

OWL WORKSHOP IN MONTANA

APRIL 24 – 29, 2008

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High, wide, and handsome, Montana is the country's fourth largest state. Its biological diversity reflects its immensity. Among its great plains, river breaks, mountains, marshes, and alpine tundra, Montana lists over 400 species of birds, 108 species of mammals, 13 species of amphibians, and 18 species of reptiles.

Join researchers for six days of owl hooting, tooting, observation, and research. Montana boasts the largest number of breeding owl species in any state in the United States. Fifteen species of owls occur in Montana, of which 14 species breed: Flammulated Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Boreal Owl, Eastern and Western Screech Owl, Burrowing Owl, Northern Hawk-Owl, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, Barn Owl, Barred Owl, Great Horned Owl, and Great Gray Owl. Snowy Owls are regular winter visitors. Although all species will not likely been seen, chances are good for 5-7 species (including Northern Pygmy and Boreal), and with some luck, 8-9 species are possible (including Great Gray).

We will assist researchers of the Owl Research Institute who are conducting a long-term study of Long-eared Owls. We will capture, band, weigh, measure, and record other biological data on these owls. We will collect and dissect owl pellets. We will discuss the natural history of Montana owls, as well as evolutionary adaptations in owls: how do owls hear, see, fly silently, conceal themselves, hunt, and other interesting characteristics. One evening (weather permitting) will be used to "owl prowling" for Western Screech Owl. We will take a short hike to potential nesting sites and look for this secretive owl.

We will check woodpecker and natural holes in trees for cavity nesting Pygmy and Saw-whet owls. We will observe the elaborate "sky dancing" courtship display of ground-nesting Short-eared Owls. We will also check stick nests in tree groves and woody thickets for the other species of owls. Please remember that the schedule, locations, and numbers of owls can change, depending upon prey species populations and the timing and whereabouts of the owls.

April 24, Day 1: Arrival in Missoula, Montana. Participants should make arrangements to arrive in Missoula today and transfer to the hotel, where rooms will be reserved in their names. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:30 PM and drive to one of Missoula's many restaurants for a get-acquainted dinner.

NIGHT: Doubletree Hotel, Missoula

April 25, Day 2: Mission Valley. This morning after breakfast, we will meet in the lobby at 8:00 AM for our departure to the Mission Valley. Along the way we will look for Pygmy Owls and Long-eared Owls. We will return to Nine-Pipes for dinner.

NIGHT: Nine-Pipes Lodge

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April 26, Day 3: Mission Valley. This morning after breakfast, we will meet in the lobby at 8:00 AM. We will spend the day in the Mission Valley again, looking for owls. We hope to observe the “sky-dancing” display of the Short-eared Owls. After an early dinner, we will get together for an evening viewing or calling for owls.

NIGHT: Nine-Pipes Lodge

April 27, Day 4: Mission Valley. After breakfast, we will meet in the lobby at 8:30 AM to depart once again for the beautiful Mission or Flathead Valleys. We will collect and dissect owl pellets in the field. We will then search for Pygmy, Saw-whet, and Great Gray owl nests.

NIGHT: Nine-Pipes Lodge

April 28, Day 5: Mission Valley. After breakfast, we will make a long drive to search for Boreal owls at their nests. This evening there will be a farewell dinner at one of Missoula's best restaurants.

NIGHT: Doubletree Hotel, Missoula

April 29, Day 6: Departure to Home. Tour participants may depart at any time on this day.

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 LEADER: Denver Holt and local guide, Megan Fyllum

Denver Holt is a wildlife researcher with many interests. In particular, his research focuses on owls and their ecology. He has been researching owls since 1978, and has published numerous papers in both scientific and natural history journals. He is founder and president of the Owl Research Institute in Missoula, Montana, and has conducted owl-related research in the U.S., Mexico, and Costa Rica. Within the U.S. he has worked in Alaska, Massachusetts, and Montana. Among other research, Denver has worked on gulls, terns, raptors, and small mammals. He is an avid and inquisitive outdoors person with other interests that include insects, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, plant identification, and geology.

Megan Fyllum, a wildlife biologist, received her zoology degree in 2000 before moving to Montana. She has studied birds and their ecology throughout the western United States, and enjoys birding as a hobby. Most recently, she is working for the Avian Science Center at the University of Montana as part of a long-term fire ecology study, and also works for an aquatic invertebrate consulting firm in Missoula. Megan has also performed volunteer work for various organizations including the Owl Research Institute and RaptorView Research. In addition to wildlife and ecology, her interests include botany, reading, skiing, road-racing, and playing hockey.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$1590** per person in double occupancy from Missoula. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 5, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Missoula and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$225**. 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 90 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 90 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less **\$125** per person is refundable. If cancellation is made between 90 and 70 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 70 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 to protect yourself.*

If you cancel:

90 days or more before departure date
Between 90 and 70 days before departure

Fewer than 70 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$125.
No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded.
No refund available.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE: Application forms 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 to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. 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 are available, however, stipulations apply usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

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.

CLOTHING: This time of year in Montana, it is advisable to dress for the unexpected as temperatures can range from 30 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. We recommend cold weather, warm weather, and wet weather clothing. A hat, gloves, coat or jacket, shelled parka or overcoat, and boots are a must. We recommend light, layered clothing, as opposed to bulky, heavy clothing. Leisure clothing, such as running shoes, short sleeved shirts, and sweat pants can be a welcome addition.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). 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 leader will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Other items you should bring are an alarm clock, sunscreen, and mosquito repellent.

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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. 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. Please consult your physician as necessary.

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.

Burt, William H., and Richard P. Grossenheider, *Field Guide to the Mammals of America North of Mexico*.

Peterson Field Guide Series #5. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Clark, William S. and Brian K. Wheeler. *A Field Guide to Hawks - North America*. Peterson Field Guide Series #35. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Ehrlich, Paul R., David S. Dobkin and Darryl Wheye. *The Birder's Handbook*. A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988.

Kaufman, Kenn. *A Field Guide to Advanced Birding*. Peterson Field Guide Series #39. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

National Geographic Society. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Fourth Edition. Washington, D.C.: NGS. 2002.

Peterson, Roger Tory. *A Field Guide to Western Birds*. Peterson Field Guide Series #2. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

Zimmer, Kevin. *The Western Bird Watcher. An Introduction to Birding in the American West*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985.

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 October 21, 2007 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 U.S. may be provided by any member carrier of Airline Reporting Corp.