

ITINERARY

***Pennsylvania's Warblers & More:  
From Cerulean Warbler to Henslow's Sparrow***

*I: May 17 – 22, 2021*

*II: May 25 – 30, 2021*



*Mourning Warblers are migrants over much of the eastern US, but these skulkers can be difficult to see. They are uncommon breeders in northern Pennsylvania, but 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 2021 Field Guides Pennsylvania's Warblers & 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

*These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:*

- 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

**O**ften 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 rolling mountains and hosts a remarkable variety of habitats. The Keystone State stretches 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 diversity 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!).

*We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.*

## Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of walking on flat ground (up to 2 miles per day), some of it on paved roads, some on gravel or dirt roads, some on wide trails that have no significant obstacles, all at a slow birding pace.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We may stand for long periods to observe flocks of birds. We cover some ground on this tour, and a few days will feature medium-long periods of time (2-3 hours) in the vans and some roadside birding with much getting in and out of vans.
- **PACE:** Early mornings (6:00-7:00 a.m. departures); both morning and afternoon birding sessions, with occasional afternoon breaks. On some afternoons, we will be in transit to our next lodging.
- **ELEVATION:** Our birding will take place in lower elevations, all below 3000 feet.
- **WEATHER:** Spring weather is usually mild and comfortable in central Pennsylvania. Expect temperatures in the 50s-60s (rarely 40s) in the evening, with days ranging from the 50s to 80s F. Early mornings can feel quite cool. Rain showers and windy conditions are possible.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Bathroom stops at indoor restrooms will be made regularly; comfort stops in nature are also possible, should the need arise.
- **OPTING OUT:** We stay in multiple towns on this short tour, but on days with multiple nights at the same hotel, it is possible to stay behind for a day.

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, the mighty Susquehanna. 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 natural corridor of the Susquehanna River, we might find migrants like Black or Caspian Tern, some of the area's riverine breeding waterbirds like Black- and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, or nesting 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 prime habitat for us to search for warblers Cerulean, Hooded, 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, pine, 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 will seek forest and marsh 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. Visiting a large wetland near Wellsboro called “The Muck” will let us search for species like Wood Duck, Marsh Wren, Virginia Rail, and American Bittern. In gaps in the forest, we’ll look for the tough-to-spot Mourning Warbler.

**The Piney Tract (Clarion County)** – Well to the west of our overnight hub in State College, a large strip mining area has been reclaimed by planting grasslands and pines on the formerly scarred areas. These “strips” are home to Henslow’s Sparrow, a fairly uncommon and declining Midwestern 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, now 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 benefit at-risk species.

**Centre County forests** - Near State College, the Bald Eagle State Park and the Scotia Barrens offer a habitat mosaic of scrubby meadows and deciduous forest, excellent habitat for Golden-winged and Blue-winged warblers. At the eastern edge of its range, the Golden-winged Warbler population has plummeted due to issues on the wintering grounds and breeding grounds, including 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 offer pristine mixed forest, perfect habitat for Alder Flycatcher, 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, Mon, 17 May, or Tue, 25 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 5:00 p.m. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. and head to dinner. Bring your binoculars – we will look for nesting Peregrine Falcons before dinner! Night in Harrisburg/Hershey.

**Day 2, Tue, 18 May, or Wed, 26 May. Harrisburg to State College.** We’ll start off with a jaunt along the broadleaf-lined banks of the 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, Hooded Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, and more. 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. Night in State College.

**Day 3, Wed, 19 May, or Thu, 27 May. State College to the Piney Tract.** Today, we’ll drive west from State College to grassland habitats to search for Henslow’s Sparrow. Northern Harrier, Willow Flycatcher, Grasshopper Sparrow, and

Bobolink also live 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 for a break in the afternoon. After dinner, we'll have an optional outing to the Scotia Barrens to look for Eastern Whip-poor-will and American Woodcock. Night in State College.



*The Bobolink is a grassland species that nests in Pennsylvania hayfields. We'll watch for the distinctive males and listen for their unique, bubbly songs in the same habitat where we'll search for Henslow's Sparrow. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

**Day 4, Thu, 20 May, or Fri, 28 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 birding in the cool mixed forest of Bear Meadows and then head to Bald Eagle State Park to search for Cliff Swallows, Blue-winged Warblers, and migrants. 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, Willow Flycatchers, and sometimes American Bitterns. Night in Mansfield.

**Day 5, Fri, 21 May, or Sat, 29 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 seek Blackburnian Warbler, Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Mourning Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and more. We'll visit a great brewery in Williamsport for lunch (and a local brew, if you'd like!). 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. After dinner, we plan to visit some creek bottom woodlands to look for Eastern Screech-Owls - both red and gray morph birds live here. Night in Harrisburg.

**Day 6, Sat, 22 May, or Sun, 30 May. Harrisburg area and departure.** This morning, we will head a short distance northeast from Harrisburg to the southern flank of the Appalachians. Our exact route will be dictated by what we haven't already seen, but we will likely search for Kentucky Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat. We'll return to the hotel by about 10:30 a.m. with enough time to pack before a transfer to the airport. The tour will end at Harrisburg International Airport at 11:00 a.m.; **please do not schedule a departure flight before 1:00 p.m.**

## About Your Guide

**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.

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

*"Tom is a top-notch birder and has an amazing ear. I loved the detail he gave about each species...plumage, habitat, migration, etc. I learned a lot about birds and places to bird in Pennsylvania." K. N.; Pennsylvania's Warblers & More*

## Financial Information

**FEE:** \$2150 from Harrisburg

**DEPOSIT:** \$225

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** January 17, 2021 (Tour I); January 25, 2021 (Tour II)

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$400

**LIMIT:** 7

### **Special Note: Tour fees may be subject to change due to the global economic effects of COVID-19.**

We have published the itinerary and price for this tour with the understanding that during these uncertain times we are likely to encounter unforeseen changes. Travel and hospitality companies all over the world have been adversely affected by the pandemic, and there is no guarantee that all of the lodging and transportation we have booked for this tour will still be available at the time of departure. We hope to maintain our services as indicated in our itinerary as well as our published tour fee. However, if changes are required we will make every effort to maintain the quality of the itinerary as it is published with the most appropriate substitutions available. Should any necessary changes result in an increase in service rates to us, we reserve the right to pass on those increases in fees to the tour participant.

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Nicole Cannon. Nicole 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 **\$2150** 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 \$225** 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 17, 2021 (Tour I) or January 25, 2021 (Tour II)**. **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.

Field Guides reserves the right 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, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a 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 information from us 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, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

**Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii.** We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

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. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible 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.

7/11/19 TBJ; 5/20NC  
NCP 7/2020