

info@naturetravelbirding.com  
www.naturetravelbirding.com



## Michigan's Saginaw Bay - Spring 4 DAY/ 3 NIGHT TOUR

### OVERVIEW

Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay, found in the central Lower Peninsula of Michigan, is the largest contiguous freshwater wetland complex in the United States. In general, Michigan is well-positioned for maximum diversity of migrating flycatchers, vireos, wrens, thrushes, mimids, sparrows, wood-warblers, tanagers, orioles, and grosbeaks as migratory routes of overwintering birds from Central and South America converge with Neotropical migrants from the Caribbean. Where land meets water, one finds the greatest diversity of birds as passerines and raptors follow and concentrate along this natural ecological barrier. The middle of May is a magical time to bird anywhere in the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes but is particularly rewarding along Saginaw Bay. Overall mid-May birding in this region produces daily lists of over 100 species as migrants are particularly abundant and diverse.

This trip will be centered around Tawas, Michigan, which is located at the northern extent of the Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron. With our focus in a narrow geographic area, it will allow participants to have multiple opportunities to see the diverse birds making passage through Michigan's Saginaw Bay region.

Tour dates: 9 – 12 May 2019 (just before the [Tawas Bird Fest.](#) )  
: 12 – 15 September 2019

### DAILY SUMMARY

DAY 1	Bay City SP, Nayanquing Point SWA
DAY 2	Tawas Point SP, Kirtland's Warbler restoration lands, Tuttle Marsh
DAY 3	Tawas Point SP, Au Sable River & Lumberman's Monument, Wurtsmith AFB, Clark's Marsh
DAY 4	Tawas Point SP, Au Gres area (Midland)

## DETAILED DAILY ITINERARY

### DAY 1: Bay City SP, Nayanquing Point SWA

After an early morning pick-up in or near MBS International Airport (07:30), we will begin the day at Bay City State Park. With its proximity to Saginaw and mixture of habitats, this very accessible park will allow us to encounter our first passerine migrants as well as shorebirds, gulls, terns, and herons along the lakeshore and interdunal wetlands. This is the most consistent location in Michigan for Cattle Egret. With Great Lakes' water levels currently high, this will be one of the best locations for shorebirds along the Saginaw Bay!

After a quick lunch in Linwood, we will visit Nayanquing Point SWA which is known for its collection of waterfowl and waders. If water levels have been controlled, shorebirds should be excellent. Recent springs have produced rarities such as White-faced and Glossy Ibis, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Willet, Red Knot, Red-necked Phalarope Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Franklin's Gull, and Laughing Gull and Eurasian Wigeon. The small, wooded areas of this marsh complex contain excellent pockets of migrating passerines. This is the best location to see Yellow-headed Blackbird, which is at the eastern limit of its range. This is a relatively large area, so we will sample the more easily accessible habitats. If time allows, we may visit Pinconning County Park and check for late afternoon migrants.

Dinner will be along Tawas Bay where we can watch for migrating Common Nighthawks!

🏠 **Accommodation: East Tawas, MI**

**Sunrise: 06:13; Sunset: 20:47**

### DAY 2: Tawas Point SP, Kirtland's Warbler restoration lands, Tuttle Marsh

After a 05:00 breakfast, we will begin the day at Tawas Point State Park. This is one of the premiere migratory stopover sites in the Great Lakes boasting a park list of nearly 300 species! One can see over 100 species just in the park in one day! This narrow peninsula funnels northbound migrants into a small area with short trees allowing for optimal viewing. As well, an extensive sandy beach that projects into Tawas Bay ensures loafing gulls, terns, and shorebirds such as Common, Forster's, Black and Caspian Terns as well as migrating Whimbrel. The beach at Tawas Point routinely hosts a pair or two of the rare Great Lakes' population of Piping Plover. The unique position of this park attracts any number of migrant species, including more southerly breeding over-shots (like Hooded, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, and Prairie Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, White-eyed Vireo, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Mockingbird, and Summer Tanager), rarities and vagrants. In recent springs, notables such as Tricolored Heron, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Western Tanager, Painted Bunting have been recorded.

Lunch will be in Tawas.

In the afternoon, we will visit Tuttle Marsh, a series of extensive diked pools known for waterfowl, rails, and if the water is drawn down, excellent shorebirds. We should easily

find breeding Osprey, Common Loon, Wilson's Snipe, Blue-winged Teal, Virginia Rail, Sora, and Black Tern. Notably, the marsh has hosted, not once but twice, Purple Gallinule. The coniferous woods will also contain passerine migrants.

Dinner will be in Tawas.

If the group has the inclination, we will call for nocturnal birds locally with hopes of hearing and seeing: Barred, Great Horned, Eastern-Screech, and Northern Saw-whet (uncommon) as well as Eastern Whip-poor-will and American Woodcock.

🏠 **Accommodation: East Tawas, MI**

**Sunrise: 06:12; Sunset: 20:49**

### **DAY 3: Tawas Point SP, Au Sable River & Lumberman's Monument, Wurtsmith AFB, Clark's Marsh**

After another 05:00 breakfast, we will begin the day at Tawas Point State Park, checking for new migrants and experiencing anew the more common passerine migrants. Depending on the activity of the birds at the park, we will then have an early or late lunch in Tawas.

After lunch, we will explore the Au Sable River Valley which has a series of dams on the Au Sable River with multiple scenic pull-outs and parks. Not only we will learn a little about the lumber era in Michigan, but also look for migrants along the way. During our tour of the Au Sable River Valley, we will check several jack pine restoration areas for Kirtland's Warbler, a guarantee in this area! On our return towards Tawas, we will take a short diversion to Wurtsmith Air Force Base. Its grasslands provide opportunity to see Grasshopper and Vesper Sparrows as well as other open field species like Upland Sandpiper. Nearby Clark's Marsh is one of the better locations for now-localized Red-headed Woodpeckers.

🏠 **Accommodation: East Tawas, MI**

**Sunrise: 06:10; Sunset: 20:50**

### **DAY 4: Tawas Point SP, Au Gres area (Midland)**

Our last morning will begin at 05:00. We return once more to Tawas Point State Park, looking for new migrants as turn-over is very high day-to-day.

After lunch in Tawas, we will explore shoreline, grassland, and forest habitats near Au Gres including Noggle Road, Point Au Gres and the Big Creek/Manor Road area. In particular, we will be looking for Cerulean Warbler along Big Creek Road, where they have nested the last several years.

Afternoon return may afford us to stop at Whiting Overlook Park in Midland, known for attracting late waterfowl and possibly shorebirds.

Guests will be dropped off in the evening at or near MBS International Airport.

Sunrise: 06:09; Sunset: 20:51

**Expected Trip List (all locations combined – 215 species)**

Canada Goose	Semipalmated Plover	Northern Saw-whet Owl
Mute Swan	Piping Plover	Belted Kingfisher
Trumpeter Swan	Killdeer	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Wood Duck	Upland Sandpiper	Red-headed Woodpecker
Blue-winged Teal	Sanderling	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Northern Shoveler	Dunlin	Downy Woodpecker
Gadwall	Ruddy Turnstone	Hairy Woodpecker
American Wigeon	Least Sandpiper	Pileated Woodpecker
Mallard	Pectoral Sandpiper	Northern Flicker
American Black Duck	Short-billed Dowitcher	American Kestrel
Green-winged Teal	American Woodcock	Merlin
Canvasback	Wilson's Snipe	Peregrine Falcon
Redhead	Spotted Sandpiper	Olive-sided Flycatcher
Ring-necked Duck	Solitary Sandpiper	Eastern Wood-Pewee
Greater Scaup	Greater Yellowlegs	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Lesser Scaup	Lesser Yellowlegs	Alder Flycatcher
Surf Scoter	Bonaparte's Gull	Willow Flycatcher
White-winged Scoter	Ring-billed Gull	Least Flycatcher
Black Scoter	Herring Gull	Eastern Phoebe
Long-tailed Duck	Great Black-backed Gull	Great Crested Flycatcher
Bufflehead	Caspian Tern	Eastern Kingbird
Common Goldeneye	Black Tern	Yellow-throated Vireo
Hooded Merganser	Common Tern	Blue-headed Vireo
Common Merganser	Forster's Tern	Philadelphia Vireo
Red-breasted Merganser	Common Loon	Warbling Vireo
Ruddy Duck	Double-crested Cormorant	Red-eyed Vireo
Ring-necked Pheasant	American Bittern	Blue Jay
Ruffed Grouse	Least Bittern	American Crow
Wild Turkey	Great Blue Heron	Common Raven
Pied-billed Grebe	Great Egret	Horned Lark
Horned Grebe	Green Heron	Northern Rough-winged
Red-necked Grebe	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Swallow
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	Turkey Vulture	Purple Martin
Mourning Dove	Osprey	Tree Swallow
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Northern Harrier	Bank Swallow
Black-billed Cuckoo	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Barn Swallow
Common Nighthawk	Cooper's Hawk	Cliff Swallow
Eastern Whip-poor-will	Northern Goshawk (rare)	Black-capped Chickadee
Chimney Swift	Bald Eagle	Tufted Titmouse
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Red-shouldered Hawk	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Virginia Rail	Broad-winged Hawk	White-breasted Nuthatch
Sora	Red-tailed Hawk	Brown Creeper
Common Gallinule	Rough-legged Hawk (late)	House Wren
American Coot	Eastern Screech-Owl	Winter Wren
Sandhill Crane	Great Horned Owl	Sedge Wren
Black-bellied Plover	Barred Owl	Marsh Wren

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Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Dark-eyed Junco	Nashville Warbler
Golden-crowned Kinglet	White-crowned Sparrow	Connecticut Warbler (rare)
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (late)	White-throated Sparrow	Mourning Warbler
Eastern Bluebird	Vesper Sparrow	Common Yellowthroat
Veery	Savannah Sparrow	American Redstart
Gray-cheeked Thrush	Song Sparrow	Kirtland's Warbler
Swainson's Thrush	Lincoln's Sparrow	Cape May Warbler
Hermit Thrush	Swamp Sparrow	Northern Parula
Wood Thrush	Eastern Towhee	Magnolia Warbler
American Robin	Bobolink	Bay-breasted Warbler
Gray Catbird	Eastern Meadowlark	Blackburnian Warbler
Brown Thrasher	Orchard Oriole	Yellow Warbler
European Starling	Baltimore Oriole	Chestnut-sided Warbler
American Pipit	Red-winged Blackbird	Blackpoll Warbler
Cedar Waxwing	Yellow-headed Blackbird	Black-throated Blue Warbler
House Finch	Brown-headed Cowbird	Palm Warbler
Purple Finch	Rusty Blackbird	Pine Warbler
Pine Siskin	Brewer's Blackbird	Yellow-rumped Warbler
American Goldfinch	Common Grackle	Black-throated Green Warbler
Lapland Longspur	Ovenbird	Canada Warbler
Grasshopper Sparrow	Northern Waterthrush	Wilson's Warbler
Chipping Sparrow	Golden-winged Warbler	Scarlet Tanager
Clay-colored Sparrow	Blue-winged Warbler	Northern Cardinal
Field Sparrow	Black-and-white Warbler	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
American Tree Sparrow	Tennessee Warbler	Indigo Bunting
Fox Sparrow	Orange-crowned Warbler	House Sparrow

Please check the Saginaw Bay Birding website for the most recent sightings in the region!

<http://www.saginawbaybirding.org/>

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