



Spring Time Jewels: Birding in Northwest Ohio May 11 – 14, 2023

6 Reservations Available

\$950 per Participant – This does not include lodging

For those coming back with me from the southern part of the state, the trip just keeps getting better with birding in northwestern Ohio. This is hands-down the best way to experience migration in North America. Some will argue that birding the Texas coast is the best for migration, but here you not only get the birds more consistently but also without the mosquito's. Instead of a traditional itinerary, I will describe some of the hotspots we will travel between and what each have to offer. Each migration year is unique and I want to keep flexibility in our day-to-day plans to maximize what we can see!

Let's start with the famous marshes along Lake Erie:

First, and arguably the most famous birding location, within the state is the **Magee Marsh Wildlife Area**. Owned and operated but the Ohio Division of Natural Resources this is a popular spot for hunting and of course bird watching. Birders have been flocking here for decades to enjoy the birds in this pristine wetland habitat. Since the marsh habitat is located directly adjacent to Lake Erie it makes for a place where birds are obligated to stop and refuel before passing over. Magee is going to be our best location for intimate views of warblers and other passerines and provide some of the best photography opportunities. We may end up visiting this location daily if the birding is good or to take some photos.

Right next door (literally attached by a birding trail) is **Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge**. Here is one of the more consistent locations in this region to find migrating shorebirds and lingering waterfowl. The wildlife drive is a great way to relax and do some car birding of sorts. The woods behind their nature center has held great diversity of passerines including warblers, thrushes, owls and more. The dikes surrounding and running through the refuge generally hold egrets and herons that give it a very Florida feel. This is a go to place to wait out spring thunderstorms that are guaranteed this time of year. This past year ONWR hosted two shorebirds from Eurasia, Curlew Sandpiper as well as a Ruff.

Metzger Marsh – Maybe one of my favorite spots to stop in the morning to check out what the previous night has delivered to us in the form of migrating birds. Gallinules, egrets, herons, terns and much more can be seen on the drive through and the back woodlot can be surprisingly productive – one spring day I tallied 29 species of warbler there, including the endangered Kirtland's Warbler. This can be a bop in and out kind of place or stay for hours depending on the birds.

The true meaning of "if you build it, they will come" **Howard Marsh Metro Park** – owned and operated by Toledo Metroparks, which have amazing parks located all around the greater Toledo area, they keep their properties clean and welcoming to birders. Since Howard opened it has hosted breeding Black-necked Stilts and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, both rare breeders for the state of Ohio. Among the success of several breeding birds at this location, loads of local rarities have been known to show up here, generally waders and shorebirds as there are no wooded areas here.

Maumee Bay State Park – Is one of Ohio’s amazing state parks. As one becomes familiar with NW Ohio, you realize that the area has plenty of places to go birding but they are owned and operated by several different organizations, or local and federal governments. They are all aware of the local uptick in birders coming from all over to experience the joy of spring migration. Maumee Bay has a beach along Lake Erie that shorebirds and gulls are sometimes found on, right next to the beach is an inland beach that even more gulls, shorebirds, and waterfowl may be found. Generally, I look for Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones here. There are some wooded areas that can be productive for migrants and a boardwalk near the big lodge found on grounds – this boardwalk is a must stop for us, it can sometimes be loaded with migrants as well as rails, Eastern Screech-owls and the observation tower at the end sometimes overlooks good shorebird depending on water levels.

Pearson and Sidecut Metroparks are two more Toledo metroparks that I love to visit during migration, they can be jammed with flocks of migrants and usually an easy way to escape the hordes of other folks that can crowd up places like the Magee boardwalk.

Now we head over to the western side of Toledo:

We start with **Oak Openings Metropark**, the city’s largest metropark and perhaps the most biodiverse as well. All sorts of unique and state endangered species can be encountered here including one of the only breeding populations of the dashing Lark Sparrows. There are sandy dunes in which cacti grow and stands of pines. This is also one of the best places in the region to encounter Red-headed Woodpeckers. Summer Tanagers are known to breed in this park as well as a very small population of Blue Grosbeaks. I think you will find yourself loving this location by the time we leave it.

Also, in the western part of the region are three locations that are easily doable back to back. We have **Sandhill Crane Wetlands** owned and operated by The Nature Conservancy, farmland that has been turned back into wetlands great for shorebirds, waders and more. We have **Irwin Prairie State Nature Preserve** also owned and ran by ODNR (same as Magee). This is a great place to find rails and Sedge Wrens among others. In the evenings American Woodcocks can be heard giving their classic “peent” song. **Cannonball Prairie Metropark** is an excellent stop for birds like Grasshopper Sparrow and Henslow’s Sparrow.

There will be other locations that we may travel to depending on reports of the birds. This list should give you a really good idea of the areas we will focusing on. With all these locations we are likely to see over 100 species of bird and 30+ warblers are possible depending on weather and migration. Come see for yourself why NW Ohio is the premier location to experience these spring time jewels.

For additional questions, please contact your guide Jeremy at birding@toledozoo.org or 419-385-5721 ext. 3096