

Spring Crane Migration

MARCH 28 – 31, 2008

\$675 per person, double occupancy

Single supplement \$450

Join the Saint Louis Zoo to experience the magic of the Sandhill Crane migration along the Platte, one of the U.S.'s great wildlife wonders according to Roger Tory Peterson! Half a million of the world's Sandhill Cranes, nearly 80% of the existing population, congregate regularly each year on the Platte River in Nebraska. This spectacular event is a stop for the cranes en route from their wintering grounds in the South to their nesting areas in the far North. With luck you will see a whooping crane also.

The group will travel via motor coach to central Nebraska, stopping at two National Wildlife Refuges in transit to and from the Platte River. Besides cranes, one can expect to see a variety of waterfowl and bald eagles. It is possible to encounter flocks of thousands of snow geese at both Squaw Creek and DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) along the Missouri River. It is not unusual to see over 20 eagles in a day if the weather conditions are right.



There is a 60-mile stretch of the Platte River that is still in its natural state as a braided river with gallery forests along the river margin which is within close proximity to agricultural fields. This habitat provides food from nearby farm fields and shallow water that meets the cranes' needs for safety as they roost standing in the near freezing water. Lillian Rowe donated part of the river corridor as a Sanctuary for the cranes with opportunities for visitors to enjoy seeing and hearing them from viewing blinds. The group will visit other sites along the Platte to see cranes feeding, waterfowl (both ducks and geese), raptors, and other wildlife. The physical activity of this trip is easy with short walks on level terrain.

Trip escorted by Ed Spevak, Curator of Invertebrates and Dr. Richard Coles, retired Director of the Tyson Research Center and Naturalist/Ecotourism.

For more information, call Altair Travel at (314)968-9600.



ITINERARY

FRIDAY, MARCH 28

2:30 p.m. departure for St. Joseph, MO for overnight

SATURDAY, MARCH 29

Morning visit to Squaw Creek NWR
Afternoon drive to Kearney, NE
Evening Crane viewing at Rowe Sanctuary

SUNDAY, MARCH 30

Morning Crane viewing along the Platte River
Drive to Omaha
Early Afternoon visit to DeSoto Bend NWR
Depart for Kansas City for overnight

MONDAY, MARCH 31

Depart Kansas City for St. Louis
Mid-trip stop at Nature Conservancy Prairie

The Daily Itinerary is tentative and may be modified to take advantage of where the birds are.

MARCH 28

ST. LOUIS / ST. JOSEPH

The group will depart at 2:30 p.m. from the Saint Louis Zoo via motor coach to St. Joseph, MO for an overnight at the Drury Inn. Dinner en route will be in Kansas City area. Large numbers of red-tailed hawks and other raptors can be observed perched over the grassy medians and edges as we travel through the Great Plains.

MARCH 29

SQUAW CREEK NWR / ROWE SANCTUARY

After an early breakfast at the hotel, the group will depart at for Squaw Creek NWR located in the Missouri River floodplain. The motor coach will drive the wildlife loop, with stops at observation towers and other viewing areas, looking for bald eagles, snow geese and ducks that frequent this area in winter and early spring. An hour visit at the visitor center provides opportunities to learn about the natural history and wildlife of Squaw Creek and meet with a NWR volunteer. After an early lunch the group heads to Kearny, Nebraska (~ 3 ½ hour drive) where we will check into the AmericInn Hotel.

We depart for Rowe Sanctuary at 5:30 for an evening session in the viewing blind watching the cranes as they come in to roost for the night. We will be within 100-400 yards of the crane congregations for over an hour as we observe a variety of behaviors. Hopefully we will have a nice sunset to photograph with cranes flying overhead B

MARCH 30

FT. KEARNY STATE SITE / DESOTO BEND NWR

After an early breakfast we depart for Ft. Kearny State Historic Site to be at the Platte River at sunrise. We will watch the cranes as they leave their night roosts and head to out to feed. We will follow the cranes driving to nearby agricultural fields and/or riverine habitats to watch them through mid-morning. The group leaves the Platte River and cranes mid-morning for Omaha where we have lunch and head north to DeSoto Bend NWR for a two-hour visit to the visitor center and surrounding environs. Bird watching from the visitor center and trails will turn up a variety of winter residents, including Harris sparrow, not seen in St. Louis. Exhibits include the Bertrand Cargo Steamer that sank in the Missouri River in the 1800's. The group then departs for Kansas City to spend the night at the Drury Inn B

MARCH 31

NATURE CONSERVANCY PRAIRIE / ST. LOUIS

The group departs the next day for St. Louis with a short stop in central Missouri at a Nature Conservancy Prairie. The group will arrive back at the Zoo by mid-afternoon

Trip Price Includes

- Deluxe motor coach transportation
- Hotel accommodations
- Taxes and Luggage handling
- Breakfast daily at the hotels
- Admission to the Rowe Sanctuary Crane Blind
- Trip Protection Insurance

Trip Price Does Not Include

- Lunches and Dinners

