

# WINTER BIRDING in the FROZEN MINNESOTA NORTH COUNTRY

January 24-28, 2022

*A birding tour organized by Seven Ponds Nature Center & NatureScape Tours*

No balmy winter getaway is this! We head straight into the frozen teeth of winter to find the toughest of birds: the inhabitants of the boreal bogs and frozen landscapes of the north country. Yes, it will be cold, but it will be worth it when you look into the haunting eyes of the majestic Great Gray Owl, the resident avian predator of the bog. Every other bird will be icing on the frozen cake!



Join us for a late-winter birding tour in Minnesota's boreal bogs, conifer forests, open farmland, and shoreline. The weather may be frigid, but the birding will be HOT! For winter specialties like Great Gray Owl, Northern Hawk-Owl, Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadee, Canada Jay, both White-winged and Red Crossbills, and many others, there is simply no place like northern Minnesota. While Sax-Zim Bog gets all the press – and deservedly so – our tour will also include additional outlying areas where we'll target specific birds of the frozen north. We'll be led by local expert guide Kim Risen of *NatureScape Tours* and *Seven Ponds Nature Center* Executive Director Daryl Bernard. Grab your binoculars and join us for this memorable birding tour.

## **TOUR ITINERARY**

Our daily activities will be flexible based on species we've seen to date and recent bird reports, but the following daily outline provides a preliminary plan of how we will spend our days. Our plans are subject to change based on rare bird sightings, weather conditions, and road closures.

**Day 1 – Monday, January 24 – Arrival in Duluth** - Participants should plan to arrive in Duluth by noon and transfer to our hotel. We'll meet in the hotel lobby at 1:00 PM and head to the bog for our first search for Great Gray Owls.

**Days 2-3-4 – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, January 25-26-27 – Birding Sax-Zim Bog and beyond** - Northern Minnesota winter days are short, but we'll have three full days to explore the region in search of the birds of winter. We will be birding four distinct habitat zones, each offering the possibility of a somewhat different slate of birds. Check out the Minnesota winter bird list at the end of this brochure for a full list of birds we will be seeking.

**Day 5 – Friday, January 28 – Departure day** - Plan your departure for any time today (check out of the hotel by 11:00 AM).



## TOUR LEADERS



**Kim Risen** of NatureScape Tours started birding along the Mississippi River flyway more than 40 years ago at the age of ten. Experiences with his camera and binoculars along the ‘Big River’ and in the woodlands and prairies of the Midwest cemented birds, photography, and natural history as major focuses of his life.

Kim began leading birding trips around the Midwest while still in high school. As his experiences grew, so did his tour-leading schedule. As a result, for the last 31 years Kim has led birding tours throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, and Southern Africa. For the past 25 years, he has specialized in Latin America, where he has studied bird vocalizations, status and distribution, and field identification.

Kim’s tour leading travels have taken him to five continents, all the states of Mexico and into more bogs than most people have ever seen. He counts the woodlands and plains of Minnesota, North Dakota and Manitoba, the awesome diversity of Mexico, Alaska’s stark beauty, South Africa’s

unsurpassed combination of birds/flowers/mammals, and the peerless Andes Mountains among his favorite locations.

Being a tour leader allows him the ultimate birding high—seeing old, familiar birds for the first time over and over again through the eyes and ears of others—something in which he takes great pleasure. Even after 40 years, Kim still looks at birds every day—often with his camera in tow—with the same excitement he felt on his first birding trips.

**Daryl Bernard** is a long-time birder and amateur naturalist who loves being outdoors and embraces every opportunity to share nature with others. He enjoys organizing trips and tours and strives to ensure that every participant has a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Daryl has organized and led numerous birding field tours throughout North America, many local birding trips in Michigan, and bird walks for Seven Ponds as well as birding festivals. Daryl is the Executive Director at Seven Ponds Nature Center in southeast Michigan, and regularly presents birding programs at Audubon clubs, libraries, and birding festivals.



## ACCOMMODATIONS

Our lodging for this tour will be in the LaQuinta Inn & Suites located in Duluth, about 45 minutes from the bog. Staying in Duluth will give us a wider set of dinner options, put us within short distance of other birding areas, and keep us close to the Duluth International Airport. The hotel offers early continental breakfast and complimentary airport shuttle.

## LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

The group will travel in a single large van, which will keep all of our group together and ensure we all get on the same birds. Daryl will be driving the van, with Kim driving his four-wheel drive truck, which includes a full tow package in case we run into trouble on the backroads of the bog.

## **GETTING TO DULUTH**

It is your responsibility to get to our lodging in Duluth. You can fly directly into Duluth and arrange transportation to our hotel (about 10 minutes), or you can fly into Minneapolis and arrange transportation to Duluth (about three hours), or you can drive directly from your home (in Michigan?) to Duluth.

## **COVID-19**

Please note that there may be ongoing COVID-19 measures in place. **It is expected that all participants on the tour will have received their vaccinations prior to departure.** At this time, it is difficult to say what airlines, restaurants, and other public facilities will be requiring. We will need to remain flexible in our planning to account for such requirements. Be sure to bring at least two face coverings for times when those are necessary.

## **FEE and REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

- Tour Fee: \$1,100 per person in double occupancy
- Single Supplement: \$300 (subject to availability)
- Deposit: \$300 due within three weeks of registration
- Final Payment of \$800, due by January 1, 2022
- Group size is limited to **10 individuals** and early registration is encouraged

## **WHAT THE TOUR FEE INCLUDES:**

- full guide service – Kim will be with us every birding step of the way
- hotel accommodations for four nights
- all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 5 of the tour
- van transportation in a single large van
- all park entrance fees
- pre-trip information and a post-trip mailing with a list of all species observed by the group
- eBird checklist sharing (for those using eBird)

## **WHAT THE TOUR FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

- your airfare to/from Duluth, Minnesota
- snacks and additional drinks
- alcoholic beverages
- laundry
- other items of a personal nature
- gratuity for local birding guide services (optional)



**INITIAL REGISTRATION WILL BE BY LOTTERY FOR SEVEN PONDS MEMBERS  
SUBMIT LOTTERY ENTRIES BY PHONE BETWEEN NOVEMBER 9-14, 2021  
LOTTERY DRAWING WILL TAKE PLACE NOVEMBER 17 at 9:00 AM  
ANY REMAINING SPACES WILL BE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC UNTIL FILLED**

**For more information, contact Daryl Bernard: (810) 796-3200, (989) 513-5195 (cell) [dbernard@sevenponds.org](mailto:dbernard@sevenponds.org).**

## **ALL PHOTOS USED WITH PERMISSION, COURTESY THE FOLLOWING:**

**Jessica Botzan:** Great Gray Owl; **Alex Eberts:** American Three-toed Woodpecker; **Mike Hendrickson:** Boreal Chickadee; **Pat Isaacson:** Boreal Owl, Canada Jay; **Linnae Halvason** - Evening Grosbeak