



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Kansas

Open Country Specialties

4th November to 11th November 2023 (8 days)



Sandhill Cranes by Lev Frid

For most, Kansas evokes images of sprawling wheat fields, tornadoes, The Wizard of Oz...and little else! But if you look beyond the stereotype, you may be surprised to discover that 'The Sunflower State' is a place of breath-taking beauty, spectacular sunrises and sunsets, and exceptional birding. Situated on the Central Flyway, Kansas's collection of prairies, wetlands, and woodlands provide vital habitat for an astounding number of migratory birds every spring and fall. Two of the world's most important waterfowl and shorebird stopover sites (Quivira NWR & Cheyenne Bottoms) are here, and its Midwest geography means that the 460 species recorded within the state are represented by a nice mix of both eastern and western birds.

November is a great time to visit with huge numbers of geese, ducks, and other waterbirds like Sandhill Crane, Franklin's Gull, and American White Pelican congregating at various wetland refuges and lakes across the state. In some years, the sheer number of birds at these stopover sites can be mindboggling,

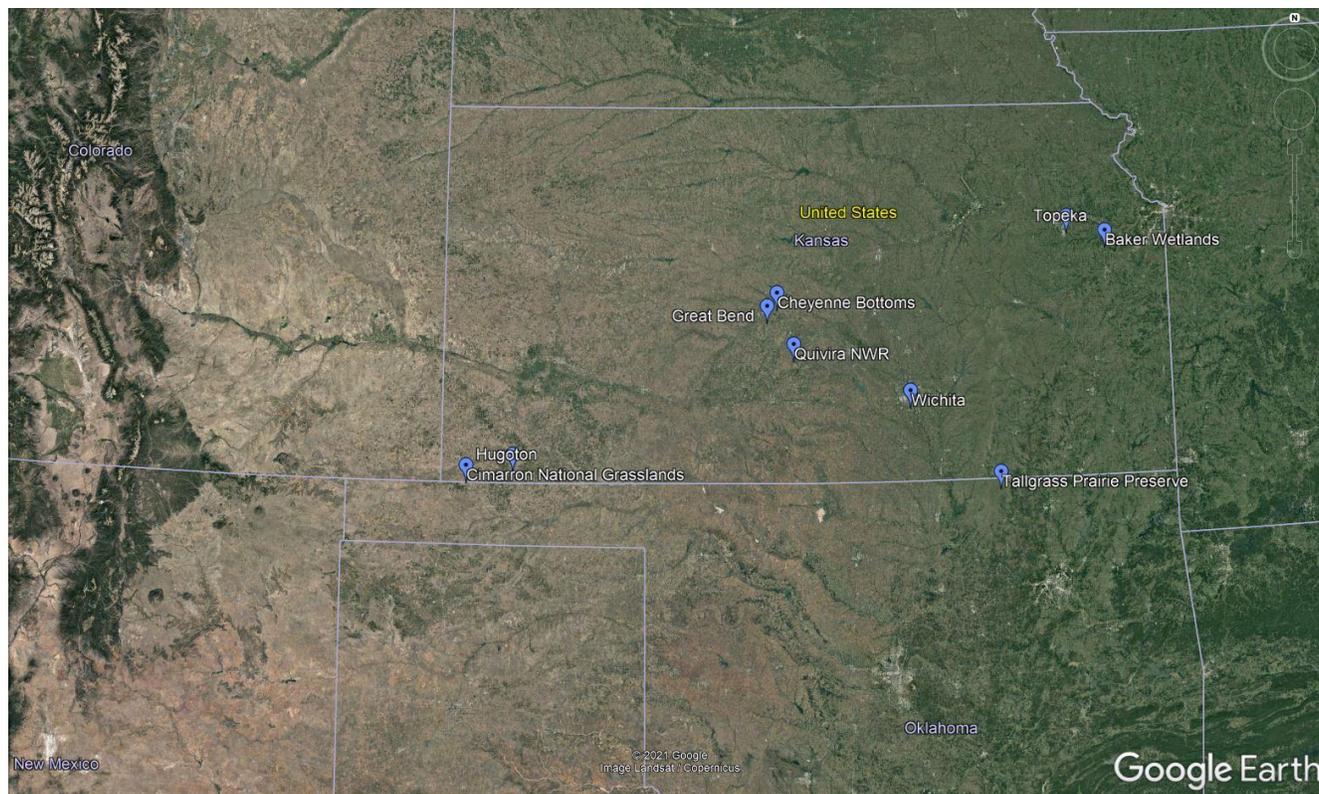
with some single day estimates for species such as Snow & Greater White-fronted Geese reaching upwards of several hundred thousand! Our tour is timed to give participants a good chance at witnessing some of these huge numbers of birds at the refuges before it gets too cold, in addition to a number of species of interest such as Long-eared & Short-eared Owls, LeConte's Sparrow, Whooping Crane, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, and Greater Prairie-Chicken plus more common beauties like Mountain Bluebird and Harris's Sparrow. We will even have a chance to see both American Bison and Pronghorn on this trip!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Wichita
Day 2	Wichita to Topeka, Tallgrass Prairie Preserve & Lyon State Fishing Lake
Day 3	Baker Wetlands & Perry Lake
Day 4	Topeka to Great Bend, Wilson Lake & Cheyenne Bottoms
Day 5	Quivira National Wildlife Refuge
Days 6 & 7	Cimarron National Grasslands
Day 8	Hugoton to Wichita and depart

TOUR MAP



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Greater Prairie Chickens by Lev Frid

Day 1: Arrival in Wichita.

Today is set aside as an arrival day, and you may arrive at any time. We plan to meet for a welcome dinner at our hotel this evening at around 18:00 where we'll have time to discuss our forthcoming birding adventure.

Day 2: Wichita to Topeka, Tallgrass Prairie Preserve & Lyon State Fishing Lake.

After breakfast we leave Wichita and head to Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, one of the largest remaining tracts of tallgrass prairie habitat in the

country. Encompassing nearly 11,000 acres, the preserve is home to a small herd of American Bison, as well as a number of typical open country and prairie birds. We will look for Horned Lark, Harris's and American Tree Sparrows, American Kestrel and Merlin amongst others. Northern Harriers and Red-tailed Hawks are common here and with luck one of these soaring raptors will flush up a group of Northern Bobwhite or Greater Prairie-Chickens.

After lunch, our afternoon will be spent at Lyon State Fishing Lake. The dense stands of pines here have often held roosting Long-eared Owls and we will do our best to find them. The lake itself attracts a great diversity of waterfowl, and the surrounding fields often have Rough-legged Hawk, Loggerhead Shrike, and occasionally large flocks of Lapland and Smith's Longspurs.

Day 3: Baker Wetlands & Perry Lake. Our morning will be spent at the fabulous Baker Wetlands, one of Kansas's most diverse habitats. Located just outside of Lawrence, on the Wakarusa River floodplain, the area contains good examples of native wetland prairie along with restored meadows, marshes, open water, shrubby and secondary growth, and mature woodlands. We will walk some of the trails and boardwalks in the area looking for targets such as LeConte's Sparrow, Virginia Rail, Marsh and Sedge Wrens, Franklin's Gull, both Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, and more.

In the afternoon we visit Perry Lake, another excellent spot for waterbirds. We will look for Common Goldeneye, all 3 mergansers, Horned &



LeConte's Sparrow by Lev Frid





Prairie Falcon by Lev Frid

Eared Grebes, American White Pelican, and more. The dense pines here will give us another chance for roosting Long-eared Owl as well.

Day 4: Topeka to Great Bend, Wilson Lake & Cheyenne Bottoms. After an early breakfast, we continue our journey towards central Kansas. As we head west, the bird selection takes on a decidedly more western feel. By mid-morning we will be birding around Wilson Lake, where we will look for Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Western Grebe, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Spotted Towhee, Western Meadowlark and Brewer's Blackbird. The lake has been a magnet for rarities through the years with near-annual reports of Pacific

Loon and a Yellow-billed Loon hung out here all of last winter!

After lunch we visit Cheyenne Bottoms, one of the top stopover sites for migratory waterfowl in the entire Central Flyway and one of the main highlights of our trip. We should see thousands of geese (mostly Snow, but also Greater White-fronted, Ross's, and Cackling), gulls (Franklin's, American Herring, and Bonaparte's), plus some of the later shorebirds like American Avocet, Grey Plover, Long-billed Dowitcher, Dunlin and Baird's, Least and Pectoral Sandpipers. The area is also excellent for White-faced Ibis, Ferruginous Hawk, Lapland Longspur, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle and more.

Day 5: Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. We spend all day today in the fantastic Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Its 7,000 acres protects vitally important stopover areas for huge numbers of Central Flyway birds and contains habitats such as inland salt marsh and sand prairie which add to its uniqueness – there really is nothing else like it! We should once again find huge numbers of waterfowl and gulls,



White-faced Ibis by Lev Frid



and if we have not seen any Sandhill Cranes yet, we will see them today. The federally endangered Whooping Cranes pass through annually at this time of year on their way to their wintering grounds in coastal south Texas and we will thoroughly cover the area looking for them. We also have the possibility of finding both Tundra and Trumpeter Swans, and by staying out until dusk we will give ourselves the best opportunity at seeing Short-eared Owls beginning their nightly hunts over the marsh.



Black-billed Magpie by Lev Frid

Days 6 & 7: Cimarron National Grasslands. Our final two full days will see us exploring the Cimarron National Grasslands in the southwestern corner of the state. With over 100,000 acres within its borders, it is the largest area of public land in the entire state, and includes rocky cliffs, cottonwood groves, open grassy fields, plus yucca and sage brush. The entire area was heavily affected by the Dust Bowl drought of the 1930's, but the federal government began restoring it in 1938. Today the land is managed for wildlife, water conservation and livestock grazing among other things, and 23 miles of the historic Santa Fe Trail passes through the area. Point of Rocks was a famous landmark along this trail and is also one of the better birding spots in the area. Rock & Bewick's Wrens, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Woodhouse's Scrub Jay, Black-billed Magpie, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Rufous-crowned Sparrow are all findable in the area. With a bit of luck, we may also stumble across Scaled Quail, Curve-billed Thrasher or even Red-naped Sapsucker. We will also have the opportunity for a few birding stops in both Oklahoma and Colorado over these couple days as well!



Rock Wren by Lev Frid

Day 8: Hugoton to Wichita and depart. This morning we will mostly be driving back towards Wichita, but we will have time for a couple of stops along the way. We will look for Greater Roadrunner and anything else we may have missed during the trip, and if there are any good rarities along the way then we will certainly give them a shot. We expect to be back in Wichita by 13:00 in time for afternoon flights home.



FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for these tours are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

The tour price includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 8;
- All accommodations;
- Ground transportation;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All leader and guiding services.

...and excludes:

- Any airfares, taxes and visa costs;
- Any beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated tour leader at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tippling: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, porters and restaurants) are NOT included on this tour. If you feel that your leader has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS

This tour **does not** include ANY international airfares. The tour will commence with dinner on day 1 at our Wichita lodgings. The tour will conclude at Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport at around 13:00 on day 8.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially



confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS

Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport (IATA: ICT) is the main port of entry and exit for this tour. **Please DO NOT book your flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

