

# The Wild Prairie

*Discover the wonders of the abundant wildlife on the Native Prairies of Western Minnesota.*

\*Two-day itinerary for spring, summer, and fall.

\*For best birding opportunities, tours are better in the spring or fall during migration.

\*For best accommodations, groups of less than 25 are recommended.

## DAY ONE:

### 10:00am – 12:00 pm

Get a first hand experience of the “Prairie Waters” by exploring Big Stone Lake State Park at the Bonanza Education Center. Discover the area’s natural and cultural environment in the Interpretive Center and Museum. Explore the 283-acre park, its tall grass prairies, oak and basswood savannahs, glacial lakeshore, natural springs, deep ravines, and gentle slopes through Bonanza’s trail system in search of various wildlife!

### 12:30pm – 2:15pm

Enjoy lunch in historic downtown Ortonville that rests next to Big Stone Lake. Explore the shops of downtown and take time to drive along the shoreline of Big Stone Lake and to the marking of the headwaters of the Minnesota River to view the different bird species.

### 2:30 – 3:30pm

Visit what the Minneapolis Star Tribune called, “one of the largest and most impressive mounted bird displays in the United States and possibly the world”, the Charles Hanson North American Wildlife Collection. The exhibit, located at the Big Stone County Museum in Ortonville, is a collection of waterfowl, birds of prey, and rare species of birds.

### 3:30 – 5:00pm

Check into Econo Lodge in Ortonville.

### 5:00 – 6:00pm

Dinner in Ortonville.

### 6:30 – 9:00pm

Take a sunset drive on the 10,000-acre Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge’s Auto Tour. Here you will view ecological systems ranging from wetlands, low-lying woodlands, native prairies, and granite out-crops. Pull into the 11 numbered interpretation stops to learn about the area and watch for varieties of wildlife including over 17 species of ducks, free-roaming buffalo and the re-introduced prairie chicken! A sighting of herds of whitetail deer is almost a guarantee! Take time to hike the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile Granite Outcrop Prairie Trail to get an even closer view of the habitat and wildlife and be sure to keep an eye out for the rare cactus species that grow on the granite!

## DAY TWO:

**8:00 – 9:30am**

Visit the largest salt-water lake between the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Salt Lake! The Salt Lake Wildlife Management Area located south of Marietta is a birdwatcher's heaven! Attracting migrating shorebirds and waterfowl from across the country, you will have an up close look at this unique habitat environment from the WMA's overlook dock.

**10:00 – 10:30pm**

View one of the largest American White Pelican nesting colonies in the Mid-West at Marsh Lake. (Best for springtime tours)

**11:00 – 12:00pm**

Enjoy lunch in Appleton.

**12:30 – 2:00pm**

Head to the Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area Headquarters to learn about the intensive management efforts that go into keeping up the 31,000 acre of wetlands, brush lands, woodlands, native prairies, and other grasslands. Known for the number of Canadian Geese that migrate through the refuge every spring and fall, the Lac qui Parle WMA recorded over 150,000 geese in the fall of 2001! Take a hike through the refuge to view numerous species of birds and wildlife that are either year-round residents or that are migrating through.

**2:30 – 4:00pm**

Visit the Lac qui Parle State Park and hike the trail system along the Minnesota River in further search of wildlife.

**4:30 – 6:00pm**

Dinner in beautiful Montevideo.

**6:00 – 7:00pm**

Check into Country Inn & Suites in Montevideo.

**7:00 – 8:00pm**

Make a loop on the beautiful Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway between Montevideo and Granite Falls. This is a great location and time of day to site white-tailed deer, bald eagles and other abundant wildlife.

**For more information or help on planning your tour contact Western Minnesota Prairie Waters toll-free at 1.866.866.5432 or by e-mail at [Rebecca.Jackson@UMVRDC.org](mailto:Rebecca.Jackson@UMVRDC.org). Additional information can be viewed at [www.prairiewaters.com](http://www.prairiewaters.com).**