

Itinerary:
'Cranes, Waterfowl, & More,' Wheeler NWR, Alabama

Day 1 – Friday, Jan 14

Today we make the 5.5 hour drive down to Decatur, AL from our respective homes, arriving in the early afternoon. After checking in to our hotel, we will make our first visit to Wheeler NWR. The ethereal, rattling calls of Sandhill Cranes will greet us and we should see many as they head to their nightly roosts. We should also see good numbers of Snow, Greater White-fronted and Canada Geese following suit before sunset. *Night in Decatur*

Day 2 – Saturday, Jan 15

After breakfast, we head back out to the refuge where we will spend the day looking for a variety of ducks and geese. We should have plenty of time to enjoy the refuge's many highlights, including the observation tower, boardwalks, interpretive Visitor Center, and trails through the swamps, marshes, and sloughs. We could very well see 18-20 species of waterfowl today and we will be sure to keep an eye out for the endangered Whooping Crane amongst the Sandhills. Other birds we hope to see today include Bald Eagle, American White Pelican, Horned Lark, American Pipit, and Rusty Blackbird, among many others. *Night in Decatur*

Day 3 – Sunday, Jan 16

We venture outside the refuge today to bird some other local hotspots, looking for species we may have missed. Our exact itinerary will depend on what's being seen, but we will be stopping at several large, man-made lakes in the area to scan for more ducks as well as gulls (such as Herring, Ring-billed, Lesser Black-backed, and Bonaparte's), loons, and grebes. We will probably have time to visit spots along both Wheeler and Gunter'sville Lakes, and there are quite a few wildlife management areas we could visit as well for a selection of sparrows. If any rarities such as Eurasian Wigeon or Common Merganser are reported in the area, we will adjust our itinerary to give us the best chance of finding them. *Night in Decatur*

Day 4 – Monday, Jan 17

After an early breakfast, we begin the journey back north toward the North Carolina Mountains. We will plan to be back in Asheville by lunch time.

Due to weather conditions and the whims of the leader, this itinerary is subject to change.