



TOUR INFORMATION FOR NORTHWEST OHIO in spring

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING THE UNITED STATES: United Kingdom citizens need to have a passport that has a minimum validity of 6 months remaining after the tour has finished. This is an immigration requirement for many countries, including the USA. All nationalities require a machine-readable passport if travelling to the USA under the visa waiver programme (see below).

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has made changes to the immigration requirements. Travellers seeking to travel under the Visa Waiver Program must pre-apply for authorisation using the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (**ESTA**). **ESTA** must be completed online via their website.

Having an **ESTA** is a mandatory requirement and applications should be made online at least 72 hours before departure via their website <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> as although the majority of responses are immediate, it can take 72 hours for approval in some cases. There is a small fee to pay as a processing charge followed by a small fee when authorisation has been granted.

For further information, or if you don't have access to the internet, please contact the Embassy of the United States in London on 020 3608 6998. Citizens of other countries should contact their nearest US Embassy for entry requirements.

Once you've applied for your ESTA please remember to print it out and take a copy of that document onto the aircraft with you.

All visitors to the USA's first port-of-entry have their index fingerprints taken by an electronic scanner at Passport Control. You will also have your photograph taken at the same time. Although the process itself only takes a few minutes the queue can be quite long if several flights arrive at the same time!

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

INTRODUCTORY MEETING: The tour begins at 18:00 at our hotel near the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport. After a quick meet and greet we will head to dinner.

CURRENCY: Credit cards are widely accepted in the U.S. As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs, you need only bring enough money to cover items of a personal nature.

CLIMATE: Mid-May weather in the Midwest can be extremely variable with temperatures possibly ranging from the mid-30s (even high 20s) to the high 80s F. Some rain, occasionally much rain (rarely snow!), is likely during the week as various weather systems pass through and it can be windy as well. Bring warm clothes!

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PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: The tour is moderately strenuous, with long days, early departures, and moderate walks. Most mornings we'll depart before dawn or shortly thereafter. There may be a few afternoon breaks other than driving between locations. Most days we try to end our birding about 19:00. We may on occasions offer additional birding after dinner. Still, we won't often retire until after 21:00 so this tour can be tiring. The terrain is fairly level throughout. On a few occasions, there will be the option of resting in the motel rather than birding. However, if you have trouble walking, this tour will be difficult.

HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations.

Ohio and Michigan present no real hazards to the visiting birdwatcher.

Insects and Arachnids: Biting insects are occasionally a problem in northern Ohio and southeast Michigan if it is a very early spring. It is best to have bug repellent along just in case. We recommend using insect repellents with DEET. Care must be taken, however, to avoid getting the DEET repellent on optical equipment as DEET dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. Camping supply stores and outfitters carry some reasonably effective alternatives, which contain natural products and aren't corrosive.

Ticks are present in numbers in grassland areas throughout and it is best to check yourself carefully if we walk into a field. These are readily visible and usually take their time before trying to attach, so careful inspections after walking in tick areas is appropriate. Treating your shoes, socks, and/or trousers with permethrin may help lower your chances of ticks.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: We will stay at standard, comfortable hotels throughout.

LAUNDRY: Most of the hotels we use offer self-service laundry facilities, but as most sites are only visited briefly finding the time to complete a load of laundry may take some planning.

ELECTRICITY: 110/120V AC 60Hz. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: Our tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to ensure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to take supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water or soft drinks are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some of the rooms where we stay.

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INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: All our accommodation has free WiFi access. Mobile phones can be useful while on tour but keep in mind that many countries operate on a different cellular technology. Your phone may be incompatible with the local system, so please check with your local carrier. Fortunately, with the advent of smartphones, it is easy to download applications such as Skype or Google Voice, which can make calling home free or very inexpensive. Another option is to replace the data (“SIM”) card in your phone in-country. The SIM cards, including data can be very cheap. If you wish to use this option, you will need to check that your smart phone has a SIM card slot.

CLOTHING: The following items are basic:

Sun hat	Light-weight gloves
Down vest or heavy sweater	Lined wind-proof jacket
Medium weight shirts (long sleeve)	Sturdy walking boots/shoes
Medium weight trousers	Light-weight rain coat
Canvas shoes (if conditions are wet)	Long underwear if you feel the cold

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: Please bring the following:

Notebook and pencil	Alarm clock
Small rucksack or shoulder bag	Sun cream (spf 15 or higher)
Water bottle/canteen	Torch (with spare batteries)
Earplugs (if you are a light sleeper)	Insect repellent
Personal medication	

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide, rubber “wellies”. At Magee Marsh, the crowds along the Bird Trail, make a telescope inadvisable and much of the time we are looking for migrant woodland passerines. Some of the time we will be scoping for water birds, the amount of time depending on the available wader habitat.

Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will provide the following:

Telescope and tripod	Small first-aid kit
Ice chest	Reference books and maps

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

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If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Memory cards may be difficult to obtain and will certainly be more expensive than at home so you should bring with you all that you expect to need. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture and dust-proof bags as a precaution. If you wish to 'digiscope' please ensure that you bring your own telescope.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However, if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: Transport will be by a 15 (or 12) passenger minibus depending on the group size. When using 15-passenger minibuses, we will take a maximum of eight passengers plus one leader/driver. Participants should be able to travel in any seat in the vehicles.

SMOKING: Smoking or vaping is not allowed in the vehicle or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Field Guides:

Dunn, J. L. and J. K. Alderfer. 2017. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. 7th Edition. National Geographic Society, Washington, DC. One of the top two field guides for North America, more portable than the Sibley guide. The latest edition contains subspecies maps for many polytypic species. **Recommended.**

Sibley, David Allen. 2014. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Second Edition. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Arguably the best North American field guide. **Highly Recommended.**

Sibley, David Allen. 2003. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. A regional guide containing the same concise and accurate illustrations and information as in the more comprehensive guide though smaller and much easier to carry. **Recommended.**

General References/Birds:

Chartier, A.T. and J. Ziarno. 2004. *A Birder's Guide to Michigan*. American Birding Association. This guide provides detailed bird-finding information to a vast number of locations across the state.

Dunn, J. and K. Garrett. 1997. *A Field Guide to Warblers of North America*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston. Recommended especially for this tour, since there is such an emphasis on migrant warblers.

O'Brien, M., R. Crossley and K. Karlson. 2006. *The Shorebird Guide*. Houghton-Mifflin, New York.

Olson, K. M. and H. Larsson. 1995. *Terns of Europe and North America*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.

Peterjohn, B. 2001. *The Birds of Ohio*. Wooster Book Company, Wooster, Ohio. One of the best state books with a wealth of information about the breeding birds and migrants (complete with arrival dates, peak movements, etc.) that are applicable to the entire region we will be birding. **Highly recommended.**

Stephenson, T. and S. Whittle. 2013. *The Warbler Guide*. Princeton University Press. About the size of the Sibley guides, this book has many photos of each wood warbler and sonograms (spectrograms).

General References/other:

Bowers, N., R. Bowers, and K. Kaufman. 2004. *Mammals of North America*. Kaufman Focus Guides. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Brock, Jim P, and Kenn Kaufman. 2003. *Butterflies of North America*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Conant, R., and J. T. Collins. *Reptiles and Amphibians Eastern and Central North America*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

Harding, J.H. 1997. *Amphibians and Reptiles of the Great Lakes Region*. The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.

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Kays, Ronald and Don Wilson. 2002. *Mammals of North America*. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton University Press.

Reid, F.A. 2006. *Mammals of North America*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Rosche, L. 2008. 2nd Edition. *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Northeast Ohio*. Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland, Ohio. An excellent guide with superb illustrations for those interested in this increasingly popular subject. The text and photos have been greatly expanded since the first edition and includes distribution maps.

FINAL INFORMATION: A Final Information sheet with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses, etc. and your flight tickets will be sent to you about three weeks before departure.