

NORTH CAROLINA: FROM THE SWAMP TO THE GULF STREAM

MAY 29 – JUNE 5, 2010

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Coastal North Carolina harbors a marvelous array of breeding species in its hardwood swamps, pine forests, salt marshes, and barrier beaches. This tour will sample all these habitats and also spend two days exploring North Carolina's rich offshore waters. Beginning in the Wilmington area, we'll search for such southeastern specialties as Wilson's Plover, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Swainson's and Prothonotary warblers, Summer Tanager, Bachman's Sparrow, and Painted Bunting. An optional evening trip may afford a chance to see Chuck-will's-widow and perhaps other night birds. Along the Outer Banks we should see a wide variety of herons and shorebirds, as well as such coastal specialties as Clapper Rail, Piping Plover, Sandwich and Gull-billed terns, Seaside Sparrow, and Boat-tailed Grackle.

The centerpiece of this tour will be two Brian Patteson Inc. pelagic trips aboard the Stormy Petrel II. Offshore of North Carolina's Outer Banks runs a fast-flowing river, the Gulf Stream, which flows north at up to 5 m.p.h. and carries warm water out of the Caribbean and across the North Atlantic to the British Isles. The Gulf Stream comes close to shore only here where it is deflected eastward by the projection of Cape Hatteras and where it mixes with cooler water flowing south in the Labrador Current. This mixing makes for unusually rich offshore waters. The Outer Banks area is not only renowned for its great fishing, but also for the best seabirding on the Atlantic Coast; both the numbers and variety are unmatched at any other East Coast site. Our daylong trips should see up to 10 species of seabirds, and possibly other oceanic creatures such as dolphins, whales, sea turtles, or sharks.

May 29, Day 1: Arrival in Wilmington. Participants should plan to arrive in Wilmington this afternoon and take a taxi to the Hampton Inn Medical Park where a room will be reserved in your name. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. for a tour introduction, followed by dinner.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Medical Park, Wilmington

May 30, Day 2: Wilmington Area. Wilmington, N.C. was settled as a port city in 1729 and has a long and exciting history. The area offers a wealth of interesting East Coast species. We will spend this morning birding several sites around town for such species as Anhinga, Painted Bunting, and possibly King Rail. We will then work our way north along the coast, being sure to stop at the New River Inlet at Topsail Beach which allegedly got its name from pirates who would hide in the coves awaiting the view of a top of a sail. The inlet here is attractive to gulls, terns, pelicans, and a number of shorebirds species, including the much-sought Wilson's Plover, which we will not see farther up the coast.

NIGHT: Buccaneer Inn Magnuson Hotel, Morehead City

North Carolina: From the Swamp to the Gulf Stream, Page 2

May 31, Day 3: Croatan National Forest and Environs. Croatan National Forest features coastal and inland swamp habitats. Significant natural features include pocosin habitat, estuaries, and a large number of carnivorous plants. We will rise early this morning for a trip to this forest where a good population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers still exists. While the woodpeckers will be our primary target for the morning, we will also run across other species of interest including Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine and Prothonotary warblers, Bachman's Sparrow, and possibly Swainson's Warbler.

After lunch and a short break, we will return to the field to search for additional forest birds or other species that have eluded us. Following an early dinner, participants will have the option of returning to the motel or joining an evening birding expedition in search of Chuck-will's-widow, Whip-poor-will, and perhaps owls.

NIGHT: Buccaneer Inn Magnuson Hotel, Morehead City

June 1, Day 4: Morehead City to Hatteras. After breakfast this morning we will commute to Cedar Point for the 10:30 a.m. ferry. En route we will visit the vast Cedar Island marshes where Seaside Sparrow, Marsh Wren, and Clapper Rail are numerous, and where there is at least a slim chance of hearing the elusive Black Rail. After a two-hour ferry ride we will arrive at Ocracoke Island, one of the barrier islands of the Outer Banks of North Carolina where the pirate Blackbeard is known to have once roamed. Amid the dunes lies the quaint oceanside village of Ocracoke, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The village is nestled among stands of live oak. Ocracoke is on the eastern flyway of many migrating water and land birds, making it a birdwatcher's paradise. After lunch on Ocracoke, we will save time for an hour or so of exploration of this remote and unique island. We will then catch the ferry across Hatteras Inlet to Hatteras Island for check-in to our hotel and a delicious seafood dinner.

NIGHT: The Villas of Hatteras Landing, Hatteras

June 2, Day 5: Pelagic Trip. We will need to rise early this morning in order to be ready for the 5:45 a.m. Brian Patteson Inc. pelagic trip, aboard the *Stormy Petrel II*. The trip will ply the Gulf Stream waters up to 40 miles offshore in search of rarely seen pelagic specialties. Brian's trips are renowned as the best on the East Coast, and ace Captain Patteson will do a great job getting us close looks at whatever birds we will happen to find. In addition to your VENT leader, Brian staffs the boat with three to five expert leaders, equipped with radio headsets so that any unusual birds can be instantly called out on the P.A. system. If the trip is not weathered out (and they rarely are at this season) we are virtually assured of seeing Black-capped Petrel, Cory's and Audubon's shearwaters, Wilson's and Band-rumped storm-petrels, and Pomarine Jaegers. Most trips get Greater and Sooty shearwaters, Leach's Storm-Petrel, and Bridled Tern. We will also hope for Manx Shearwater, South Polar Skua, Long-tailed Jaeger, and Arctic and Sooty terns. Last but not least, we will "hold our breath" for a really rare sighting, such as European Storm-Petrel; Herald, Fea's, or Bermuda petrel; White-tailed or Red-billed tropicbird; or Masked Booby, all of which have been seen on these trips recently. We will eat lunch on the boat and return around 5:00 p.m.

NIGHT: The Villas of Hatteras Landing, Hatteras

June 3, Day 6: Pelagic Trip. Today we'll spend a second day offshore aboard the *Stormy Petrel II*. With so many exciting possibilities in the pelagic waters off Hatteras, a second boat trip will greatly increase our chances of connecting with one of the real rarities. In the (unlikely) event of bad weather canceling one of our two boat trips, we will spend a leisurely day exploring the Cape Hatteras area, renowned as one of the better birding areas on the East Coast.

NIGHT: The Villas of Hatteras Landing, Hatteras

June 4, Day 7: Pea Island NWR to Norfolk. After breakfast this morning we will drive north along the Outer Banks, stopping to investigate the spectacular impoundments at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, on the north end of Hatteras Island. We'll also visit the tidal flats at Oregon Inlet and perhaps several other interesting

birding locations. Even in early June, there should be numerous migrant shorebirds around, as well as local breeders such as Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher, and Black-necked Stilt.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites Norfolk Airport, Norfolk

June 5, Day 8: Departure for Home. Participants may make arrangements to leave Norfolk anytime today.

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

TOUR LEADER: Michael O'Brien (a second leader will be added if group size warrants)

Michael O'Brien is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has traveled extensively throughout North and Central America and has a passionate interest in migration, bird vocalizations, and field identification. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, writes a monthly ID column and photo quiz (see www.birdcapemay.org), and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*. His illustrations have been widely published including in National Geographic's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and the new *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America*. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies and leads several "Birds & Butterflies" tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$2795** per person in double occupancy from Wilmington, North Carolina (tour ends in Norfolk, Virginia). This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 7, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Wilmington and return from Norfolk, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$505**. 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.

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: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less **\$150** per person is refundable. 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, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***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.

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.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION 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.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Please read your itinerary carefully to see whether or not your tour/cruise requires MANDATORY Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip. This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by Travel Insured International. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through Travel Insured International, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

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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.

CLOTHING: At this time of year we can expect hot and very humid temperatures. Bring lightweight, cool, well-ventilated clothing. Mosquitoes will certainly be a nuisance at some sites, so lightweight long pants and long-sleeved shirts will be preferable, and some may want to pack mosquito netting just in case. Bring a hat to provide shade from the sun, and sunglasses, especially for the pelagic trip. A lightweight rain jacket is also a good idea.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a day pack. As a precaution it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leaders will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Sunscreen and insect repellent will be indispensable. If you are prone to motion sickness, be sure to bring seasickness medicine for the pelagic trip. Other items you should bring are an alarm clock.

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, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

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.

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TIPPING: As noted in our itineraries, tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and 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

North Carolina: From the Swamp to the Gulf Stream, Page 6

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 another leader for the first leader on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members and they will have the right to cancel their participation and receive a full refund. 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 on August 25, 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.