodpecker. This site is not just a birding stop however. Ferd's Bog is an outstanding natural area that we will want to appreciate in full. A well-marked trail and boardwalk will give us access to a suite of northern trees and plants. Club mosses, striped and mountain maples and yellow birch are just some of the flora that characterize the area.

An afternoon outing to the majestic Moose River Plain will see us in the most pristine habitat found in the area. Wet bogs and crystalline boreal lakes pepper a vast 50,000 acre forest of spruce, fir and hemlock. Birds abound and we will want to pay special attention to the diversity of warblers that occur here annually. Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Nashville, Yellow-rumped, and American Redstart are to be watched for, and even Veery and Bay-breasted Warbler are also possible.

This whole area, in fact, presents opportunities for exploration and discovery. Each path, each road, each grove of trees may be just different enough to harbor a previously unseen resident. The shrouded forest floor may hold a shy Winter Wren, revealing its presence through its soul-touching flute-like song. The wet thicket at the turn of the road may be just right for a skulking Hermit Thrush to call home. The clearing along the river may be patrolled by flycatchers sensing an opportunity. Eastern Phoebe; Eastern Wood-Pewee; and Least Flycatcher would surely not pass up that site! And be sure to keep an eye on those dense stands of trees! A Pileated woodpecker might show up at any moment, while it may require a keener eye to spot the secretive Ruffed Grouse. When the sun goes down the sounds of the night will draw us back outside. If conditions are right, we may enjoy the loud hooting broadcast of the powerful Barred Owl, or the distinctive wonderful bugling of the Common Loon.

NIGHTS: Adirondack League Club, Old Forge, NY

May 26, Day 5: Morning birding on the lodge grounds; transfer to Albany; boarding the Lake Shore Limited. We will have half the day on the League property before returning to Albany. Our activities will be based on pursuing those species that may have eluded us to this point or visiting areas that we have not yet had the chance to see. Our morning will invariably be a rewarding one, as we are sure to turn up something unexpected. Following lunch we will load up and make our way to Albany. We will want to arrive at the train station early to be sure we are in place for the incoming train.

The Lakeshore Limited (Train 49) is one of AMTRAK's most famous routes, traveling daily between Chicago and New York City. We will board at 6:00 p.m. and immediately settle into our accommodations. The train boasts comfortable staterooms, a full service dining car, and a café. As we pull away from the station, we can settle into our seats and let the scenery glide by.

Although most of our time aboard the train will be spent during nighttime hours, the route will take us west through the Mohawk River Valley, where the setting sun may produce a pleasing site as it paints the surrounding forests and fields in a luminous glow. As we push on toward Chicago we will pass through Utica, Syracuse, the Finger Lakes district, Rochester, and Buffalo. Late in the night we will ride through a number of Ohio cities, including Cleveland and Toledo. We will pass through Indiana in the final few hours before we reach Chicago. The trip from Albany to Chicago is a little over 15 hours.

NIGHT: Aboard the Lakeshore Limited

May 27, Day 6: Travel day by train. The Lakeshore Limited is due to arrive in Chicago this morning at 9:00 a.m. If time permits, we will plan for a late morning activity before boarding the train for Minot, North Dakota. The most likely option is an outing to the famous Field Museum, one of the world's great natural history museums.

We will return to Union Station in time to board the Empire Builder (Train 7) for the 18-hour journey to Minot, North Dakota. The Empire Builder is one of AMTRAK's Superliner trains and runs daily between Chicago and Seattle. While on board, we will experience excellent comfort and service while the scenery of the upper Midwest glides by. Departing Chicago, we will have fine views of one of the world's best and most famous skylines, followed by stunning views of the Mississippi River. As the afternoon light fades toward evening, the glowing night skyline of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota will be a welcome distraction. The atmosphere aboard the train is completely relaxed, and tour participants are encouraged to take advantage of a number of possible activities. For some it may be a drink before or after dinner in the lounge car; for others it may be sitting down to a delicious dinner in the dining car, or spending some time watching the countryside from the sightseer lounge car. Others may simply want to relax in their private rooms and watch the miles slip by in private.

NIGHT: Aboard the Empire Builder

May 28, Day 7: Arrival in Minot, North Dakota; birding Around Minot. We are scheduled to arrive in Minot, North Dakota at 8:30 a.m. We will have most of the next three days to explore the prairies, wetlands, and farmlands of north-central North Dakota. Unlike the confining boreal forests of upstate New York, the prairie country of North Dakota is one of wide open spaces and endless vistas rolling on to infinity under limitless blue sky. North Dakota may not have the towering mountains of the western states, or the stately forests of the eastern states, but it preserves a sense of magic reserved for those places where nature seems as boundless as the open space itself. While the heavy hand of man has long been felt here, this part of the world has been spared the explosive development and relentless urban sprawl that characterize many of our other states. Instead, North Dakota remains a landscape of shortgrass prairies, badlands, pothole marshes, reservoirs, and croplands. It also supports some of the highest remaining concentrations of grassland and wetland nesting species in North America.

After leaving the train station, we will not have to travel far to experience the richness of the region. Oak Park, situated in Minot, is a neat little natural area that provides a nice introduction to birding in North Dakota. Tall

trees, dense understory and open lawns form a simple diversity of habitats in a relatively small area. The park supports a number of nesting species of forest and water, some of which tend not to range much further north. Wood Duck, Belted Kingfisher, Great-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Indigo Bunting are likely. The real draw of Oak Park is that it serves as a wonderful magnet for migrating birds, and anything is possible! If birds are pushing through, we may encounter a range of species, with some of the more exciting possibilities being Alder Flycatcher; Blue-headed Vireo; Connecticut, Mourning, and Tennessee warblers; Ovenbird; and Lazuli Bunting.

We will spend the remainder of the afternoon just outside Minot at the city's water treatment facility, where thousands of birds are expected to be waiting for us. Multitudes of shorebirds and waterfowl are staging on and around the various impoundments and surrounding fields before continuing the journey to more northerly breeding grounds. A tremendous assortment of shorebirds are possible and we should take time to pick out the more expected species like White-rumped, Baird's, Pectoral, Least, and Semipalmated sandpipers. With a bit of luck we may make an exciting discovery of some of the less predictable species, including American Golden-Plover; Hudsonian Godwit; and Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

Tanks of impounded water host thousands of Wilson's and Red-necked phalaropes, often side-by-side, and a great number of ducks are likely. Surrounding fields are chock full of sparrows and Bobolinks, and fence rows will be checked for Eastern and Western kingbirds and Say's Phoebes.

NIGHT: Grand International Inn, Minot, ND

May 29, Day 8: Lostwood and Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuges. For the next two days, you can expect full and rewarding days in the field. Using Minot as our base, we will venture out into the surrounding prairies and agricultural lands in search of a variety of specialized but declining species. We will focus on the likes of Baird's Sparrow and Sprague's Pipit, but the possibilities are numerous and exciting. Microhabitats within the greater grassland ecosystem support a broad diversity of species. With all the breeding species freshly arrived from their wintering grounds, the rejuvenating sound of birdsong will fill our ears, and wildflowers will color the landscape as we drink in the fresh, halcyon days of springtime on the prairie.

We will spend the first part of the day at the tremendously important Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge. Lostwood was established in 1935 as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. The refuge, at nearly 27,000 acres, is the largest contiguous block of prairie pothole habitat in federal ownership. As native prairie has been destroyed over the majority of its original range, Lostwood plays an important role in the survival of numbers of threatened and endangered species. Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge was officially named one of America's top 500 Globally Important Bird Areas by the national non-profit organization, American Bird Conservancy.

Our exploration of the refuge will see us in pursuit of a variety of grassland sparrows including Field, Chipping, Clay-colored, Lark, Grasshopper, Baird's, Le Conte's, Nelson's Sharp-tailed, Savannah, Song, and Vesper. Aside from the broad array of sparrows, we hope to encounter vibrant Upland Sandpipers; Sprague's Pipits; Bobolinks; Dickcissels; and Chestnut-collared Longspurs as they stake out their territorial claims with vigor. Significant numbers of Sharp-tailed Grouse live on the refuge and we hope to start the day at a lek where we can watch male grouse in full display. In addition to the birding, Lostwood provides spectacular prairie scenery.

In the afternoon we will drive along a portion of Des Lacs (pronounced deh-lack) National Wildlife Refuge. At nearly 20,000 acres, Des Lacs stretches from the Canadian border south to a point 8 miles south of Kenmare, North Dakota. An impressive mix of natural lakes and wetlands in the valley provide a haven for migrating and nesting waterfowl and marsh birds. More than 250 species of birds have been recorded on the refuge. While we won't encounter that many, we will surely have some terrific experiences. Stops at several reservoirs, marshes, and coulees (wooded draws), will undoubtedly turn up Eared, Western, and Clark's grebes. Even Horned Grebe

is possible. Black and Forster's terns hunt over the marshes and Soras and Virginia Rails reside amongst the cattails and bullrushes. Black-billed Magpies are frequently seen moving through isolated groves of shade trees.

NIGHT: Grand International Inn, Minot, ND

May 30, Day 9: J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge. The northern Great Plains in the spring is about more than grasslands and prairies. It is also the site of some of the most prodigious waterfowl reproduction zones on the planet. The prairie pothole marshes are as classic a symbol of the Great Plains as the rolling grasslands. A by-product of ancient glacial activity, these gouged out depressions in the prairie fill with rainwater and annually host an amazing assortment of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, terns, and blackbirds.

Perhaps no place in North Dakota embodies the spirit of the prairie-pothole ecosystem more than J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge, where, not coincidentally, we will spend a lot of the day. Established in 1935 for the preservation and propagation of migratory waterfowl and other wildlife, J. Clark Salyer NWR, the largest national wildlife refuge in the state, is 58,700 acres in size. It extends along the Souris River for 50 miles in north central North Dakota. Originally called Lower Souris Refuge, it was renamed in 1967 in honor of J. Clark Salyer II, who was a biology teacher in Minot, North Dakota and went on to become the Chief of Refuges for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The refuge serves as an important feeding and resting area for hundreds of thousands of waterfowl which annually migrate through the Central Flyway. The refuge has developed into one of the most important duck production areas in the United States.

We will drive a significant portion of the auto tour route simply taking our time exploring this tremendous refuge. Stops at major overlooks should provide all the expected marsh and waterbird species, many of which have formed huge breeding colonies. Double-crested Cormorants and American White Pelicans are abundant. We might encounter as many as five species of grebes (including Horned and Clark's), fourteen species of ducks, and a variety of breeding shorebirds, including American Avocet; Willet; Marbled Godwit; and Wilson's Phalarope. Enormous concentrations of California and Franklin's gulls nest around many of the larger bodies of water; Black and Forster's terns course across the surface; and Yellow-headed Blackbirds issue their abrasive songs from seemingly every stand of cattails. All the while we will be scanning the skies for Swainson's and Ferruginous hawks, the two great raptors of the open prairie.

The refuge also contains sizeable tracts of native prairie and many of the associated nesting species, including LeConte's Sparrow and Sedge Wren. The refuge is also good for upland "game" birds and we may encounter Ring-necked Pheasant; Gray Partridge; and Wild Turkey.

NIGHT: Grand International Inn, Minot, ND

May 31, Day 10: Travel day by train. This morning we will re-board the Empire Builder at 8:30 a.m. for the final leg of our journey. We will be on the train for most of the next 24 hours, in which time our participants will be provided a wonderful slice of the United States. Leaving Minot, we will head west through the Great Plains, skirt the Missouri River, and enter the true Big Sky country of western North Dakota and Montana. Featuring endless vistas, rolling prairie, and robust agricultural lands, participants will gaze out on a landscape once occupied by millions of buffalo, Native-Americans of the Plains, and pioneers heading west. We will also be following in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark, who passed through this country some 200 years ago as they were laying the groundwork for westward expansion.

As the hours and miles pass by, the train will roll through the prairie towns of Havre, Shelby, and Cut Bank, Montana. Approaching Browning, we will be in the heart of the Blackfoot Indian Reservation. This is a most remarkable place as it signals the end of the big sky country and the start of the Rocky Mountain Eastern Front. Few places in the world can compare in dramatic beauty to the Rocky Mountain Eastern Front. It is wild and rugged country, lightly populated, and full of wildlife. Elk, moose, and grizzly bears still roam the mountains and foothills in healthy numbers. First appearing as blue specks on the horizon, the Rockies begin to take more

distinct shape as snow-capped mountains as we close in on them. Together with the lush green grasses of spring, this country is one of glorious visual scenery.

We will cross the Rockies late in the day, cruising for miles along the tremendously scenic Flathead River, and even touching the boundary of Glacier National Park. For many, on past trips, the crossing of the Rockies represents the most beautiful portion of the trip. We'll pass through western Montana and Idaho by night and eventually wind up in Spokane, Washington. Early the next morning we will find ourselves out on the Columbia Plateau peering out at the mighty Columbia River. From there it's on to and over the Cascades, and finally down to Puget Sound country and the Pacific Northwest, with an expected midmorning arrival in Edmonds, Washington.

NIGHT: Aboard the Empire Builder

June 1, Day 11: Arrival in Edmonds, WA; Diamond Point and Sequim Bay. We are due to arrive in Edmonds, Washington this morning at 9:00 a.m. Lying on the protected waters of Puget Sound, Edmonds is approximately 20 miles north of Seattle and is a perfect jumping off point for the Olympic Peninsula. We will proceed to the attractive waterfront and board a ferry for a trip across the sound. The 20-minute ride will serve as a neat introduction to the Pacific Northwest, with forested islands, rocky coastlines, and placid waters providing a picturesque sight before us. If the weather is clear, the rugged snow-capped summits of the Olympic range loom up in front of us in stark contrast to the rolling green forests below.

As the ferry cruises the sound, we will want to be positioned up front as the birding can be remarkably good. We should have no problem seeing our first alcids as Rhinoceros Auklets, Pigeon Guillemots, and Marbled Murrelets all use the protected waters of Puget Sound as a feeding area. Other birds likely are Black Oystercatcher, Glaucous-winged Gull, and Bald Eagle.

Arriving on the Olympic Peninsula is always an exciting event. The lush, second growth coniferous forests surrounding us are composed primarily of Douglas fir, western red cedar, and western hemlock. Making our way west, the landscape around us will be one of thick, dark forests interspersed with grassy pastures, stands of red maple, and quaint country homes. We will stop to look for Red-breasted Sapsuckers, and at a place for lunch overlooking a beautiful bay.

In the early afternoon we'll visit Diamond Point, northwest of Sequim (pronounced "skwim"). Diamond Point is one of the best places in the entire state of Washington for seeing Tufted Puffins. Lying just offshore from the point, Protection Island hosts perhaps 20 pairs of Tufted Puffins, one of the world's most regal seabirds. They continually come and go from their feeding grounds in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and, with good fortune, we may spot a few of them casually floating on the water not far from shore. Though seeing a puffin is our primary objective, there are lots of other birds to see here. Protection Island is a key seabird nesting island on the Strait of Juan de Fuca and is a critical site for tens of thousands of birds that live in the Puget Sound region. Thousands of pairs of Rhinoceros Auklets nest in the burrows on the island's grassy slopes. Black Oystercatchers and Pigeon Guillemots nest along the beach, and Pelagic and Double-crested cormorants raise chicks along the island's vertical faces. A Glaucous-winged Gull rookery numbers in the thousands as well, often rising in a single cloud to clamor at a passing Bald Eagle. Many of these birds are often seen from the beaches of Diamond Point.

Scores of harbor seals raise their pups on the beaches surrounding the island and feed near shore; and even a few elephant seals may be basking on the beach. We may also spot several pairs of the endangered Marbled Murrelet amid the larger numbers of Common Murres and Rhinoceros Auklets. Upon leaving Diamond Point, we will depart immediately for our hotel in Port Angeles, where we can expect a late afternoon arrival.

NIGHT: Best Western Olympic Lodge, Port Angeles, WA

June 2, Day 12: Olympic National Park (Hurricane Ridge). Today will be a day of exploration and discovery, featuring ancient old growth forests, glorious mountain scenery, and great birding. Our destination is wondrous Olympic National Park and the 17-mile scenic drive leading from Port Angeles to Hurricane Ridge.

Olympic National Park is another of nature's masterpieces. It is as diverse a place in North America as there is, containing an improbable assortment of ecosystems ranging from wild, wave-cut beaches to extraordinary temperate rainforests, all the way up to lush alpine meadows and imposing mountain glaciers. Olympic is, in fact, really three parks in one: the coast, the forests, and the mountains, all interfacing in a mosaic of habitats supporting a rich array of wildlife. The story of Olympic dates back to the middle 1800s and to a time when the first settlers were coming into the Pacific Northwest. Native-Americans had been living here for thousands of years of course, but the first white people to the region stayed mostly along the protected waters of Puget Sound and the coastal zone of the Olympic peninsula. It wasn't until 1885 that the first systematic exploration, led by Lt. Joseph P. O'Neil, of the interior of the peninsula took place. Four years later, in 1890, another expedition, led by a man named James Christie, made a north-south crossing in five and a half months. The next year Lt. O'Neil returned and made an east-west crossing. What these expeditions found was a true land of majesty, a country of untarnished wilderness.

With the settlement of the Olympic peninsula, the trees began to fall. The earliest days of the logging industry in Washington are traced, at least in part, to operations on the Olympic Peninsula. So as the expeditions of the late 1800s concluded, a movement slowly came about to protect this tremendous country, with some championing the cause that some of the peninsula be set aside as a national park. The first effort toward preservation was realized in 1897 when President Grover Cleveland signed into law the Olympic Forest Reserve. In 1909 President Theodore Roosevelt designated a portion of the reserve as a national monument, largely to protect the endemic Roosevelt Elk. Nearly thirty years later, in 1939, Franklin Roosevelt signed into law Olympic National Park, and finally in 1988, nearly 96 percent of the park was given the designation of Federal Wilderness.

Olympic is indeed a wild place. The public roads surrounding the park are limited to the coastal zone and foothills, meaning that almost all the interior is virtually free of any human activities. Wildlife, consequently, is abundant, and black bears and mountain lions are still known to venture from their mountain strongholds down to the deserted beaches.

While we should not expect to encounter any of these spectacular beasts, our day in the mountains is bound to be an exciting one. We will visit three of the four major forest types and bird all the way from the coast to the treeline. Departing quaint Port Angeles, we will immediately strike out on the road to Hurricane Ridge. This road is one of the few park roads that offer any penetration into the vast interior of the national park. It provides a most remarkable opportunity to travel from the coast to the tundra and transects several distinct life zones. We will want to sample the birds and other natural history of the varied and ever-changing habitats, and will do so with numerous stops along the way.

The Heart O' the Hills campground is our first destination. With its ancient cathedral-like trees, Heart O' the Hills preserves a fantastic vestige of old growth, lowland forest. Emerging from our touring van, we will be in the company of giants. Ancient Douglas fir, western red cedar, grand fir, and western hemlock tower up around us, their gnarled, twisted limbs and shattered crowns belying their ages. Peering about the dark forest around us, we'll notice the fern-laden understory, where the moss often grows thick enough as to be like carpet, and the rhododendrons flourish like cactus in the desert. We will take time to walk the various roads and trails of the campground in our quest for birds and to simply marvel at this magical forest. We should find many of the birds considered typical of the wet forests of the Pacific Northwest including Hairy and Pileated woodpeckers; Violet-green Swallow; Hutton's Vireo; Common Raven; Golden-crowned Kinglet; Chestnut-backed and Black-capped chickadees; Winter Wren; Brown Creeper; Red-breasted Nuthatch; Swainson's Thrush; Song Sparrow; and Purple Finch. Aside from these more common species, we will be on the lookout for several less often seen birds that call these forests home. Careful listening might alert us to the soft tapping of the Red-breasted Sapsucker, a quieter denizen of the woods, or the haunting call of the Varied Thrush as it vocalizes from a moss-covered stump of some long dead tree.

Moving up the road, we will begin to gain altitude. To our west the hillside will fall away before us, providing distant views of the coastal valleys and even the contour of some of the distant ridges. Eventually we will enter the next forest zone, the mountain forests of the middle elevations. We will stop at least one of the scenic overlooks, where even Puget Sound is visible. Perhaps most interesting is that these roadside overlooks may give us our best chances for finding Gray Jay and Northern Pygmy-Owl. Oftentimes, a simple imitation of its repetitious whistled call can result in pandemonium, with a curious pygmy-owl perched amid a mob of scolding songbirds! At this elevation the western red cedars will be noticeably fewer and farther between, and are ultimately replaced by the Alaska (yellow) cedar. Also on the scene now are the elegant Pacific silver firs.

The road continues up, up, and up, all the way into the Canadian zone, where dense stands of sub-alpine fir and mountain hemlock intermingle in the final zone before treeline. The road tops out at this elevation, amidst rolling higher altitude meadows broken by islands of trees. The scenery is simply magnificent. In practically all directions are limitless views of the interior of Olympic National Park. Snow-capped peaks highlight rugged ridgelines that will remind some of the Rockies. Large mountain glaciers accentuate the distant ridges, all gleaming bright white under the late spring sun. A bird flying to the horizon would pass alternately over lofty, snowy ridges and plunging, forest-clad river valleys. From our vista point at Hurricane Ridge, all we can do is simply gaze out at the distant mountains and valleys. The birding is often on a par with the scenery. The surrounding trees and meadows frequently harbor Sooty Grouse and we will definitely be on the watch for this sought after species. Larger stands of forest may yield more Red-breasted Nuthatches and Golden-crowned Kinglets but, additionally, we are now in the nesting zone for Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and White-crowned Sparrow. This elevation is also good for seeing a number of the finches. Pine Siskins are to be expected, but even Red Crossbills and Pine Grosbeaks are possible.

Our time at Olympic National Park will conclude with a trip to the park visitor center, where a variety of literature, maps, lists, gifts, and artwork are available.

NIGHT: Best Western Olympic Lodge, Port Angeles, WA

June 3, Day 13: Port Angeles waterfront; drive to Seattle. Today marks the final day of our adventure across America. A trip that started in the boreal forests of upstate New York will conclude on the scenic waterfront of Puget Sound, on the Strait of Juan de Fuca, some 2,000 miles to the west. We will have most of the day to explore this fascinating and beautiful region before heading back to Seattle later this afternoon. A morning at Ediz Hook, just outside Port Angeles, is an excellent way to end a trip to the Olympic Peninsula. Essentially a man-made barrier against the open ocean, Ediz Hook is a reinforced peninsula of rock, sand, and pavement that protects the near shore waters off Port Angeles and serves as a base for the U.S. Coast Guard. The short drive out the length of the peninsula is essential for the visiting birder, as a wide variety of birds are usually here in profusion and at any time of year. By working the pullouts and assortment of microhabitats, we are virtually assured of encountering an array of loons, grebes, cormorants, waterfowl, alcids, shorebirds, gulls, and terns.

Some of the species of particular interest are birds of both coasts of North America, such as White-winged and Surf scoters; while others like Pelagic Cormorant; Black Oystercatcher; and Black Turnstone are specialists of the Pacific coast. We will leave no stone unturned, and are to expect Common Loon; Red-necked Grebe; Harlequin Duck; Pigeon Guillemot; Rhinoceros Auklet; Western Gull; and Caspian Tern. Shorebirds and gulls may still be migrating through at this season and such less common species as Surf-bird; Wandering Tattler; and Black-legged Kittiwake are possible. An added bonus is the presence of Northwestern Crow in the area, a species restricted in the U.S. to the outer limits of the Olympic Peninsula.

We'll visit the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge and the mouth of the Dungeness River, both offering quality scenery and quality birds. Common Ravens; Red-breasted Nuthatches; Winter Wrens; Hutton's Vireos; and Black-throated Gray-Warblers inhabit these wet forests. The open shoreline may reveal an assortment of wintering ducks and shorebirds.

As we make our way east, we'll avoid the busy highways via a scenic back-road byway. Our next destination is John Wayne Marina on picturesque Sequim Bay. The legendary screen giant once kept a boat here, explaining the unlikely name for this little-known location. Depending on tidal activity, the rocky tidal basin, when exposed, is a wonderful place to view Black Oystercatchers; White-winged Scoter; and Glaucous-winged Gull. The charming little marina also offers classic Pacific-Northwestern scenery.

As we make our way east toward the ferry that takes us off the peninsula, a short stop at the Quilcene National Fish Hatchery may give us time to locate the resident pair of American Dippers that live along the rocky stream here. The surrounding forest may also give up its other hidden treasures, such as Band-tailed Pigeon and Pacific-slope Flycatcher. The afternoon ferry will again take us across the placid waters of Puget Sound, with the memories of snowy peaks and rolling forest behind us and the bustling waterfront of Edmonds in our immediate future. Participants should expect a late afternoon arrival in Sea-Tac.

NIGHT: Marriott Sea-Tac Airport Hotel, Seattle

June 4, Day 14: Departure from Seattle. Tour participants may make arrangements to depart from Seattle at any time today.

Special Note: On some tours and in certain areas, the larger 15-passenger vans are not available. Every effort will be made to secure the larger vehicle for this tour. However, when smaller vans are reserved, participants will not always have a window seat and you will be asked to rotate daily.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Victor Emanuel and Barry Lyon

Victor Emanuel started birding in Texas 61 years ago at the age of eight. His travels have taken him to all the continents, with his areas of concentration being Texas, Arizona, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. He is the founder and compiler for 50 years of the record-breaking Freeport Christmas Bird Count, and served a term as president of the Texas Ornithological Society. Birds and natural history have been a major focus throughout his life. He derives great pleasure from seeing and hearing birds, and sharing with others these avian sights and sounds, both the common ones and the more unusual ones. He initiated the first birding camps for young people, and considers that one of his greatest achievements. Victor holds a B.A. in zoology and botany from the University of Texas and an M.A. in government from Harvard. In 1993, he was the recipient of the Roger Tory Peterson Excellence in Birding Award, given by the Houston Audubon Society in recognition of a lifetime of dedication to careful observation, education, and addition to the body of avian knowledge. In 2004, he received the Roger Tory Peterson Award from the American Birding Association, and the Arthur A. Allen Award from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Victor is a member of the board of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, and the American Bird Conservancy.

Barry Lyon's passion for the outdoors and birding has its roots in his childhood where he grew up in southern California. Through his early and teenage years his developing interests were nurtured by summertime camping trips to southern Arizona and road trips throughout the American West. He attended three VENT/ABA youth birding camps, which would ultimately pave the way for his future involvement with VENT. While in college, Barry studied history and political science, with an emphasis on environment and development politics. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona at Tucson from which he graduated in 1994. He joined the VENT team in 1995 and hasn't looked back. Barry has guided tours throughout the United States and Canada, as well as to Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and the Caribbean. In the summer of 2004 he relocated to Austin and joined the staff in an administrative position. Barry will continue to lead a limited number of tours, but his increased responsibilities include new tour development and assisting in marketing and advertising efforts.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$5250** per person in double occupancy from Albany, NY. This includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 13, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, accommodations on AMTRAK in Deluxe Sleeper Cabins, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Albany with return from Seattle, WA, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1165** which includes guaranteed single accommodations while on Amtrak; or **\$420** if you are willing to share a cabin on Amtrak with single accommodations at all other locations. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

Special Note: Deluxe Sleeper Cabins onboard AMTRAK are limited, and VENT has all the available Deluxe Cabins reserved for each leg of the journey. Deluxe Cabins will be reserved on a first-come first-serve basis. After all Deluxe Cabins have been reserved, you will be assigned a Standard “Roomette” Cabin. Deluxe Cabins are equipped with an upper and lower berth, toilet, vanity/sink and shower; Standard “Roomette” Cabins have an upper and lower berth, a toilet and sink but share shower facilities. The number of Deluxe Cabins available from Albany to Chicago is 4; Chicago to Minot is 10; and Minot to Seattle is 10. Participants accommodating Standard “Roomette” Cabins will receive a **\$185** discount for each portion of the trip travelled in that category.

Albany to Chicago

Deluxe: 6’8” x 7’1”

Lower Berth: 3’4” x 6’0”

Upper Berth with Ladder: 2’4” x 6’2”

Capacity for 2 suitcases

Standard: 3’6” x 6’8”

Lower Berth: 2’4” x 6’6”

Upper Berth with Steps: 2’4” x 6’2”

Capacity for 2 small suitcases and garment bag

Chicago to Minot / Minot to Edmonds

Deluxe: 6’6” x 7’6”

Lower Berth: 3’4” x 6’3”

Upper Berth with Ladder: 2’4” x 6’2”

Capacity for 2 suitcases

Standard: 3’6” x 6’6”

Lower Berth: 2’4” x 6’6”

Upper Berth with Steps: 2’0” x 6’2”

Capacity for 2 small tote bags (larger luggage may be checked)

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$300** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$150** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$50** per person. If cancellation is made between 120 and 90 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee

schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

If you cancel:

120 days or more before departure date
Between 120 and 90 days before departure
Fewer than 90 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$150*
No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$50 per person.

TRIP INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness.** VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than *Travel Insured International*, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

Medical insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip is also recommended for this tour. This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by *Travel Insured International*. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE: Since some of our travel will be aboard AMTRAK trains, it is essential that participants pack as efficiently and economically as possible. While being prepared is important, we suggest packing a minimal amount of clothing and equipment. Space in the sleeping quarters will be limited, and accommodating large, heavy bags can be difficult. Soft-sided, pliable duffle bags are always preferred over the more rigid, hard-sided suitcases.

CLOTHING: Due to limited luggage space aboard the train, participants should pack as lightly as possible. We recommend 2 pairs of pants, 1 – 2 pairs of shorts, several t-shirts (long and short-sleeved) and several long-sleeved shirts. Many outdoor stores carry the designer clothing that many travelers now favor. This includes shirts and pants made of light but durable material, well ventilated, and with numerous pockets. You should definitely bring a few items of heavier clothing in the event of our encountering cold and/or wet weather. Examples of items of this nature include flannel shirts, sweaters and a lightweight waterproof jacket. For footwear, a light hiking boot or trail-walking shoe is adequate. Rubber boots are not necessary. A hat for protection from the sun is essential. A pair of warm, lightweight gloves might come in handy. **Please bring an**

appropriate supply of socks and undergarments as laundry service is generally not available on this tour route.

CLIMATE: Due to the fact that this tour will cover a broad cross section of the United States, tour participants should expect a wide variety of weather conditions. Springtime in the northeastern and central United States is among the most beautiful times of the year. The days are generally warm, with temperatures in the 70s to low 80s and the evenings cool, but not cold, with temperatures ranging from the mid 40s to upper 50s. While conditions are often beautiful, springtime also sees its share of unstable weather. Rain is a definite possibility on this trip, usually in the form of thunderstorms associated with late cold fronts. Under these conditions, heavy rain and even hail are possible. Generally though, participants should expect mild mostly sunny days intermixed with periods of cloud cover.

In the Pacific Northwest, the weather at this time of the year is often gorgeous, with clear skies and mild weather. On the Olympic Peninsula, tour participants should expect cool to warm weather, with daytime temperatures in the 60s and 70s. The expected conditions are clear skies, but with the possibility of morning fog and light rain. On the day we visit Olympic National Park, we will venture up to the treeline, where the weather will be 10 to 20 degrees cooler. At this elevation wind is a distinct possibility, in which case we may experience conditions that can be downright cold. More likely though, we can expect a mild day with temperatures in the 50s. Nighttime temperatures in Port Angeles can range from the upper 40s to low 60s.

CONDITIONS: The Mountain Lodge at the Adirondack League Club is rustic, yet offers clean and comfortable accommodations. Our group will be divided among three cabin-style houses, with each house featuring a single downstairs bedroom and three upstairs bedrooms. The downstairs bedroom contains a single queen size bed that is most suitable for singles, those with problems climbing a flight of stairs, or couples who prefer to share a bed. The upstairs rooms each contain two single beds. Each house has two bathrooms, one upstairs and one down. The upstairs bathrooms have a sink, toilet, and bathtub, but no shower, while the downstairs bathrooms have a sink, toilet, and shower. Both bathrooms are located in common areas and are available to anybody staying in the house, regardless of who is staying upstairs or downstairs. There are no private telephones available here. Cell phone reception is spotty and not always available while we are at the League Club.

The Grand International Inn in Minot is a large hotel with recently refurbished rooms. Each room is spacious and well-decorated.

The Best Western Olympic Lodge in Port Angeles, Washington is a beautiful hotel with large tastefully decorated rooms.

Travel aboard the train is expected to be comfortable, but not luxurious. Overall, participants should expect to be on the train for 3 segments of the trip, in stretches of 15, 18 and 24 hours respectively; but participants should read the itinerary carefully for a better idea of what to expect from the trip. Participants need to be aware that considerable delays of arrivals and departures of the train are definitely possible. In the event of such delays, our travel/birding plans may need to be altered. Please pack as efficiently as possible.

Conditions at Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park are difficult to predict. If winter snowfall was heavy, the higher reaches of the road may still be under snow, therefore restricting our activities in the park. In the event that we cannot reach the end of the road, we will change the day's plans as we see fit, possibly visiting other areas of the Olympic Peninsula not mentioned in the itinerary.

EQUIPMENT: As this is a nature tour, you will want to bring your binoculars first and foremost. Many people like to bring their own spotting scopes. This is fine and acceptable, but your tour leaders will have their personal scopes available for group use. "Birding Across America by Train" is designed to provide participants with time birding and traveling through several ecosystems of great natural beauty. You will, therefore, want to bring your camera. For overall conditions, sunglasses and sunscreen are essential, as the sun can be intense, even in the spring. A travel alarm clock is recommended, as is insect repellent.

HEALTH: If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots.

This tour does visit elevations up to 7,000 feet. Tour participants with any pre-existing conditions associated with cardiac or pulmonary disorders should check with their doctor before registering for this tour. Your tour leaders will have a first aid kit available in the event of minor injury. Tour participants might consider a variety of over-the-counter drugs in the event of mild illness or negative reaction due to springtime allergies.

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books.

For use during the tour, we recommend:

National Geographic Society. *Field Guide to North American Birds*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 5th edition, 2006.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Western Birds*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000. (Probably the best resource available for bird I.D.)

Bird References:

Ehrlich, Paul R., et. al. *The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988. (An excellent reference guide full of essays and information about North American birds.)

Kaufman, Kenn. *Lives of North American Birds*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996. (An excellent and underrated resource to North American birds' natural history.)

Mammals:

Kays, Roland W. and Wilson, Don E. *Mammals of North America*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Butterflies:

Brock, Jim P. & Kaufman, Kenn. *Butterflies of North America*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003.

Trees:

Petrides, George A. *Eastern Trees*. Peterson Field Guides. New York: Peterson Field Guides, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988.

Petrides, George A. and Olivia. *Western Trees*. Peterson Field Guides. Boston and New York: Peterson Field Guides, Houghton Mifflin, 1998 (2nd ed.).

History:

Ambrose, Stephen E. *Nothing Like it in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2001 (paperback).

Since the central feature of this tour is a cross-country train trip, it would only be appropriate to read the story of the construction of the first cross-country train. Stephen Ambrose, author of *Undaunted Courage* and *D-Day*, takes us back to the 1860's, to a time when the first "railroad minds" were pushing Congress to fund the nation's first transcontinental railroad. Ambrose documents the year-by-year progress of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads as each company pushed across the country in an effort to finish the line. A first rate read.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect August 20, 2009 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.

LAKE SHORE LIMITED – ALBANY TO CHICAGO



EMPIRE BUILDER – CHICAGO TO MINOT / MINOT TO EDMONDS

