

Exploring the Hawkeye State Prairies, Marshes and Lakes, Iowa

October 22 - 28, 2020

Provisional Itinerary

For those who would like to drive to Iowa we will leave Asheville on October 19 and explore for 2 days on our way to Cedar Rapids. All expenses before we get to Cedar Rapids will be on our own.

Day 1: October 21 Cedar Rapid

Please plan to be in Cedar Rapids for tonight. Dinner and the hotel tonight in Cedar Rapids will be included in the trip cost. *Night in Cedar Rapids*

Day 2: October 22 Cedar Lake and Big Marsh WMA

Cedar Lake is within the city limits of Cedar Rapids, so we will look for some waterbirds first thing this morning before heading north toward Waterloo. Our destination this afternoon is Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area, which is a breeding spot for Sandhill Cranes. *Night in or near Waterloo*

Day 3: October 23 Upper Mississippi River

From Waterloo we will drive towards the Mississippi River in the general direction of Prairie du Chien and Effigy Mounds National Monument. The locks along the Mississippi River attract good number of waterfowl, Bald Eagles and American White Pelicans. We will slowly bird our way north looking for some open country species, such as Short-eared Owl and maybe an early Rough-legged Hawk or Northern Shrike. *Night near La Crosse WI*

Day 4: October 24 Northern Iowa

From La Crosse we will drive west across the corner of Minnesota before dipping down into North Central Iowa. We will make a stop around Chester Woods Park near Rochester where they should be some fine late season woodland birding. Clear Lake is near Mason City and this lake and surrounding marshes will be our birding spot this afternoon. Snow Geese, White-fronted Geese and both Swans are possible at this time of year. *Night in Mason City*

Day 5: October 25 Western Iowa

Continuing our journey west we will stop at Spirit Lake to see what waterbirds have been reported. In and around Sioux City we will look for Horned Lark and Snow Bunting, maybe Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle and crossbills. *Night near Sioux City*

Day 6: October 26 Ida County and Saylorville Lake

Drive towards stopping in Ida County to look for Saw-whet Owls and then on to Des Moines and Saylorville Lake, which is one of the top hot-spots in the state. We can expect a variety of loons, grebes, ducks and gulls. Iceland Gulls are regular at the lake at this time of year. If we have time, we will also check out Neal Smith NWR which has Short-eared Owls and Eurasian Tree Sparrows and wild roaming American Bison. *Night in Des Moines*

Day 7: October 27 Kellerton Grasslands

It's just over an hour south to Kellerton Grasslands which is an important bird area. Greater Prairie-chickens are found in the area so we will look for them and other open-country birds, such as Northern Harrier and Short-eared Owl. After lunch we will then slowly bird our way northeast towards Cedar Rapids, where we will spend the night. *Night in Cedar Rapids*

Day 8: October 28 Cedar Rapids and home

After breakfast we will check any local birding spots, including Hawkeye WMA that is good for sparrows, in and around Cedar Rapids before those who drove here begin their drive back to Asheville, NC.

This Itinerary is just a guide and is subject to change depending on the birds, weather and whims of the leader!