



## OHIO DAY TOUR INFORMATION



**Kirtland's Warbler**

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## USA day tours - Ohio

Birding Ecotours has an office in Columbus, right in the middle of Ohio. This gives our US-based staff excellent access to the whole state, as all four corners of Ohio can be accessed within about 2.5 hours' of driving (or less) from our office in Columbus. We also have guides in other cities around Ohio (e.g. Dayton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo, etc.). The following text just provides "samplers" for birding day trips around the state, briefly mentioning some of the birds and sites that can be visited across Ohio.

Starting in Northwest Ohio, Magee Marsh (the venue of the Biggest Week in American Birding) is famed for its spring migration spectacle, when myriads of spectacular, brightly-colored wood warblers and other migrants can be seen and photographed at eye level. These birds forage madly to accumulate adequate energy stores to make the big crossing over Lake Erie to Canada, Michigan, etc. Most eastern warblers can be seen here during spring migration. **Kirtland's Warbler** is the rarest of them, and if missed here (during migration) it can be seen (usually easily) in adjacent Michigan on its breeding grounds in late spring and early summer. **American Woodcock**, roosting **Whip-poor-will**, and **Common Nighthawk** are often seen at close quarters here.

As an aside (as this text is about our 1-day trips in Ohio), our new Ohio full-length birding tour, which includes brief forays into Michigan (to near-guarantee **Kirtland's Warbler**) and West Virginia (for **Swainson's Warbler**) is something you might consider, as we have a realistic chance of seeing *all* the eastern warblers (and stacks of other birds) on this tour.

Back to describing possible places to visit on a 1-day trip, Northwest Ohio is not only about Magee Marsh. This part of the state also boasts a lot of other famous birding sites, so at very least one full day of birding is warranted in the Toledo/Oregon/Port Clinton area. The Ottawa auto drive, the brand new Howard Marsh Metro Park, Pearson Metro Park, Metzger Marsh and woodlot, and Maumee Bay State Park (which usually boasts red and gray morphs of **Eastern Screech Owl** and lots of migrant activity) are just a few of the spectacular and famous birding sites in this area, not only for wood warblers, tanagers, cuckoos, orioles, and other terrestrial migrants, but also for shorebirds and all kinds of other species such as **Trumpeter Swan**, **Sandhill Crane**, and many others. While we've been emphasizing spring migration here in north-western Ohio, this and other parts of the state are very well worth a day of birding at any time of year. Summer is of course good for breeding birds, fall migration sees a stack of shorebirds, rarer sparrows, and others, and winter is good for owls that can often include the adorable **Northern Saw-whet Owl** and winter ducks and gulls along the lakeshore. The areas further east along the shores of Lake Erie around Sandusky and Cleveland are also phenomenal for a plethora of winter gulls, ducks, **Snowy Owl**, and so many others. Near Cleveland, where there are lots of birders, rarer birds tend to be well staked out. Conneaut right in the extreme north-east of the state, is known for local rarities that "drop in" along the beach there.

Shorebirds, including **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, can also be prevalent at various sites much further south within Ohio, such as Findlay Reservoir, Indian Lake, around Columbus and Dayton, at Big Island and Killdeer Plains, and at many other statewide sites. Columbus itself, right in the middle of Ohio, has so many first class metro parks (all of them free!) that it's really tough to get to know even a small proportion of them very well, even if you're a local. On our day trips around Columbus we often visit the wetland section of

the huge Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park for **American Bittern** (one of the best places anywhere for this skulking heron), **Least Bittern** (with luck), **Sedge Wren** (spring and summer), **Virginia Rail**, **Sora**, **Henslow's Sparrow** (spring and summer), **Nelson's Sparrow**, **Le Conte's Sparrow** (these two during a brief window in the fall), **Short-eared Owl** (mainly in winter), **Northern Harrier** (mainly in winter), winter ducks, and many others. Woodland sections of this same park, and other sites like Blendon Woods, Highbanks, and Blacklick Woods Metro Parks, are great for migrants and breeding birds such as warblers, tanagers, a host of woodpeckers (including the massive **Pileated Woodpecker**), and lots of others.

The hilly southern parts of Ohio should not be neglected and are really good for **Worm-eating Warbler**, **Cerulean Warbler**, **Kentucky Warbler**, and many other birds not very often seen further north except as “overshoot” migrants. Places such as Lake Hope State Park within Zaleski State Forest, Shawnee State Forest, Clear Creek Metro Park, and so many others are legendary among birders. Cincinnati, picturesquely situated on the scenic Ohio River, which forms the border with Kentucky, definitely warrants a bare minimum of one full day of birding.

If you're an Ohio “year lister” wanting FOY (First of Year) species, or a visiting birder from a different state, you should equally enjoy one of these Ohio day trips with us. If you're a foreign birder (and that could include the Western United States, ha ha!), you're in for even more of a treat, as so many (if not most) birds will be new for you here in Ohio...!

The guide fee for these 1-day trips is US\$250 for 1 person, plus \$75 per extra person, if you provide a vehicle and cover all the costs for the day (e.g. entrance fees – usually nil, vehicle, fuel, tolls, lunch, etc., for you and the guide). You can add US\$150 for us to provide the vehicle and to pay for fuel and tolls. *It must also be stated that we very often arrange free trips just for fun, mainly around Columbus (usually half-day trips) – please inquire with us if you're interested in these. Some of these are run as free trips through the Columbus Audubon Society and other excellent organizations.*