

Golden Gate Audubon Society



Ohio: Eastern Warblers and Spring Migration Sensation

May 8-15, 2020



Blackburnian Warbler abounds in Ohio in May

On this tour we have a good chance of finding almost every eastern warbler except for **Swainson's Warbler**. **Kirtland's Warbler** migrates through this area but is easy to miss and a lot of luck is needed to find it. Some of the other warblers are also difficult, but the trip is timed to give us the best chance at **Connecticut Warbler**, **Mourning Warbler**, **Canada Warbler** and other less common species. But, many of the warblers are abundant and we usually see stacks of **Blackburnian Warbler**, **Magnolia Warbler**, **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, **Bay-breasted Warbler**, **Prothonotory Warbler**, **Cape May Warbler**, **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, **Black-throated Green Warbler**, **American Redstart**, **Northern Parula**, **Black-and-white Warbler**, etc. These are some of America's brightest, most beautiful birds. We also expect to see a lot of the duller warblers such as **Blackpoll Warbler** with its orange legs, **Tennessee Warbler**, **Nashville Warbler**, etc. We spend two nights in the hilly extreme south of Ohio on the edge of the Appalachians for some other fantastic warblers including the Vulnerable, beautiful **Cerulean Warbler**, the unusual **Worm-eating Warbler** and some dazzling yellow and black ones in the form of **Kentucky Warbler** and **Hooded Warbler**. **Yellow-breasted Chat** is also easiest to find here near the southern state line.



We usually get close views of **American Woodcock** while enjoying the “eye level” warbler spectacle at Magee Marsh, NW Ohio

It's not all about warblers. We'll also look for **Blue Grosbeak**, **Scarlet Tanager**, **Baltimore Oriole** (very common), **Orchard Oriole** and so many other brightly-colored migrants. **Wood Thrush**, **Gray-cheeked Thrush**, **Hermit Thrush**, **Swainson's Thrush** and

Veery are almost always seen. **Blue-headed Vireo**, **Philadelphia Vireo**, **Yellow-throated Vireo**, **Red-eyed Vireo** and the ever-abundant **Warbling Vireo** should be on the cards.

Northern Ohio is bordered by the great Lake Erie, creating expansive freshwater marshes. The lake is like a freshwater ocean, creating similar effects as birds migrate along its shores. In the spring, this can create a jaw-dropping spectacle as **Blue Jays** and many other species move along the lakefront in groups of 100+. As birds migrate north and encounter the huge body of water they will put down into the trees along the shore to rest and feed before attempting to cross the unknown. This creates a massive build-up of extremely tired and hungry birds with one mission, to refuel. The sheer number of exhausted warblers, thrushes, vireos, orioles, tanagers, flycatchers, and more present birders with eye-level views within 10-20 feet.

This phenomenon in northern Ohio is unlike any other in the United States. The north also has some fantastic shorebird habitat, which supports tremendous numbers of birds on their journey to breeding grounds in Canada. These beautiful birds are normally molting into their dapper breeding plumages, like **Stilt Sandpiper**, **Short-billed Dowitcher**, **Wilson's Phalarope**, and upwards of 15 others.

Because different warbler species arrive at different times, some in early May and some in later May, we have two sessions in north-western Ohio, and in the middle of the trip we go to extreme southern Ohio. This strategy usually enables us to find a greater number of our targets.



Cape May Warbler is common at Magee Marsh in May



Worm-eating Warbler occasionally “overshoots” and ends up in Magee, but we visit southern Ohio to near-guarantee sightings of this unusual species

Itinerary (9 days/7 nights)**Day 1, Detroit and Pointe Mouillee, Michigan**

After arrival at Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW) participants, should plan on a quick stop at Pointe Mouillee, where we will hopefully find our first warbler of the trip to get things started! Please arrive at the airport by no later than 3 p.m. to give us enough time for some birding. From there we will get dinner and make the 1-hour drive to the first hotel.

Overnight: Oregon, Ohio

Day 2, Maumee Bay and Magee Marsh

Located on Lake Erie's south-western shore just outside of Toledo, Maumee Bay and Magee Marsh are unbelievable migrant traps all spring long. As birds make their tireless flight to breeding grounds in Canada they see the water of Lake Erie and put down in the small patches of trees along the shoreline. Both areas have fantastic boardwalks right through the middle of these woods, providing some easy walking and birding. It is here that we will target some of the earlier migrating warblers such as **Nashville Warbler**, **Palm Warbler**, **Black-throated Green Warbler**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler** (Myrtle subspecies), as well as others that are potentially on the move already. The entrance drive to the Magee boardwalk is through a beautiful and extensive marsh habitat. This should be packed with **Yellow Warbler** and many large waders. Stopping here for two nights should score us many fantastic bird species and allow everyone to get familiar with this national attraction before we visit it again later in the week for the next few waves of migrants.

Overnight: Oregon, Ohio

Days 3-4, Shawnee State Park/Shawnee State Forest

It's a 5 hour drive to our next site. We will likely make a day of this drive, stopping at a couple of key sites for target species that might include **Henslow's Sparrow**, **Sedge Wren**, **American Bittern** and others. During our full day at Shawnee, we will be up and out of the door very early at this 60,000+ acres of old-growth forest. As we navigate our way up the curvy roads before dawn we should see plenty of eye shine of **Eastern Whip-poor-will** in the road. The morning chorus here can be absolutely deafening with loads of migrating birds echoing through the slopes and ravines. We will start on higher grounds, as migrants typically land at the tops of canyons for a rest. As with most migration it can be hit or miss depending on the winds, but we should be able to score a bright **Blackburnian Warbler** glowing in the morning sun and see loads of **Black-and-white Warblers** scoting up trunks. After things slow down on the mountain tops we will move back down into the ravines near creeks and streams. Here we will see loads of **Yellow-throated Warblers** and **Northern Parulas**. Next we will move into areas with precipitous drops to find a true southern specialty, **Worm-eating Warbler**. These mid-to-high elevations also provide us with excellent opportunities to see the jaw-dropping blue of **Cerulean Warbler** up close and personal. This huge forest is filled with the skulking **Ovenbird** and **Hooded Warbler** as their songs

echo throughout the entire area. In the evening we will head out to a small creek in Adams County to listen for **Barred Owl** and **Eastern Screech Owl**. This is also the only place in the entire state of Ohio where **Chuck-will's-widow** breeds. Then we'll head back to the lodge for a good night's sleep after an action-packed day.

Overnight: Shawnee State Park Lodge

Days 5-7, Magee Marsh and Northwest Ohio

After a 5-hour drive, we'll be back to the wonder of Magee Marsh and the countless number of parks along the Lake Erie shoreline. Over the next four days we will experience the true greatness and wonder of spring migration in Ohio. Spending most mornings at the Magee Marsh boardwalk, we will be treated to eye-level looks at a great diversity of warblers and migrants as they drip from the trees like rain droplets. This will also give us a chance to see how drastically things can change from one day to the next with different waves of birds moving through. One day may be dominated by **Chestnut-sided Warbler** and **Black-throated Blue Warbler** and the next by **Bay-breasted Warbler** and **Cape May Warbler** with little to none left of the previous day. Expect to experience things like **Magnolia Warbler** bouncing in trees right above your head and **Northern Waterthrush** foraging on the marshy leaf litter under the boardwalk. Like in Columbus we will take special interest in targeting any warbler or other migrant we still need for the trip, especially some of the later migrants like **Wilson's Warbler** and **Canada Warbler**. There is great diversity in habitats here for all species of birds from warblers to shorebirds. We will see breeding-plumage **Dunlin** and **American Golden Plover** in great numbers at the brand-new and fantastic Howard Marsh. This is a site specially managed with birds in mind, as the water levels are controlled to aid shorebirds in migration. We will also explore some unique areas to the west in Toledo like the pine and oak savanna at Oak Openings. It is here we will find one of Ohio's breeding populations of the colorful **Lark Sparrow** as well as plenty of singing **Blue-winged Warblers** and some noisy **Red-headed Woodpeckers** foraging in a stand of dead trees.

Overnight: Maumee Bay Lodge



Golden-winged Warbler is one of our top targets on this trip.

Day 8, Back to Detroit, Michigan

We'll take the hour long drive back to the airport for your flight home.

Please note that the itinerary above cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.

Duration: 8 days
Limit: 8-9 paying participants
Date: May 8-15, 2019
Start: Detroit
End: Detroit

Price: US\$2850 per person sharing, which includes a \$200 donation to GGAS. This assumes a group of 8-9 paying participants.

Single supplement: US\$690

Price includes:

Meals

Accommodation

Guiding fees

Entrance fees

All transport while on tour

Tolls

Price excludes:

Flights to and from Detroit

Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts



Black-and-white Warbler