



## **Greg Miller Big Year Series : MINNESOTA “WINTER OWLS”**

**TRIP LIST : February 21-25, 2018**

Guide: Tom Reed

### **BIRDS**

#### **WATERFOWL**

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK (*Anas rubripes*) – Our sole observation of this handsome species consisted of 9 at the Port Terminal section of Duluth on 24 Feb.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – We encountered individuals along the lakeshore on most days, typically in/near Duluth.

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*) – It was a delight to see a raft of 15 at Two Harbors on 23 Feb, with a nice mix of males and females.

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*) – A few were found along the Lake Superior lakeshore, a bit north of Duluth on 23 Feb.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – We encountered a single group of 52 just north of Duluth on 23 Feb, and found other singles and small groups elsewhere.

#### **GROUSE, QUAIL, and ALLIES**

RUFFED GROUSE (*Bonasa umbellus*) – We enjoyed great looks at a couple near

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) – We enjoyed 14 that were either lekking or feeding nearby at Sax-Zim Bog on 24 Feb.

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – A group of 4 trotted across County Highway 7 in Sax-Zim Bog on 24 Feb.

#### **DIURNAL RAPTORS**

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Encountered on most days, particularly when closer to Lake Superior, with a majority of individuals being adults.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (*Buteo lagopus*) – We were pleased to see a light-type bird at Sax-Zim Bog on 24 Feb.

## **GULLS**

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) – Seen every day we were along the Lake Superior shore, with a vast majority in the Duluth area.

## **PIGEONS and DOVES**

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Encountered most days, with a few flocks in Sax-Zim Bog and through Duluth.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Just one, near the Sharp-tailed Grouse at Sax-Zim Bog on 24 Feb.

## **OWLS**

SNOWY OWL (*Bubo scandiacus*) – We were pleased to find two birds (one quite dark, one quite light) in Duluth on the evening of 24 Feb.

NORTHERN HAWK OWL (*Surnia ulula*) – We had several encounters with a long-staying individual in Sax-Zim Bog on 22 Feb, and enjoyed wonderful views of the same bird on 24 Feb.

GREAT GRAY OWL (*Strix nebulosa*) – A primary target, we enjoyed seeing no less than 16 during the course of the tour, with most in an area just north of Duluth and others at Sax-Zim Bog.

BOREAL OWL (*Aegolius funereus*) – Perhaps the bird of the trip, we enjoyed astounding views of two individuals in broad daylight at Sax-Zim Bog on 22 Feb, and viewed one of those again on 24 Feb. The species is not present here every winter, and this was easily the best period to find Boreals locally since February 2013.

## **WOODPECKERS**

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – Found most days, and in a variety of habitats.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – Also found most days, and also in a variety of habitats. We enjoyed some rather nice looks at Sax-Zim Bog.

AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (*Picoides dorsalis*) – Typically quite rare, there were several in the area this winter (following a noticeable movement of this species and Black-backed Woodpeckers the previous fall). We soaked up amazing views of a female at Sax-Zim Bog on 24 Feb.

BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides arcticus*) – After several failed attempts we were very happy to find one at Sax-Zim Bog on 24 Feb.

PILEATED WOODPECKER (*Dryocopus pileatus*) – We came across a few, but one in particular put on a wonderful show at Sax-Zim Bog on 24 Feb.

## **FALCONS**

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – We drove past one perched ever so high above the bridge between Duluth and Superior, WI on 24 Feb.

## **SHRIKES**

NORTHERN SHRIKE (*Lanius excubitor*) – Most of our encounters with this fascinating species occurred in Sax-Zim Bog, with multiple individuals seen on 22 & 24 Feb.

## **JAYS, MAGPIES, CROWS, and RAVENS**

GRAY JAY (*Perisoreus canadensis*) – Many great looks at Sax-Zim Bog on 22 & 24 Feb.

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Seen in small numbers most days, most often around bird feeders. As with the previous year, probably more Gray Jays than Blue Jays on this tour!

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica hudsonia*) – Present in relatively small numbers at Sax-Zim Bog, we eventually lucked into a brief view of two on 24 Feb.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Generally encountered in small numbers, but we did make a brief visit to a larger roost in downtown Duluth (200+ birds) on the evening of 24 Feb.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Encountered with regularity and in numbers, especially along the North Shore and in Sax-Zim Bog.

## **CHICKADEES**

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Poecile atricapillus*) – Widespread and numerous, especially at Sax-Zim Bog and wherever bird feeders were maintained.

## **NUTHATCHES**

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*) – We were pleased to find this spunky nuthatch at several feeding stations throughout our time in northeast Minnesota.

## **STARLINGS**

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Regular in towns and at feeding stations throughout.

## **SPARROWS and other EMBERIZIDS**

DARK-EYED JUNCO (*Junco hyemalis*) – Scarce in winter, we were a bit surprised to find one at Gooseberry Falls State Park on 23 Feb.

## **FINCHES and ALLIES**

PINE GROSBEAK (*Pinicola enucleator*) – We found a few scattered here and there, with the best looks at Mary Lou's feeders in Sax-Zim Bog on 22 Feb.

COMMON REDPOLL (*Acanthis flammea*) – We came across a few scattered flocks, mostly at Sax-Zim Bog, where the Visitor Center provided us with point-blank looks on 22 & 24 Feb.

HOARY REDPOLL (*Acanthis hornemanni*) – It's always fun to scour flocks of Common Redpolls, searching for a Hoary. We had good looks at 3 individuals in Sax-Zim Bog on 22 Feb.

EVENING GROSBEAK (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) – The famous Mary Lou's feeders in Sax-Zim Bog hosted a flock of 20+ on 22 Feb, with a fair proportion made up of flashy males.

## **OLD WORLD SPARROWS**

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Seen in small numbers around urban centers and at feeding stations most days.

## **MAMMALS**

### **RODENTS**

NORTH AMERICAN PORCUPINE (*Erethizon dorsatum*) – One chewing away on birch branches in Sax-Zim Bog on Feb 22.

RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – A handful seen on 3 days mainly at feeders in Sax-Zim Bog.

### **CARNIVORES**

RED FOX (*Vulpes vulpes*) – One with a light bushy coat walking through the snow at Sax-Zim Bog on Feb 24.

### **EVEN-TOED HOOFED MAMMALS**

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – Seen daily, scattered in small numbers, mainly in and around wooded areas.