

# Buckeye Birding: America's Biggest Week! With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



**May 14 – 21, 2022**

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Naturalist Journeys, LLC



“... A ‘Peg trip’... bring[s] together people who like to explore new places and share the joy of finding new birds ... under the guidance of someone who knows the birds and the area. The accommodations are always excellent and special to the place we visit.”

— Maggie Clark





Join Naturalist Journeys on this second spring migration tour to Ohio, an area that is quickly gaining recognition as one of North America's best places to bird during spring migration due to its location on the teeming shores of Lake Erie where, each spring, migrant songbirds, shorebirds, waders, and raptors pass through by the thousands on their way to Canada. The area is famous for its Biggest Week in American Birding Festival, in the first weeks of May, but the warblers and warbler diversity continue for the rest of the month of May. This second Big Week trip is timed to avoid the festival crowds, but stay at the same location and bird all the same productive birding locations we bird during week one. So if you want to avoid the crowds of the festival but still want the Big Week experience, this is the trip for you.

Northwest Ohio is unofficially the Warbler Capital of the World; Ohio is home to 7 designated Globally Important Bird Areas (IBA). Over 325 species have been recorded here, with daily spring tallies reaching 120 species! While Canada's Point Pelee has long been the Great Lakes' star location, just across the Lake, the Ohio shoreline (with its extensive wetlands and preserves) serves as the staging side before migrating birds head north. Crane Creek, Magee Marsh, and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge are gems of this unique geography, and until now have been a long-kept secret. Today, the word is out and it's considered one of the top birding areas in the country.

Dan lives and works in the region and we are fortunate to have him share his contacts and expertise.

*The daily activities on this trip are highly weather and wind dependent. Daily activities and destinations will be arranged by the guide to maximize your birding experience.*

## Tour Highlights

- Explore the famous Magee Marsh Boardwalk, swarming with feasting migrants, some at arm's length!
- Bird the upland scrub-shrub forests and marshes of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge
- Visit Oak Openings Metro Park, home to 80% of Ohio's endangered species
- Explore Kelley's Island and its stunning example of glacial grooves
- Discover Marblehead Island and its beautiful and endangered Lakeside Daisy
- Watch a bird-banding demonstration at Black Swamp Bird Observatory
- Stay right at Maumee Bay State Park Lodge, where you can bird Lake Erie and the numerous trails at the park.

## Tour Summary

8-Day / 7-Night Spring Migration Birding Tour with Dan Donaldson

\$2790, from Cleveland, Ohio

Airport is Cleveland Hopkins International Airport (CLE)





## Itinerary

### **Sat., May 14 Arrive in Cleveland | Downtown Lake Front Birding**

Please plan to arrive no later than 2:00 PM at the Cleveland International Airport. Please plan to take our hotel's free airport shuttle to the hotel. Drop your bags at the hotel, freshen up, and then depart for some afternoon birding in the downtown lakefront areas of Cleveland. These green islands and lakeside woodlots are often very productive for birds and offer interesting views of the city.

We then enjoy dinner at a fun restaurant in one of the up and coming "hipster" Cleveland neighborhoods before return to our hotel in time to relax and settle in before our first morning of birding tomorrow.

*Accommodations at the Hilton Garden Inn Cleveland Airport, Cleveland (D)*

### **Sun., May 15**

#### **Cuyahoga Valley National Park | Lakefront Birding to Maumee Bay**

This morning, after breakfast at our Cleveland hotel, we depart early for the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Here we bird a very mature beaver marsh where thick vegetation can produce many warblers, and perhaps our best chance for Yellow-throated Warbler, River Otter, and a good variety of waterfowl and water birds. We also visit a heron rookery that offers terrific views and photo opportunities of over 60 nests, many with chicks by this time. We then make a stop at one of the most viewable Bald Eagle nests in Ohio.

We enjoy lunch in the historic town of Peninsula and then depart for areas west as we make our way to the Maumee Bay Lodge and Conference Center, our lodging for the rest of the week; it also happens to be the headquarters for the Biggest Week in American Birding Festival. Today is casual, guide's choice for locations, and the plan is to get acquainted, bird Maumee Bay State Park, and enjoy a welcome dinner at the lodge.

*Accommodations at Maumee Bay State Park Lodge (B,L,D)*

### **Mon., May 16 Magee Marsh & Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge**

Jump start your birding today with a walk on the Magee Marsh boardwalk. While the boardwalk can be busy with other birders, it is always rewarding. See 15+ warbler species including, Cape May, Blackburnian, Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, and Canada Warblers, plus Black-billed Cuckoo, both Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrush, and American Redstart.



After lunch we explore the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), 6,700 acres of protected Lake Erie marshes and upland scrub-shrub forests. We make a quick stop in the new, LEED-Certified visitor center, then drive the auto tour through many of the wetland units. Trumpeter Swan were reintroduced here in the late 1990s, and these swans are easy to identify by their bright, orange-red necks and heads, stained from the water's high iron content. We take time to seek out shorebirds and waterfowl, including Blue-winged Teal, both Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, and Wood Duck, plus Bald Eagle, and even Great Horned Owl (one year we saw a young owl that had been reared in a vacant Bald Eagle nest — what a treat!). (B,L,D)



## **Tues., May 17 Oak Openings | Metzger Marsh — International Migratory Bird Day**

Today we venture west of the Lake Erie marsh region to visit the Oak Openings region of Ohio. An ancient sand dune area, Oak Openings boasts nearly 80% of the state's rare and endangered species. This unique dune and wetland complex creates a habitat that replicates the oak savannas and sand barren areas far into the Midwest. Here we hope to spot Lark and other sparrows, both Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, and Hooded, Pine, and Yellow-throated Warblers, and we may even see Eastern Meadowlark.



After lunch, we head to Pearson Metropark to explore the newly-created marsh, part of a large wetland restoration project. Common finds include Marsh Wren and Least, Spotted, and Semipalmated Sandpipers. We also network with other guides and experts to monitor the migration, so as activity calls, we follow! (B,L,D)

## **Wed., May 18 Kelley's Island & Catawba Island | East Harbor State Park | Magee Marsh Boardwalk**

We begin the day with a ferry trip to Kelley's Island. Kelley's Island offers unique habitats for birding, interesting cultural history, and North America's best example of glacial grooves. After a late lunch we head back to the mainland and bird the under birded areas surrounding the Sandusky Bay and Catawba Island. We visit Marblehead and if we're lucky, we may catch the endangered Lakeside Daisy in abundant bloom. We keep our eyes out for Mississippi Kite, as well as other species. While we're here, we make sure to stop at the picturesque Marblehead Lighthouse.



We move on to East Harbor State Park, where we're sure to spot Great Blue Heron in the bays, and forest dwellers like Red-eyed Vireo along the park's woodland trails.





Depending on how productive the day has been, we head back to Magee Marsh Boardwalk for a late-afternoon check in; birds are (almost) a guarantee here — we like to check often! *(B,L,D)*

## **Thurs., May 19**

### **Magee Marsh | Ottawa Marsh | Metzger Marsh | Maumee Bay State Park**

This morning we hit Magee Marsh Boardwalk early. We keep our eyes peeled for Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Chestnut-sided and other warblers, and thrushes: Hermit, Swainson's, and Gray-cheeked.

Moving on we explore Ottawa NWR once again in search of songbirds, as well as waterfowl. We also seek out Northern Parula, both Yellow and Black and White Warblers, and American Redstart that work low in the flowering dogwoods and willows along the wetland management canals. We also watch for Sandhill Crane; two years ago, we had the pleasant surprise of a family — two adults and two chicks — feeding in the grassy fields along the driveway to the refuge's visitor center. We explore Metzger Marsh again; so close to the lake, we may catch glimpses of Common, Forster's, and Caspian Terns. We also watch for raptors, like Merlin, streaking past and causing a ruckus. *(B,L,D)*

## **Fri., May 20 Magee Marsh | Ottawa Marsh | Metzger Marsh**

We start the day with another sunrise shuttle to Magee Marsh. Although the boardwalk may be busy, we can hope that more visitors equals more birds. Spot Cerulean, possible Kirtland's, and Blackpoll Warblers; Scarlet Tanager; Willow, Alder, and Least Flycatchers; Eastern Kingbird; and Eastern Wood-pewee.







We make quick stops at Ottawa NWR and Metzger Marsh again in hopes of picking up a few more species, then head back to the lodge early for a little down time. Tonight we enjoy a final dinner together at one of Dan's favorite restaurants, The Beirut, famous for fresh, authentic Lebanese food. (B,L,D)

## Sat., May 21 Departures

A great week of birding comes to an end. Please make your airline reservations to depart after 12:00 PM. (B)

## Guide Dan Donaldson



Dan Donaldson is an accomplished naturalist-birder based in Northeastern Ohio. Dan has developed his skills while working as a naturalist for a local park district for 15 years as well as with his full-time job as director of the local soil and water conservation district. With varied audiences from novices to experts, Dan incorporates much more than just identification in his tours and programs. Dan led tours for Discovery Tours and this is where Peg and Dan met. His specialization in birding locales ranges from the Great Lakes to coastal destinations from the Maritime Provinces of Canada to the Florida Keys.

## Cost of the Journey

### Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

### Cost of the Journey

Cost of the tour is **\$2790 DBL / \$3290 SGL**, per person based on double occupancy from Cleveland, Ohio. The cost includes seven nights' accommodation, all meals as noted in the itinerary, airport transfers, land and boat transportation during the journey, professional guide services, park and other entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses. Not included in the tour cost is round-trip airfare to and from Cleveland, personal expenses such as laundry, telephone, drinks from the bar, and gratuities for luggage handling or other services. Guide gratuities are at your discretion.

### Tour Notes & Pace

Weather and wind direction greatly impact bird migration and which locations offer the best birding for the day. Our goal is to visit all the locations and more during the trip, but days and locations will be arranged to accommodate the weather and local conditions.

Dining is casual at restaurants that feature regional foods, some picnic lunches, and a few restaurants that feature some international flair.

Pace is moderate; full days of birding and walks on sometimes wet, but established roads and trails; a typical walk is half a mile to two miles. You can opt to return to the hotel on several days if you would like a lighter pace.

### Travel Information

Airport is Cleveland Hopkins International Airport (CLE), Ohio. Plan to arrive no later than 2:00 PM on Saturday, May 14; plan to take the hotel's free shuttle from the airport to the hotel. Please schedule flights to depart after 12:00 PM on Saturday, May 21.

### Photo Credits

Chestnut-sided Warbler, Terry Peterson (TP); American Woodcock, Mahlon Hale (MH); Prothonotary Warbler, Ruth Guillemette; Baltimore Oriole, MH; Mississippi Kite, Steve Wolfe (SW); Rose-breasted Grosbeak, MH; Golden-winged Warbler, Tom Dove (TD); Wilson's Snipe, SW; Prothonotary Warbler, Doug Pratt (DP); Warbler Hunting, Naturalist Journeys Stock (NJS); Bald Eagles, NJS; Eastern Screech Owl, Greg Smith; Blue-winged Teal, TD; Glacial Grooves, NJS; Magnolia Warbler, Dan Donaldson; Green Heron, TP; Northern Parula, TP; Lake Erie Shoreline, NJS; Group at Magee Marsh, Maggie Clark; Lakeside Daisy, TP; Indigo Bunting, DP.

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