



BIRD TOURISM REPORTS 10/2016

Petri Hottola

NORTH MICHIGAN, THE USA



Fig. 1. Pretty galls on a leaf, at Dingman Marsh, North Michigan.

In summer 2016, June 10th to 15th, I had a pleasure to drive around Lake Michigan at the Great Lakes region, birdwatching on the way, with two additional birding days in Wisconsin (Horicon Marsh; see a separate report) and a departure to Grand Cayman at O'Hare, Chicago. The journey was about my twentieth visit in the United States but the first one in Michigan.

It was a high time to visit North Michigan. On the 14th of March, 1988, I and Harri Kontkanen met a Michigan birder Terry Walsh at Snake Bight Trail in Florida. He invited us to his home state, promising to show us the rarest U.S. passerine, **Kirtland's Warbler**. Since then, I had been contemplating on such a visit. 28 years later and with my 50 States list already at 680, I was finally going to go for it! Not only for the warbler, but for three other species as well...

The main target birds were **Yellow Rail**, **Black-backed Woodpecker**, **Connecticut Warbler** and, of course, **Kirtland's Warbler**, all potential lifers. Moreover, I was looking for species already seen or heard, but not yet on my U.S. list, such as **Sharp-tailed Grouse** (which I missed). Finally, there was an interest to add as many North American bird species to my World Year List, which in the end of 2016 stood just below 1.300 species. The target birds were soon located and my other lists received a number of new species, too. Birding in the States tends to be rewarding and the trip was not an exception to the general rule.

Today, a very useful aide in locating one's target birds is eBird (www.ebird.org). Its search function allows people to see the records on the map and not only the most recent records, but an accumulation of records made during the past few years. The results do give one a good idea where to go to find a certain species.

One should, however, keep in mind that 90% of U.S. birdwatchers are not very serious about it. In other words, the potential for self-made discoveries is far from exhausted. Just like I did, one may be certain to find more than the eBird records suggest. All in all, I located 5 **Yellow Rails** (one in Wisconsin), 2 **Black-backed Woodpeckers**, 3 **Connecticut Warblers** and 7 **Kirtland's Warblers**, in addition to other birds. Out of these records, only 5 were already in the eBird database; 12 were not.

In the following text, the focus will be on scarce species. Common, widespread birds will only occasionally be mentioned. North Michigan is rich in bird diversity and it makes little sense to list all the observed birds under each of the sites. Overall, I recorded a total of 150 bird species during the four-and-half days on the road. I am also going to provide some experiences on accommodation, for example, to help others to visit the area. Traveling in the United States may in general be even easier than at home, but there always are travel related issues which need to be considered before hitting the road.

CAR RENTAL AND ROUTE

10th June: I rented my car at Alamo (Chicago International Airport) and was more or less happy with their services. My chosen vehicle was a Chevrolet Impala LTZ, primarily because of its trunk, which the other available choices (e.g. Nissan Versa Note) lacked. That was a break in a long-standing habit. I normally prefer Japanese cars, because of their high reliability and low fuel consumption. Gas does cost next to nothing (60 % less) in the U.S.A., if compared to Europe, but the distances are long there.

The Impala may be a compact car by U.S. car rental standards, but it nevertheless is a full size family car by European standards. For birding purposes, there is no need to rent a larger vehicle or a 4x4 in this part of the world, where roads are wide and in a fine condition. The rental cost €355 for the week (a Priceline.com price) in Michigan and Wisconsin, with unlimited kilometers and full insurance, excluding PAI, which I did not need.

Unfortunately, the Alamo pick up service was slow. I had already been delayed at the O'Hare Airport by 40 minutes, because of bad airport management. The plane was at the arrival gate, but there was nobody there to open the access. On top of these delays, there was slight confusion in regard to rental documents at Alamo and I had to return to the counter, to have everything made again. When I was finally able to go, I noticed an expensive pair of sunglasses in the car, forgotten by a previous renter, and had to carry them to the office.

All in all, it took 2 hours and 20 minutes from the airport gate to the car rental exit gate. At that time, the sun had already gone down and I had to drive through Chicago at night, after 15 hours of air travel from Finland to the United States.

11th June: After initial problems on the way to downtown Chicago, I finally arrived at Interstate 94 toll freeway and could soon leave Illinois, entering Indiana, and then Interstate 196, towards Grand Rapids in Michigan. The average speed was around 70 miles per hour, despite three toll gate stops (total of USD 7.00). Otherwise, I stopped only once, to purchase some food, snacks and drinks at a well-stocked gas station.

In Cadillac (!), I filled the tank for the first time. 87 octane unleaded gas cost USD 2.74 per gallon; in other words 40% of the prices in Finland. One could fill $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tank for USD 25! Between Chicago and Cadillac, the temperature dropped from +31C to +20C. Originally Clam Lake, the town of Cadillac was renamed in 1877, after a French explorer Antoine Laumet de la Mothe, sieur de Cadillac, who also founded Detroit in 1701.

In the morning, before sunrise, I wet my feet and fed a number of mosquitoes at Nellsville Rd, south of Houghton Lake. My first birding stop, a boardwalk across a marsh, was not easy to locate, but I finally discovered it at the first light. Later on, at 05.50, I moved north, to east of Grayling, exploring the Staley Lake Rd and some other gravel roads in the vicinity. At 10.00, I had not only scored with three out of my four target species, but had seen a number of other goodies, too.

Shopping was done at a Family Fare, in Grayling. From 12.00 to 19.30, I slept in Motel 72, before an evening trip back to Nellsville Rd, and had another short sleep before sunrise. There were fireflies and lots of frogs at the marsh, but fortunately no bears. It was exciting to walk on the boardwalk alone, almost in complete darkness. If a **Black Bear** had decided to cross the marsh at night, its obvious route choice would have been the same boardwalk I was walking on.

12th June: Sunrise drive to Potter Rd, southeast of Mackinaw City, with a detour via Paradise Lake Rd on the way. The day really started at Dingman Marsh Reserve, at Potter Rd, where my first **Connecticut Warbler** was located. Afterwards, I moved north, across the large Mackinac Straits toll bridge (USD 4), between Lakes Michigan and Huron. More birding and also shopping (e.g. Family Fare) followed at St. Ignace, where I had to wait (too) long to be able to check in, till 14.30, for another deep and restful sleep.

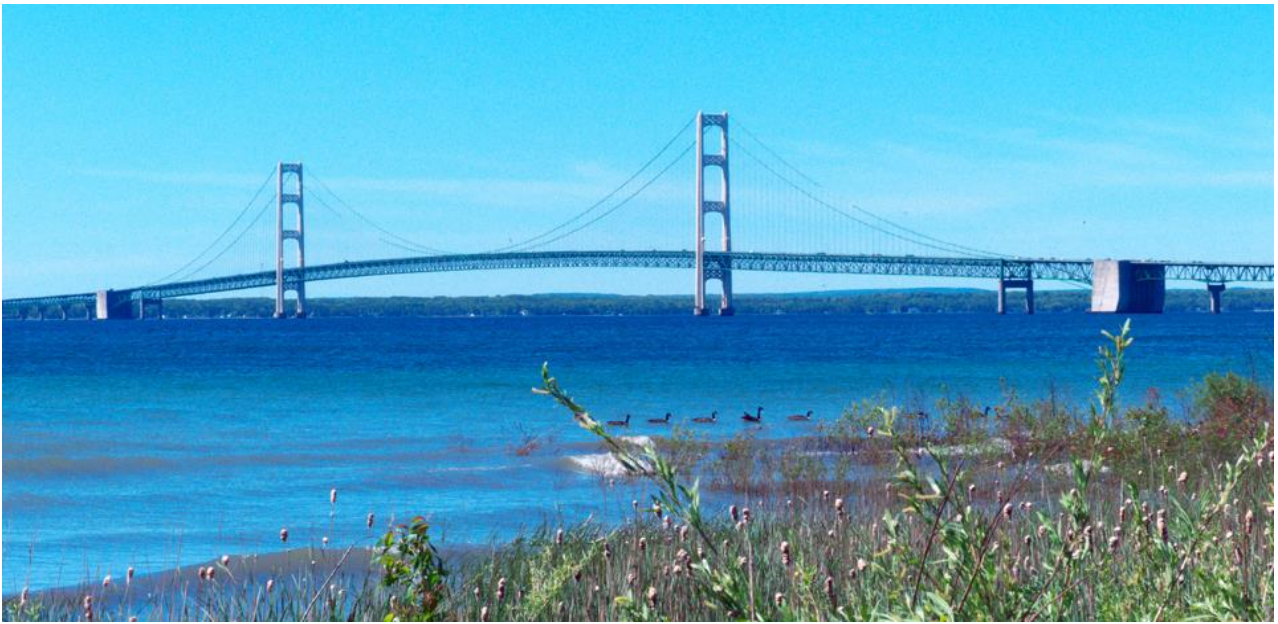


Fig. 2. The toll bridge of Mackinac Straits, between Lakes Michigan and Huron, and **Canada Geese**.

In three hours, I learned a lot about the small town, including the Saulte St. Marie tribe of Chippewas, and their casino in the north of St. Ignace. Antoine Laumet de la Mothe surfaced again. He was the 1694 commander of Fort de Buade, around which St. Ignace later became established. The 2,500 inhabitants of the town are mostly of Ojibwe and German ancestry, with Irish, French, Brits and Poles each forming 8 to 13% of its population.

At this point, I already had all the four target species 'in my bag'. What was I going to do during the remaining five days, before a return to Chicago?



Fig. 3. The night is about to end at Bobbygay Lake Logging Trail, north of Trout Lake.

13th June: Starting at 02.00, I drove to Trout Lake area, listening for owls on the way. The weather was ideal for them, dead calm and +13C. Most of the morning was spent exploring the Bobbygay Lake Logging Trail, which follows an esker between large peat bogs. Other birding attempts were made in the vicinity, at Rudyard Rd, for example. A circle around Trout Lake itself revealed an almost complete lack of birds, save a breeding pair of **Great Northern Divers**.

During the day, the numbers of mosquitoes increased, finally to an intolerable level. The mild Off I had brought with me from Finland only seemed to excite them! Fortunately, in St. Ignace, the Ace Hardware had Off Deep Woods Sportsmen, with 98% DEET content! Potent stuff...

At the motel, I slept between 12.00 and 19.00, and again from 21.30 to 02.15. Twelve hours of sleep was very welcome at this stage.

14th June: Another early morning at Trout Lake, starting at 03.30. Drove the Bobbygay Lake Logging Trail up and down twice, very slowly. Afterwards, some exploration along the North Ozark Rd (Lovegrove Rd on the map), and its side track 3329, and 27 Mile Rd & W Vertz Rd, plus the coastal roads west of St. Ignace (all land privatized, no access to the lake shore). In the latter area, for example few raptors were seen, including a **Peregrine**.

Once again, shopping at Family Fare, where a local gentleman colorfully explained the situation of rampant poaching in the area, including his private lands. In Chicago, 50 murders during the weekend... In Orlando, a church shooting and another 50 dead...

15th June: In the morning, I left St. Ignace at 05.00, following the shoreline of Lake Michigan (a breeding pair of **Bald Eagles**, **Grasshopper Sparrows** at protected dunes) and U.S. Highway 2 to Blaney Park Jct, turning right there, north to road 77, to Germfask and Seney National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The signs of Finnish immigration in the area included the Lustila Rd, named after a Finnish family. The Finnish presence in north Michigan did show in a number of road and company names (e.g. Koski at Ozark, Trout Lake).

At Seney NWR, the seven mile nature driving route was circled twice (the second time in rain), with additional birding around the headquarters. In the afternoon, a long drive to Wisconsin followed. All along the way, the access to Lake Michigan had been prevented by privatization and 'leisure pass' requirements, in the case of state lands.

Beyond Green Bay, I lead a convoy of adamant drivers, at 40 miles per hour, through a storm and an approaching tornado. Most of the locals had stopped by the road, many of them hiding under bridges. The visibility barely allowed driving and there was plenty of water on the highway, too. It was difficult to see the road and the windshield wipers were no match to the rain.

Fortunately, radio provided detailed information on the movements of the tornado. The news on severe hailstorms were, however, more worrying as it was not possible to anticipate where the

hails would fall. Many cars had already been damaged further south on the highway. Fortunately, we passed through unscathed, after half-an-hour in the storm. In Dodge County, Waupun, sun was shining again.



Fig. 4. Koski Rd, indicating a history with a Finnish family named Koski (= rapids, in English).

ACCOMMODATION

In summer, sleeping is not always possible if one is on a birding tour. The birds are active at night or very early in the morning, whereas mid-days tend to be rather dull. Unfortunately, many motels only let people to check in few hours after noon, thereby making daytime sleeping impossible.

In northern Michigan, locating an affordable motel is not easy in summer. In the wilderness areas, also along the main highways, the motels tend to rely on phone bookings and may not accept one night customers. Moreover, the rates are both high for the summer and negotiable on the spot. Indicatively, these enterprises will not tell how much they charge for their rooms, even though other information may be provided in the Internet. You will not find them in Booking.com, either.

As a result, one may have to stay some distance away from the birding locations. In Grayling and around Houghton Lake, there are several motels and booking a room is not a problem, if one does that early enough. St. Ignace is even better, because it has a cluster of motels, apparently as a result of its location at the Mackinac Straits, and the casino in town. Trout Lake area and Seney NWR have hardly any choices, and they are expensive. I stayed in the following places:

Motel 72; Grayling, MI (USD 64; stayed for one night only): The room was fine and the wing had a separate access to the yard, where it was possible to park one's car, conveniently close to the room. There was a fridge in the double. Everything was tidy and comfortable, and it was a

peaceful place to rest, even during the day. They let me to check in already at 11.00, which was a great relief after the long transit (all the way from Finland), the night of driving and the morning of birding at Houghton Lake and Grayling.

The friendly manager was an Albanian and very pleased to meet a fellow European, to be able to discuss world news from a European point of view. Interesting enough, a common ground was there, even though I have never been to Albania myself and the cultures of Finland and Albania are not exactly close to one another!

Huron Inn Motel; St. Ignace, MI (USD 55; stayed for three nights): A small motel with 1970s character and convenient location in St. Ignace, including plenty of space for parking. The room was clean and comfortable, and had all the gadgets I needed for a pleasant stay. There was some slight noise disturbance during the day, but no real problems. The main street is far enough from the building.

Their credit card machine did, however, decline my Visa card, probably because the card had a debit/credit function. I therefore had to withdraw cash at a local ATM. For some reason, these problems occasionally surface in the U.S.A., and nowhere else. It does not feel nice when somebody suspects that one has gone over the limit of one's card, and does not understand that in Northern Europe, people normally have zero or just one credit card. Credit payments do not agree well with Lutheran Protestant ethics, I guess...



Fig. 5. Huron Inn Motel, St. Ignace; an early bird guest has arrived, from Finland.

Inn Town Motel; Waupun, WI (USD 54; stayed for two nights): See details in another trip report, on Horicon Marsh. It was a privately owned motel with peaceful small town character, and with ideal location for services (Piggly Wiggly) and for the Horicon Marsh.

SITES AND BIRDS

Nellsville Rd Marsh (44.318516, -84.824859)

Having gone through the eBird data, I had found out that a **Yellow Rail** had recently been calling along a boardwalk at a marsh by Nellsville Rd, west of Houghton Lake. The area is a regular breeding area of the species. The exact location of the boardwalk could only be guessed, but I would certainly give it a try. On the 11th of June, I arrived at the site well before sunrise and begun searching for the trailhead. Add the coordinates at Google Maps search function to see the location. The other side tracks further south are worth exploring, too.

The final gravel track was a narrow one, with limited parking space, and the search took some time in the darkness. The thousands of mosquitoes and the wet ground did not help, either. Nevertheless, I eventually arrived at the edge of a large open marsh, where a boardwalk followed a pipeline, possibly part of the local sewage management facility. The sewage plant is 800 m away, on the other side of the U.S. Highway 127. Perhaps they pump the treated water into the marsh?

As explained under route and timetable, I visited the site twice, in the morning of 11th and in the evening of the same day. In the morning, the weather was calm and the conditions therefore better. In the evening, there was slight wind but I, on the other hand, knew where to go and was able to walk to the center of the marsh.

In addition to an assortment of ducks and other common species, the marsh had at least two **American Bitterns**, a **Virginia Rail**, a **Sora** and an infrequently calling **Yellow Rail**. Territorial **Wilson's Snipes** were a pleasure to listen, too. In the forests of the area, I heard an **Eastern Screech Owl**, a **Long-eared Owl** and a **Great Horned Owl**. **Swamp Sparrows** were noisy at the edge of the swamp, along the pipeline.

Grayling (44.652324, -84.637714)

Kirtland's Warbler is the bird species which has made the small town of Grayling famous among the birding fraternity. In this particular area, the warblers are common in the managed jack pine habitats. Hartwick Pines State Forest probably is the most well known site for them, but I did not go there, because the birds also had territories closer to the town, as found out in the eBird.

In Grayling, named after a rather tasty fish (harjus) we also have in Finland, I focused on Staley Lake Rd, south of Road 72, and several small roads in the vicinity. The Staley Lake Rd had six **Kirtland's Warblers** in the beginning, one of them being easily observed from the road. One should not enter the managed habitat during the breeding season or disturb the warblers in any way. Another **Kirtland's Warbler** was heard east of the town, along Interstate 75.



Fig. 6. A territorial male **Kirtland's Warbler**, at Staley Lake Rd, Grayling, MI.



Fig. 7. **Kirtland's Warbler** habitat at Staley Lake Rd, and my Alamo Impala.

Further down on the Staley Lake Rd, there was a large clear-cut (to be managed as warbler habitat) area, with dead trees and therefore also my first **Black-backed Woodpecker**. Great views! The same site had at least three breeding pairs of **Upland Sandpipers**. A **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was a nice find, too, in terms of my year list. Several common forest species such as **Ovenbirds** and **Brown Thrashers**, the latter with rather beautiful songs, were added to my trip list. No wonder the thrasher is a cousin of **Northern Mockingbird**!

There was also a lone **Michigan Redneck**, a subadult individual, in a battered pick-up, apparently protesting against nature conservation and my birding activities there. That is how I interpreted his driving behavior next to my car. Two **Eastern Chipmunks** were the only other mammals.



Fig. 8. Guidelines for visitors, at a habitat managed for conservation purposes.

Dingman Marsh SWMA (45.716880, -84.684756)

The state wildlife management area lies east of Interstate 75, in Cheboygan County, with an access on Potter Rd. The latter road is a narrow gravel track, suitable for sedans and seldom traveled. I did not know about the wetland but was simply following information in the eBird, which indicated a territory of **Connecticut Warbler** right next to the marsh, in a streamside flooded thicket. Only after arriving at the site, I saw the signs which indicated a protected area. It is a vast marsh, of which only the main open water pond may be observed from the Potter Rd observation point. Fortunately, there were no mosquitoes there, and the sun was shining during the visit.

The marsh had a breeding pair of **Trumpeter Swans**, with five juveniles, and a pair of **Great Northern Divers**, too. A good selection of waterfowl was accompanied by three **Pied-billed Grebes**. The most surprising sight was a party of eight **Black Terns**, in this rather northern habitat. In Finland they seldom occur at boggy forest lakes.

My first **Alder Flycatcher** of the trip occupied the edge of the flooded forest and had a **Least Flycatcher** and some **Cedar Waxwings** as its neighbor. A male **Black-throated Green Warbler** was a pretty sight at the same spot. Most importantly, the **Connecticut Warbler** was still present at the site, albeit a bit farther in along the boggy stream. What a skulker, I had to say, after spending an hour with the bird which went around me, like a mouse in the undergrowth! As a result, I had already recorded all my target birds in North Michigan.

On my way to the Potter Rd, I did some exploration along the Lake Paradise Rd. There were not many birds there, but I nevertheless managed to see an **American Woodcock**, a rare bird for me.



Fig. 9. Trumpeter Swans have benefited from wetland reserves in North Michigan.

Trout Lake (46.219989, -85.020411)

In Chippewa County, the Trout Lake area is known for its **Yellow Rails**, **Black-backed Woodpeckers** and **Connecticut Warblers**. In there, I focused on Bobbygay Lake Truck Trail (Fs 3344), a sandy forest road which first follows an esker between two large bogs. It leaves Road 123 to the west, north of the village of Trout Lake. I drove the track three times to a junction next to a railway crossing (Wilwin Rd) and back. By turning right, it would have been possible to return to the 123 further north, but the southern section of the forest road appeared better at eBird.

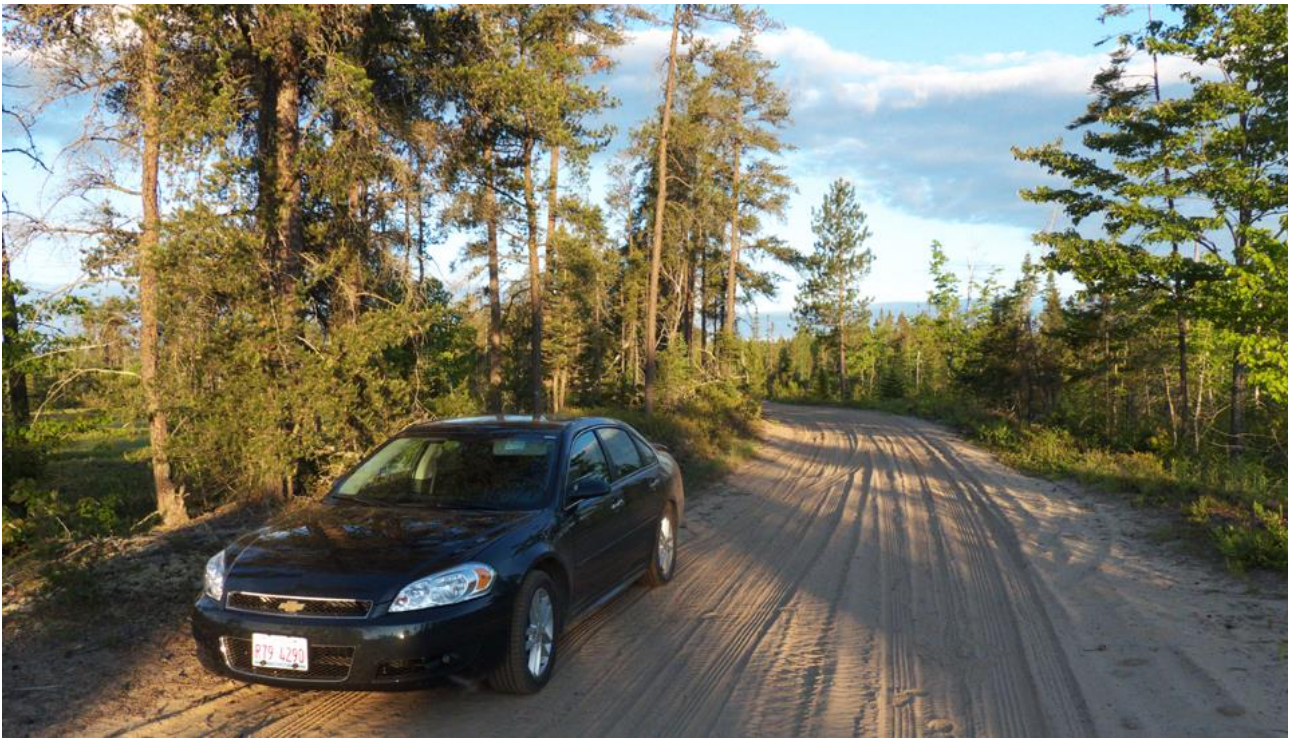


Fig. 10. Bobbygay Lake Truck Trail, early in the morning. Just like in Finland...

By driving the trail, I mean very slow driving, as silently as possible and lights off, with windows partly open and with frequent stops along the track. The stops tended to be relatively short, because walking on the road soon brought in a lot of mosquitoes!



Fig. 11. Roadside **Pink Lady's Slippers** at Bobbygay Lake Truck Trail.

Additionally, I drove the 123 (Trout Lake -> N) to the 28 Jct and back, and also explored the first three kilometers of the Rudyard Rd (E 3343), opposite of the BLTT. In the beginning of the Rudyard Rd, there were two **Connecticut Warbler** territories. The lakes south of Trout Lake village were driven around once, with species such as **Willow Flycatcher** and **Indigo Bunting** added to my trip list. The village itself did not have notable services but it had an interesting railway junction, in-between the few buildings.

I also visited the North Ozark Rd (Lovegrove Rd), with a **Northern Harrier** and the best numbers of **Eastern Bluebirds**, 27 Mile Road and W Vertz Rd, with a side trip to forest road 3329. The aspen forest of the latter was just the kind of place where murderers torture their kidnapped female victims in television... It had many breeding **Least Flycatchers** in full song. A tree fallen (or placed?) across the track forced a u-turn, before I went too deep into the forest...

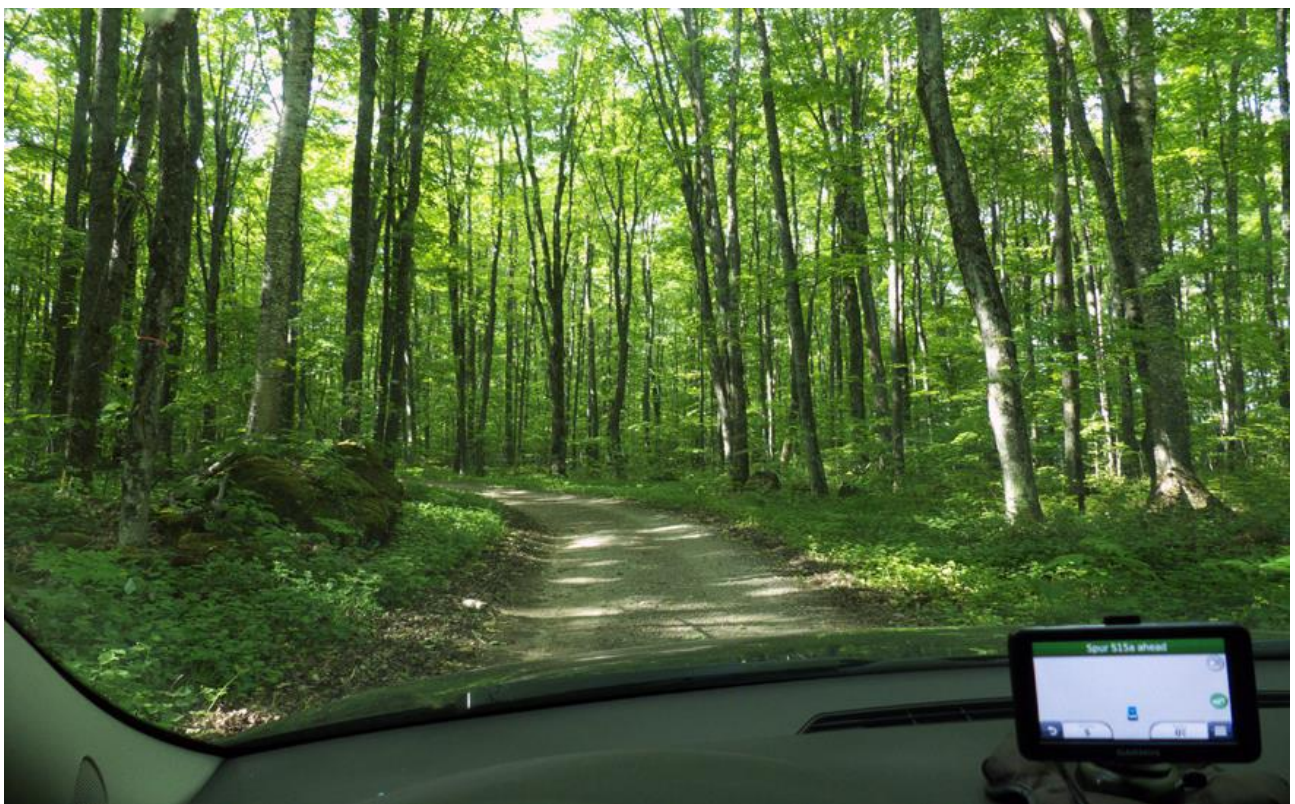


Fig. 12. The aspen forest of road 3329, northeast of the North Ozark Rd, off the GPS range.

I rather liked the peaceful Bobbygay Lake Truck Trail, where nobody else was seen early in the morning. The habitat was much like in Northern Finland, with some familiar smells of coniferous trees, not to mention the mosquitoes! Territorial **Sandhill Cranes** were calling from every direction. There was a male **Spruce Grouse** on the trail before sunrise, and a male **Ruffed Grouse** drummed next to the route, in the silence of the forest. An **American Woodcock** trotted on the track, too, unafraid of me, and three **Yellow Rails** called their hearts out in the nearby bogs. The dead trees along the trail had four species of woodpeckers, including another **Black-backed Woodpecker**.

The assortment of breeding wood warblers included **Blackburnian**, **Magnolia**, **Pine** and **Chestnut-sided**. There were three **Winter Wren** territories along the trail, a pair of **White-throated Sparrows** and two pairs of **Lincoln's Sparrows**. Among the thrushes, **American Robins** were very common, **Veeries** and **Hermit Thrushes** uncommon, and only one **Swainson's Thrush** was seen. A **Barred Owl** was observed once. The other birds of the bogs included a party of 50 (non-breeding) **Canada Geese**, a **Hudsonian Whimbrel**, still on its way to the tundra, and **Rusty Blackbirds**.

The road 123 between Interstate 75 (St. Ignace), Moran and Trout Lake also deserves a few words. I listened for owls along it on the 13th, when the weather was ideal, and made other records by the road later on. Most importantly, there was a territorial **Great Grey Owl** along the road on the 13th, a new species for my 50 States list. The owl may be recorded in northern Michigan also in summer, for example at Dingman Marsh, even though its regular breeding distribution apparently starts about 50 km to the north, on the Canadian shores of Lakes Huron and Superior. In Finland it is an uncommon breeding species throughout the country.

The other owls recorded along the road were two **Barred Owls**. The many noisy frogs were a bit of a nuisance at night, even though there was certain charm in their chorus. During the day, my best record was an **American Bittern** being chased by a male **Merlin**. The falcon apparently breeds in the area?

An assortment of mammals was also spotted in the Trout Lake area: three **White-tailed Deer**, a **North American Porcupine**, an **American Red Fox**, four **American Red Squirrels**, three **Fox Squirrels** and five **Eastern Chipmunks**.

Seney NWR (46.288411, -85.944635)

In the 1930s, Civilian Conservation Corps tried to repair and restore a failed 1910s attempt to drain the remnants of the Great Manistique Swamp, thereby creating the ponds and drains which today form the 385 km² Seney National Wildlife Refuge. At that time, for example **Canada Goose** was under a threat of extinction, because of unlimited hunting, and Seney NWR became a key site for its recovery, which started after WWII. Imagine that the nowadays abundant species was almost lost, just like the **Passenger Pigeon** was lost thirty years earlier, because of excessive hunting!

Incidentally, the last large nesting area of the pigeon was in Petoskey, Michigan, in 1878, where 50.000 birds were killed each day, for nearly five months. In 1897, the **Passenger Pigeon** was legally protected in Michigan, at a time when the pigeon was already unable to breed in the wild, simply because no pairs existed anymore... They are gone now, forever.

The NWR is located in Schoolcraft County, west of Germfask. It has an information center and a drivable nature trail (on embankments). The NWR has both wetland and coniferous forest bird species, not to mention a good variety of mammals including a pack of **Grey Wolves**.

On the day I visited the reserve, 15th of June, the morning was overcast but there was no rain. In the afternoon, it started to rain, and my chances to observe the birds decreased in a significant way. Nevertheless, 43 species were recorded during the visit. According to eBird, this a regular site for both **Yellow Rail** and **Connecticut Warbler**, but I failed to find any. Also **Sharp-tailed Grouse**, a potential 50 States species for me, failed to appear.

Overall, the Seney NWR bird species were the common species of this part of the United States, but I nevertheless enjoyed observing them, because the views were oftentimes fine. Moreover, I gained a number of World Year List species. At the information center, I and a Mennonite family from Ohio watched a movie on the history of the reserve, while waiting for the rain to cease.

There were six pairs of **Great Northern Divers**, with 4 chicks. I also located one nest, not to mention three **Osprey** nests. Hundreds of **Canada Geese** and about 70 **Trumpeter Swans** occupied the area, together with wildfowl, some of which were new (**Blue-winged Teal**, **Hooded Merganser**, **Bufflehead**) for my trip list. The list of shorebirds was a short one: a **Greater Yellowlegs** (a late migrant) and a **Spotted Sandpiper**, in addition to the common **Wilson's Snipes**.



Fig. 13. One of the breeding **Great Northern Divers**, at Seney NWR.

A **Belted Kingfisher** had a territory by the headquarters, together with several passerines, such as **Grey Catbirds**, a **Yellow Warbler** and an **American Redstart**, and a pair of **Chimney Swifts**. **Swamp**

Sparrows were more common than **Song Sparrows** at swamp margins. Only one **Rusty Blackbird** was seen at one of the reserve's bogs. In Germfask, an *iliaca* **Fox Sparrow** must have been a vagrant. Perhaps a migrant which had been forced to stop its flight short for some reason?

The five mammal species recorded at Seney NWR were: two **White-tailed Deer** (a memorably graceful female with a 'bambi'), one **American Mink**, one juvenile **Eastern Cottontail**, five **American Red Squirrels**, one **Fox Squirrel** and two **Eastern Chipmunks**.



Fig. 14. A WWII relic of the 1943 Allied invasion in Italy, a Pershing tank at Germfask, MI.

IN RETROSPECT

Looking back, I would not change much in regard to sites and itinerary. If budget motels had existed towards Hiawatha State Forest, northwestern Michigan, I might have stayed there instead of driving straight to Wisconsin. As no additional lifers could be expected at the Great Lakes Region, most of the time was spent in general birding, without any specific targets. I wish I had met a local birder somewhere, but U.S. birders seem to be pretty difficult to locate in the field during the summer months. It would have been interesting to chat and exchange information in regard to recent records. Somebody might have been interested in the **Great Grey Owl**, for example.

Overall, I would recommend North Michigan as a birding destination, especially for North Europeans. The nature there is pleasantly familiar but nevertheless very different, and services are readily available, with the exception of budget accommodations (summer). The last feature requires some planning before a visit. For a Finn, or a Swede, a culturally appropriate extension would have been a visit to Minnesota, to where so many of our ancestors migrated long time ago.

I decided to not to go there this time, but the state is definitely on my list in the future, even though there are no lifers there for me.

Go and see North Michigan by yourself. You will not regret it!



Fig. 15. A morning bath at a roadside pool of water; an **Upland Sandpiper** at Staley Lake Rd, Grayling.

