

Kansas Itinerary

Nov 4-11, 2023

Day 1, Saturday, Nov 4 Arrival in Wichita

You may arrive anytime today to Dwight D. Eisenhower Airport in Wichita, KS. A room will be reserved in your name at a nearby hotel. We will plan on meeting for dinner & a brief orientation at 6 PM. ***Night in Wichita***

Day 2, Sunday, Nov 5 Tallgrass Prairie Preserve; Lyon SFL

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 among 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. ***Night in Lawrence***

Day 3, Monday, Nov 6 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, in 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 & Sedge Wrens, Franklin's Gull, both Eastern & 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 & Eared Grebes, American White Pelican, and more. The dense pines here will give us another chance for roosting Long-eared Owl as well. ***Night in Lawrence***

Day 4, Tuesday, Nov 7 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, Herring, and Bonaparte's), plus some of the later shorebirds like American Avocet, Black-bellied 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. ***Night in Great Bend***

Day 5, Wednesday, Nov 8 Quivira NWR

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, 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. ***Night in Great Bend***

Days 6 & 7 Thursday and Friday, Nov 9 and 10 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 1930s 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!

Nights in Hugoton

Day 8 - Saturday, Nov 11 Drive to Wichita; Departure

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 should be back in Wichita by 1 PM in time for afternoon flights home.