

Westby Weekend Birding Tour, May 24-28

In conjunction with the 2008 Bird Festival, Montana Audubon is offering a birding tour to Westby, located in northeastern Montana. This "Westby Weekend" tour is appropriate for both experienced and beginning birders. It operates from May 24-28, which coincides with the peak migration of warblers and shorebirds through this area. This tour is being led by John Shipley, who will be assisted by Steve Hoffman. It is limited to 10 non-smoking participants.

The city park in Westby, Montana will be our main focus for birding. Many bird species visit this oasis in their spring migration, during this last week of May. Westby is the migrant warbler capital of Montana, and we expect to find about 15 species, all in fresh breeding plumages! We hope to see most of the following: Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Blackpoll, Yellow, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, American Redstart, Black-and-white, Cape May, Northern Waterthrush, Yellow-rumped, Ovenbird, Mourning, Wilson's, Canada, and Common Yellowthroat.

We'll see about a dozen species of sparrows, and we should find Baird's, Field, LeConte's, Clay-colored, Grasshopper, and Nelson's Sharp-tailed. Shorebirds will be plentiful at nearby Round Lake. We hope to find Piping Plover and White-rumped Sandpiper, along with about 20 other species of sandpipers.

Other resident or migrant birds that we should see on this tour include Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Purple Martin, Sprague's Pipit, Broad-winged Hawk, Alder Flycatcher, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Philadelphia Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Sedge Wren, and Purple Finch.

This trip begins in Billings on the morning of May 24 (Sat). We'll travel by 15-passenger van to Westby, a distance of nearly 400 miles. We have three full days to bird in this delightful town and the surrounding areas. Our four nights of lodging in Westby are at the Hilltop House B&B, along with rooms in other neighborhood homes. While these are not 4-star facilities, they are certainly clean, quiet, and comfortable accommodations. Most of our meals will be at the Prairie Kitchen restaurant. We return to Billings on May 28 (Wed), arriving there in the afternoon.

The cost for this tour is \$495/person from Billings. The tour fees include all transportation and lodging during the tour. They also include the guide services of the tour leaders. The tour fees do not include meals. You should allow a daily average of about \$30/person for meals. Participants will be able to count \$50 of their tour fees as a tax-deductible contribution to Montana Audubon.

Come join us and immerse yourself in the wonderful birds of Westby, Montana! To register for this tour or for additional information, please call John Shipley at (406) 465-8247. You may also Email John via his website at: www.KingfisherBirdTours.com