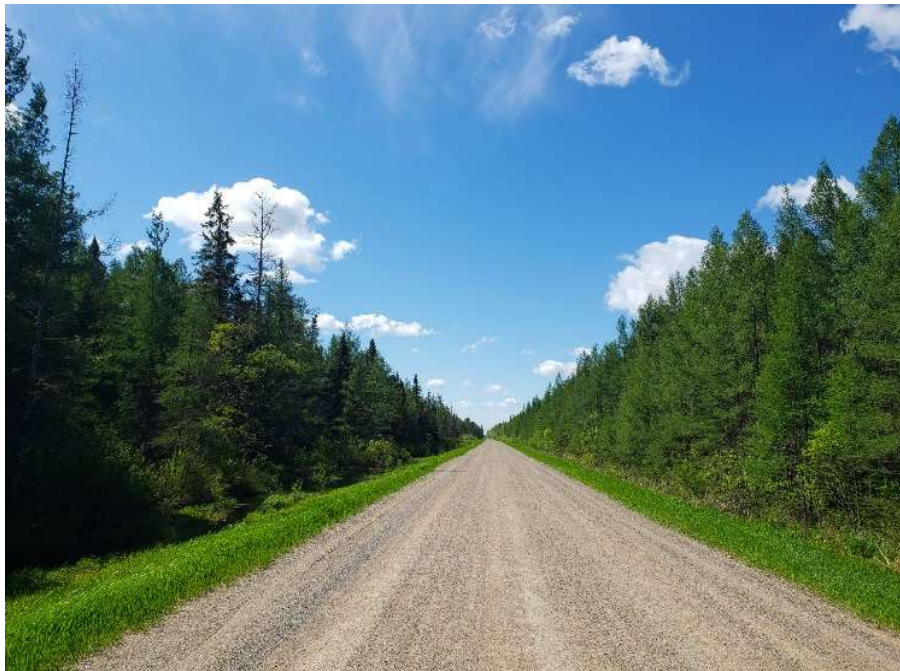


FIELD REPORT

MINNESOTA'S NORTHWOODS

MAY 29–JUNE 3, 2022



Enjoying the miles and miles of Sax-Zim Bog © Erik Bruhnke

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The charm of Minnesota's Northwoods left each of us in awe and with great memories every day of the tour. The scenery and birding throughout this stunning landscape was wondrous. Our first evening together started off near Lake Superior, where recently-arrived migrating birds had gathered in near proximity to the lake.

We pulled up along Southworth Marsh, a quaint yet sheltered woodland just minutes from our hotel. The first bird of the tour was a point-blank Philadelphia Vireo, mere feet from where our vans were parked. We savored our views of this uncommon and beautiful bird, complemented with American Redstarts, a migrating Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and more! All of these birds were on their journeys north, and what a treat it was to be in their presence. A tasty dinner capped off this fun little wedge of birding.

We left early the next morning for Sax-Zim Bog. The chance of rain increased as we drew closer to Sax-Zim Bog. Once we were along the bog roads, the skies let loose with heavy rain showers, impressive lightning, and roars of distant thunder. We weren't about to have the elements rain on our birding parade, however. While scanning from inside the van, we got on our first bird of a day: a soaking wet Great Gray Owl! After a little while of watching this beautiful bird, the downpour turned into light rain, which turned into drizzle, which eventually halted entirely. The sheer experience and scope views of this bird were mesmerizing. The bird roused



Soaking wet Great Gray Owl © Erik Bruhnke

the water off its feathers and began to casually preen the drying feathers. Warblers and thrushes sang around us throughout the woods as the rain cleared. We had our breakfast-in-the-bog, just a moment's drive up the road, but still in range of the owl. Warblers delighted our views in the hours to come as we explored new roads. Just before our lunch break we trekked along a vast expanse of edge habitat, where grassy fields meet woodlands, and to our surprise came across a second Great Gray Owl that morning! After a local lunch we birded the shore of Lake Superior. What a fun day!

The next day we had our sights set on birding throughout the Superior National Forest, as well as some of the scenic highlights of Lake Superior's North Shore. This northeastern expanse of Minnesota is renowned for spectacular views and rich bird diversity. Our visit at the White Pine Picnic Area brought



Adult Broad-winged Hawk © Erik Bruhnke

forth birds such as Northern Parula, Brown Creeper, and a sneaky Ovenbird. Along the Stoney River Road that followed, the changing ecosystem welcomed an array of exciting new birds. A Canada Warbler was a show-stealer, while we went for a short hike enjoying the geology and different micro-ecosystems around us. We had some stellar views of a singing Northern Waterthrush and Blackburnian Warbler, in addition to a beautiful adult Broad-winged Hawk. After a tasty lunch we explored Tettegouche State Park, where we had amazing experiences with up-close American Redstarts, a handsome

Black-throated Green Warbler, and migrating waves of Cedar Waxwings! A dapper Franklin's Ground-Squirrel greeted us as we scanned the Lake Superior horizon. Farther down the North Shore we enjoyed stops including the Silver Bay Marina and at Gooseberry Fall State Park, a remarkably scenic spot where waterfalls have carved their way to Lake Superior. Shortly after arriving at Gooseberry State Park, a Red Squirrel caught our attention as it bounded in-and-out of a nearby garbage can. It was captivating and comical, showing no hesitation with our groups' presence!

The next day of the tour was a full day at Sax-Zim Bog, where we covered a different tier of the bog. After birding throughout on-and-off rain showers over the past two days, our morning in the bog was a pleasant change of weather, with clear skies and refreshingly cool temps. An early morning Sharp-tailed Grouse was seen among



View from Tettegouche State Park © Erik Bruhnke

grassy fields of chatty Bobolinks and serenading Savannah Sparrows. Following this first target of the day was our next target, the Connecticut Warbler. We first heard him singing deep in the tamarack bogs. The recent rainstorms had added much water to the edge of the road, which looked to be a significant challenge to initially get to our target. Erik ran ahead of the group and built a bridge to help escort everyone in the group across. The adventure of hiking on a vast peat blanket awaited us. After about half-a-mile of tracking the Connecticut Warbler's song, we got our sights on him. And what a stunner he



Connecticut Warbler © Erik Bruhnke

was! His song carried through the thicket of trees, “teepa teepa teepa!” After a wonderful Northwoods lunch at the Wilbert Café, we birded along a boardwalk that led us through sky-high spruces of years past and Hairy Woodpeckers actively feeding on these towering trees. Before we headed back to Duluth we birded Nichols Lake, where we enjoyed the sight of Common Loons on the lake, as well as a nearby active cavity of nesting Hairy Woodpeckers. We ended our day with a dinner in Duluth, savoring delicious wild

rice, walleye, and more!

On the last morning we headed back to Sax-Zim Bog, a spot that is hard to savor enough. There were still roads that we hadn’t explored yet. Especially when it comes to summer birding, the ‘bog has many days’ worth of birding adventures in store. A lucky catch from our eyes spotted both Moose tracks and Wolf tracks along the road we were driving on. While birding the central part of the bog we locked our sights on a dapper, out-in-the-open LeConte’s Sparrow, which is an uncommon treat to see, let alone when one is out in the open and up close! The views of this bird lasted several minutes. We saw him singing away, perched on blades of grass. His golden hues glowed against the nearby grasses. An obligatory visit to the Friends of Sax-Zim Bog Welcome Center was in order, as this is the headquarters for the conservation efforts and public outreach that takes place throughout Sax-Zim Bog. We enjoyed both the little store inside as well as the diverse property. A

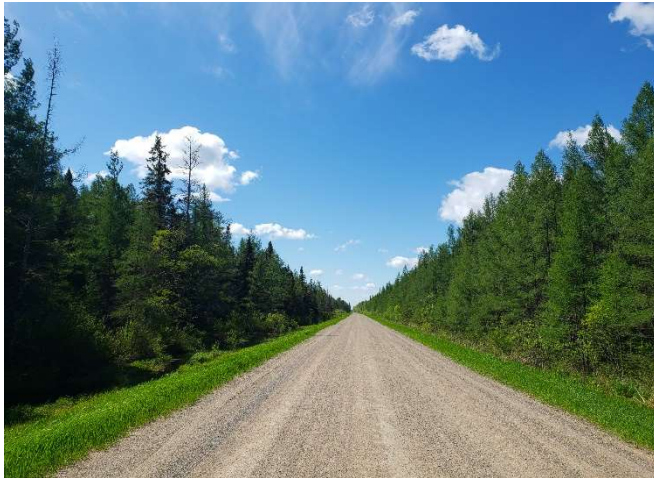


LeConte's Sparrow © Erik Bruhnke

delicious lunch back in Duluth fueled up our afternoon for doing some local birding and exploring throughout Duluth’s hotspots. After lunch we first headed to Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, one of the legendary migratory hotspots for birding and sightseeing all-round. During our visit to Hawk Ridge, we talked about the incredible migration that comes within view of this spot every fall. A local Turkey Vulture offered some good identification practice of birds on the wing. We ended the tour at Park Point,

witnessing local Common Terns and a surreal spectacle of a Sanderling being plucked off the beach by a Peregrine Falcon, right in front of us!

VENT's Minnesota's Northwoods tour is always a delight to the senses, trekking deep into the beautiful forests around Duluth and beyond. I'm already looking forward to next year's tour!



Enjoying the miles and miles of Sax-Zim Bog © Erik Bruhnke



Birding at Hawk Ridge on the last day of the tour © Erik Bruhnke

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	
Waterfowl	Anatidae	
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Seen every day
Trumpeter Swan	<i>Cygnus buccinator</i>	Flyovers at Sax-Zim Bog
Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Spatula discors</i>	Park Point
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Seen every day
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	Southworth Marsh
Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Silver Bay Marina

Pheasants, Grouse & Allies	Phasianidae	
Sharp-tailed Grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>	Seen once, in the fields of Sax-Zim Bog
Pigeons and Doves	Columbidae	
Rock Pigeon (I)	<i>Columba livia</i>	Seen every day around town
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	
Cuckoos	Cuculidae	
Black-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Park Point
Nightjars	Caprimulgidae	
Common Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	Seen up-close in a tree along Park Point
Hummingbirds	Trochilidae	
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	<i>Archilochus colubris</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Hawk Ridge
Cranes	Gruidae	
Sandhill Crane	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Plovers and Lapwings	Charadriidae	
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	Park Point
Sandpipers & Allies	Scolopacidae	
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Park Point
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Park Point
Wilson's Snipe	<i>Gallinago delicata</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Gulls, Terns & Skimmers	Laridae	
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Seen every day around Lake Superior
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Seen every day around Lake Superior
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Park Point
Loons	Gaviidae	
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Cormorants	Phalacrocoracidae	
Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Nannopterum auritum</i>	Seen every day around Lake Superior
New World Vultures	Cathartidae	

Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Near-daily sight. Enjoyed well from Hawk Ridge
Osprey	Pandionidae	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Hawks, Eagles & Kites	Accipitridae	
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>	Gray Ghosts (adult male Northern Harriers) patrolling over the fields of Sax-Zim Bog
Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	Hawk Ridge
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Superior National Forest, Sax-Zim Bog
Broad-winged Hawk	<i>Buteo platypterus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Stoney River Road
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Sax-Zim Bog and along highways
Owls	Strigidae	
Great Gray Owl	<i>Strix nebulosa</i>	Seen well in Sax-Zim Bog, in both rain and shine!
Kingfishers	Alcedinidae	
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	Stoney River Road, Sax-Zim Bog
Woodpeckers	Picidae	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	Lester Park
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	Lester Park
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates villosus</i>	Near-daily sighting among various woods
Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	Common near-daily sighting
Falcons & Caracaras	Falconidae	
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	Superior National Forest, Sax-Zim Bog
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Park Point
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Seen nesting in downtown Duluth
Tyrant Flycatchers	Tyrannidae	
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Eastern Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus virens</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Park Point
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax flaviventris</i>	Seen up-close at Park Point on the opening evening, heard several times in Sax-Zim Bog
Alder Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax alnorum</i>	Widespread and common in Sax-Zim Bog
Least Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax minimus</i>	Southworth Marsh, Sax-Zim Bog, Superior National Forest
Eastern Phoebe	<i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	Sax-Zim Bog

Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Superior National Forest, Park Point
Vireos, Shrike-Babblers & Erpornis Vireonidae		
Blue-headed Vireo	<i>Vireo solitarius</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Philadelphia Vireo	<i>Vireo philadelphicus</i>	Southworth Marsh
Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo gilvus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	Seen and heard every day. Delightful to hear among many habitats.
Crows, Jays & Magpies Corvidae		
Canada Jay	<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	Seen every day
Black-billed Magpie	<i>Pica hudsonia</i>	Fields of Sax-Zim Bog
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	Common and widespread, daily
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Seen daily in dense woodlands
Tits, Chickadees, & Titmice Paridae		
Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>	Daily sight throughout forests
Swallows Hirundinidae		
Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Park Point
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Kinglets Regulidae		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Corthylio calendula</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Superior National Forest
Golden-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus satrapa</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Superior National Forest
Waxwings Bombycillidae		
Cedar Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	Seen near-daily. We enjoyed sizable roaming flocks up and down the North Shore
Nuthatches Sittidae		
Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>	Southworth Marsh, Sax-Zim Bog, Superior National Forest
White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Treecreepers Certhiidae		

Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>	White Pine Picnic Area, Sax-Zim Bog
Wrens	Troglodytidae	
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	Seen skulking throughout Southworth Marsh
Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes hiemalis</i>	Heard near-daily. We had a few zen-listening moments with this species in Sax-Zim Bog and the Superior National Forest
Sedge Wren	<i>Cistothorus stellaris</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Mockingbirds & Thrashers	Mimidae	
Gray Catbird	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	Southworth Marsh, Sax-Zim Bog, Park Point
Brown Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Starlings	Sturnidae	
European Starling (I)	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Daily sight
Thrushes & Allies	Turdidae	
Eastern Bluebird	<i>Sialia sialis</i>	Seen nesting in nest boxes in Sax-Zim Bog
Veery	<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	Daily sighting among various places. Beautiful thrush!
Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	Seen as a migrant at Southworth Marsh
Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	Seen every day - common
Old World Sparrows	Passeridae	
House Sparrow (I)	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Near-daily, not seen in the Superior National Forest
Finches, Euphonias & Allies	Fringillidae	
Purple Finch	<i>Haemorhous purpureus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
American Goldfinch	<i>Spinus tristis</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Park Point, Hawk Ridge
New World Sparrows	Passerellidae	
Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>	Common breeder, seen daily.
Clay-colored Sparrow	<i>Spizella pallida</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Park Point, Hawk Ridge
White-throated Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	Seen and heard regularly throughout forests. Background ambience during the visits to Sax-Zim Bog

LeConte's Sparrow	<i>Ammospiza leconteii</i>	Crushing experience with one in Sax-Zim Bog. Incredible views of one close and out in the open!
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Park Point
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	Seen and heard every day
Troupials & Allies	Icteridae	
Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	Fields of Sax-Zim Bog
Eastern Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella magna</i>	Fields of Sax-Zim Bog
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	Daily observation
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	Daily observation
Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	Daily observation
New World Warblers	Parulidae	
Ovenbird	<i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Park Point, Superior National Forest
Northern Waterthrush	<i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>	Stoney River Road
Golden-winged Warbler	<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, wonderful experience with a singing male atop a tamarack tree
Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	Common among warblers. Seen daily
Tennessee Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis peregrina</i>	Stoney River Road
Nashville Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis ruficapilla</i>	Common in Sax-Zim Bog, also seen along Stoney River Road
Connecticut Warbler	<i>Oporornis agilis</i>	After a little hike through a peat bog, we had an incredible experience with a singing male Connecticut Warbler!
Mourning Warbler	<i>Geothlypis philadelphia</i>	Heard and seen at Sax-Zim Bog
Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	Southworth Marsh, Sax-Zim Bog, Hawk Ridge
American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	Southworth Marsh, Sax-Zim Bog, Park Point, Superior National Forest, along the North Shore
Cape May Warbler	<i>Setophaga tigrina</i>	Stoney River Road
Northern Parula	<i>Setophaga americana</i>	White Pine Picnic Area
Magnolia Warbler	<i>Setophaga magnolia</i>	Seen and heard every day

Blackburnian Warbler	<i>Setophaga fusca</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, also seen well along Stoney River Road
Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>	Common, seen daily
Chestnut-sided Warbler	<i>Setophaga pensylvanica</i>	Common, seen daily
Palm Warbler	<i>Setophaga palmarum</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, seen with Sparky Stensaas
Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>	Seen most days, in woodlands
Black-throated Green Warbler	<i>Setophaga virens</i>	White Pine Picnic Area, Stoney River Road
Canada Warbler	<i>Cardellina canadensis</i>	Stoney River Road
Hooded Warbler	<i>Setophaga citrina</i>	Seen briefly at Park Point. Very rare record for northern Minnesota.
Wilson's Warbler	<i>Cardellina pusilla</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Cardinals & Allies	Cardinalidae	
Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	Heard during breakfast at Lester Park
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, Park Point, Lester Park, Stoney River Road
MAMMALS		
Squirrels, Prairie Dogs & Marmots Sciuridae		
Eastern Gray Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	Southworth Marsh, Park Point, Lester Park
Red Squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>	Stoney River Road, seen well and up-close at Gooseberry Falls State Park
Eastern Chipmunk	<i>Tamias striatus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog, North Shore of Lake Superior
Franklin's Ground-Squirrel	<i>Poliocitellus franklinii</i>	Tettegouche State Park
Rats & Mice	Muridae	
Common Muskrat	<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>	Close views of one carrying dam-building material in Sax-Zim Bog
Rabbits & Hares	Leporidae	
Eastern Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>	Seen most days. A frequent visitor around our hotel.
Snowshoe Hare	<i>Lepus americanus</i>	Seen briefly running across the road in Sax-Zim Bog
Deer	Cervidae	

White-tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	Seen near-daily while driving
AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES		
Toads & Frogs	Anurans	
Northern Spring Peeper	<i>Hyla crucifer</i>	Heard near-daily
Boreal Chorus Frog	<i>Pseudacris triseriata maculata</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Turtles	Testudines	
Painted Turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
INSECTS		
Dragonflies		
Common Green Darner	<i>Anax junius</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Butterflies		
Monarch	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Mourning Cloak	<i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Pink-edged Sulfur	<i>Colias interior</i>	Sax-Zim Bog
Dreamy Duskywing	<i>Erynnis icelus</i>	Sax-Zim Bog