

ITINERARY

***Pennsylvania's Warblers & More:
From Cerulean Warbler to Henslow's Sparrow***
May 21-26, 2019



The brilliant Blackburnian Warbler is always a highlight! We will make a concerted effort to find this beauty and many other breeding warblers on this tour of Pennsylvania's special birding areas. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.

We include here information for those interested in the 2019 Field Guides Pennsylvania Songbirds & More tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

Often overlooked because of its lack of endemic species, a coastline, or popular migration hotspots, Pennsylvania's breeding bird bonanza is a well-kept secret. The state is heavily forested, and despite no huge elevation changes, the state is covered with modest mountains and hosts a remarkable variety of habitats from southern riverine maple forest to oak-hickory ridge forests to the dark and mysterious hemlock groves of the Northern Tier. There are plenty of streams, rivers, lakes, and even a few marshes, too. This tour seeks to visit as many of these habitats as possible in a short week, allowing us to pursue a big list of breeding season specialties. In addition to flycatchers, vireos, orioles, tanagers, and more, we stand a great chance of finding over 25 species of wood-warblers including such gems as Cerulean, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Golden-winged, and Prothonotary Warblers.

We'll take a special trip to the west to seek out Henslow's Sparrows in their reclaimed grassland haunts, and we'll seek out other grassland species like Grasshopper Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, Bobolinks, and Northern Harrier along the way.

In addition to seeing a wonderful chunk of the birds and natural history of Pennsylvania, we'll also make sure to take in some cultural aspects of the Keystone State in passing. A rich set of breweries and restaurants exists along our route, and we'll be sure that nobody goes hungry (and don't worry, we won't make you try scrapple!).

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: Late spring is the perfect time to visit Pennsylvania. Morning temperatures will be mild or even cool (high 40s Fahrenheit are possible, though high 50s to 60s are more typical), and afternoons sometimes reach the upper 80s around Harrisburg. The forests of rural Pennsylvania are easy to access by a tremendous network of small forest roads, and almost all of our birding will take place along wide, easy-to-walk trails or roadsides. We will probably walk (stroll, actually) up to **two miles per day at an easy pace**, and we won't have to make any strenuous climbs. Because Pennsylvania's mountains are old, weathered, and small (almost all <3,000 ft.), elevation won't pose a challenge for us on this tour.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with Tom.

About the Birding Areas



Lower Susquehanna River Valley – The tour starts and ends along the widest non-navigable river east of the Mississippi. In the warm broadleaf forests along the banks of the Susquehanna, we'll seek out southern breeders such as Prothonotary and Yellow-throated Warblers, Carolina Chickadees, Orchard Orioles, and more. Due to the migrant corridor of the Susquehanna River, perhaps we'll find migrants like Black or Caspian Tern or some of the area's riverine breeding waterbirds like Black- and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons or raptors like Peregrine Falcon and Osprey.

Ridge-and-valley region – Much of the middle of Pennsylvania is covered by the wrinkled expanse of the Appalachian Mountains. Each ridge/ valley fold offers a

transect of habitats from lower to higher elevation, and the oak-hickory forests north of Harrisburg are primo habitat for us to search for quite a few species of warblers including Cerulean and Worm-eating, in addition to Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Broad-winged Hawk, and Hairy Woodpecker. Part of our birding will take place right along the Appalachian Trail itself, a summer home to "through-hikers" en route along the trail from Georgia to Maine.

Northern Tier/ Pine Creek Gorge - Mansfield, a small college town almost on the New York border, will be our portal to the vast mixed hemlock and hardwood forests of the Northern Tier, including the majestic Pine Creek Gorge (also called the "Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania"). This part of the state is almost entirely forested, and we'll have opportunities to find birds like Ruffed Grouse, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, Alder Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Magnolia and Blackburnian Warbler, Dark-eyed Junco, Swamp Sparrow, and more. A large wetland near Wellsboro called "The Muck" will let us seek out species like Marsh Wren, Virginia Rail, and American Bittern. In regenerating clearcut areas, we'll look for Mourning Warblers. While these secretive warblers can be downright tricky to find on migration, they can become little show-offs during the breeding season, and we'll hope to connect with some good views.

The Piney Tract (Clarion County) – About two hours' drive west of State College, there's a large area of former coal mines that have been reclaimed by planting grasslands and pines on the areas formerly scarred by mining. These "strips" are home to Henslow's Sparrow, a fairly uncommon and declining species of songbird. Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, and Northern Harrier breed in this region, too. We'll also search for Upland Sandpiper and Clay-colored Sparrow, two rare breeders in the Piney Tract area. By visiting this area, we'll be able to see firsthand how environmental reclamation can lead to specialized habitat that can really benefit at-risk species.

Centre County forests - Near State College, Bald Eagle State Park and the Scotia Barrens offer a regenerating mosaic of scrubby meadows and deciduous forest that provide excellent habitat for Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers. The Golden-winged Warbler population has plummeted in the East due to habitat loss and competition from its close

relative, the Blue-winged Warbler. We might have the chance to study some hybrids between these two beautiful songbirds and ponder the implications of range changes and hybridization. We'll visit the Scotia Barrens at night to look for Eastern Whip-poor-will, American Woodcock, and perhaps an owl or two. This area is also one of the best places in the state to find Ruffed Grouse (a widespread but scarce and declining species).

Rothrock State Forest and Bear Meadows Natural Area will take us into pristine mixed forest, perfect habitat for Canada Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Northern Waterthrush. We might also run into Acadian Flycatcher, Northern Parula, or even a surprise American Woodcock.

Itinerary for Pennsylvania Songbirds & More

Day 1, Tue, 21 May. Arrival in Harrisburg. Upon arrival at Harrisburg International Airport, please transfer to the Sleep Inn on Eisenhower Blvd, Harrisburg (taxi costs ~\$25) or let the office know if you'd like to be picked up by the guides at 5 PM. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:00 PM and head to dinner. Night in Harrisburg/Hershey.



*Henslow's Sparrow can be difficult to find; your guide grew up in the area we will visit, however, and our chances are excellent!
Photo by guide Tom Johnson.*

Day 2, Wed, 22 May. Harrisburg to State College. We'll start off with a jaunt along the broadleaf-line banks of the impressively wide Susquehanna River south of Harrisburg. Here we will look in riverside swamps and sycamore groves for southern species like Prothonotary Warbler and Yellow-throated Warbler before starting to head northwest. A few stops on the southern ridges of the Appalachian Mountains will focus on the exquisite Cerulean Warbler. After we've had our fill, we'll head on toward State College, stopping for lunch along the way. After we explore the forest roads around Colyer Lake, we'll check in to our hotel in the afternoon. After dinner, we'll have an optional outing to the Scotia Barrens to look for Eastern Whip-poor-will and owls. Night in State College.

Day 3, Thu, 23 May. State College to the Piney Tract. Today, we'll drive west from State College to the reclaimed strip mines of Clarion County. This shrubby grassland habitat is notable for its dense breeding population of Henslow's Sparrows, a declining species that is seldom seen without a concerted effort on the breeding grounds. Northern Harrier, Willow Flycatcher, Grasshopper Sparrow, and more are also in the area, and we'll spend some time looking for Upland Sandpiper, now a rare breeder in the state. We'll return to State College in the afternoon and plan to visit a wetland site or two in the evening. Night in State College.

Day 4, Fri, 24 May. State College to Pine Creek Gorge. An early departure this morning will take us from State College across a large, remote stretch of northern tier forest to the fascinating Pine Creek Gorge area (the "Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania"). We'll start with a picnic breakfast at Bear Meadows and then head to Bald Eagle State Park to search for Golden-winged Warblers. Afterwards, we'll wind our way north along a network of forest roads, visiting hardwoods, hemlock groves, and regenerating clearcuts. Pileated Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee, Blackburnian Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Mourning Warbler, and Dark-eyed Junco are a few of the many forest species we might encounter in this rich and wild area. To enable us to cover as much of this large area as possible without rushing, we'll have a field picnic for lunch and continue birding our way to Mansfield. After dinner near our hotel, we'll head out for a visit to "The Muck," a beautiful state game land near Wellsboro home to a nice diversity of marsh birds including Wood Ducks, Virginia Rails and sometimes American Bitterns. Night in Mansfield.

Day 5, Sat, 25 May. Northern Tier forests (and back to Hershey/ Harrisburg). Our exact itinerary on this day will depend on which northern tier forest species we haven't found yet. We plan to visit Colton Point State Park and the Pine Creek Gorge (a.k.a. Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania) to target Blackburnian Warbler, Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher,

Mourning Warbler, and more. We'll visit a great brewery in Williamsport for lunch (and a local brew, if you'd like!). Keep an eye out at lunchtime – Peregrine Falcons nest atop the historic Genetti Hotel in the city. In the afternoon, we'll drive back to the Harrisburg area and check out a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron breeding colony - this state endangered species often nests in the large sycamores lining a few residential streets in the city. Night in Harrisburg.

Day 6, Sun, 26 May. Harrisburg area and departure. The morning will give us an opportunity to track down any breeding southern songbirds (perhaps a Kentucky Warbler or an Orchard Oriole) we missed at the beginning of the tour. We'll likely visit the southern flank of Second Mountain, northeast of Harrisburg, but this will depend on what we haven't see at this point. Sadly, by late morning we'll have to part ways. The tour will end at Harrisburg International Airport at 11 AM. If you require a departure flight leaving earlier in the morning, you are welcome to skip the final morning of birding.

About Your Guides

Tom Johnson grew up watching birds in central Pennsylvania. Interested in science and the outdoors from a young age, Tom became involved in a variety of field projects throughout his school years, including banding migrant landbirds and conducting point counts for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. He was fortunate to pursue undergraduate studies in biology at Cornell University, where he became even more excited to learn about systematics and migration while surrounded by the amazing ornithologists and birders of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Since graduating from college, Tom has spent much of his time studying seabirds off the east coast of North America, conducting line transect surveys from NOAA ships between Nova Scotia and the Bahamas. When he's not otherwise occupied, he loves to devote time to wandering, taking photos, and searching for vagrants and hybrid birds.

Tom has long been interested in sharing his enthusiasm for exploring bird identification, distribution, and migration dynamics; he is a regional editor for *North American Birds* magazine and writes a regular column on identification for *Birding* magazine. Perhaps most of all, he loves sharing his passion for the natural world with others out in the field, and he's excited to have the opportunity to do this while leading for Field Guides.

"Tom has an amazing knowledge of birds and the natural world. His enthusiasm and professionalism comes through so much. He kept us on schedule -yet allowed for some great diversions that showed up. Field Guides is so fortunate to have him guiding." L.T. Arizona Nightbirds & More

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for Tom's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

A **second guide** will be added as tour size warrants.

Financial Information

FEE: \$1950 from Harrisburg

DEPOSIT: \$200

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: January 21, 2019

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$400

LIMIT: 14

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Ruth Kuhl. Ruth will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Please plan to taxi to the hotel on arrival (expect a price of roughly \$25) or let the office know ahead of time if you'd like to be picked up at the airport at **5:00 p.m.** Tom will meet the group at **6:00 p.m.** on the first day of the tour in the hotel lobby. We will return to the Harrisburg Airport by 11:00 a.m. on the final day of the tour; **please do not schedule a departure flight before 1:00 p.m.**

Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand

that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$1950 for one person in double occupancy from Harrisburg. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 5, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 6, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from the tour, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$400. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR LIMITS: Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, the guide in training will be taking a seat in the van or bus. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$200** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **January 21, 2019**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

7/26/18 TBJ

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