

Alberta & Canadian Rockies

25 May – 5 June 2012



Peyto Lake, Banff NP – said to be the bluest lake in the Rocky Mountains.

Introduction

Choosing Alberta as destination for a birding trip derived from the writer's perhaps somewhat peculiar urge to travel wherever necessary to add Sprague's Pipit to his life list. Trip reports for the province proved difficult to find, so planning the itinerary was very much based on site information available in Field Guide to the Birds of Alberta, with some important alterations made from suggestions by birders with local knowledge. Timing it to late May-early June should add warblers and flycatchers, as well as offering better snow conditions in the high mountains. Eventually we ended up a party of four going, not without great expectations. And as it turned out, the trip was a great experience, and the province is thoroughly recommended for a birding trip – it offers really great birding, coupled with fantastic scenery!!

Getting there and around, and accomodation

We flew KLM from Gothenburg to Calgary. We rented a quite thirsty Nissan Pathfinder 4WD through Alamo, ending up at around SEK 7500 for twelve days. It proved that a 4WD was not really necessary, although a standard car would not have been the preferred one on the very slippery gravel roads on the prairie. However, with worse snow conditions in the mountains, a 4WD would certainly be essential.

As we would arrive Waterton Lakes NP on a Friday evening, we were recommended to book accommodation well in advance as this is a very popular weekend destination located only about three hours driving from Calgary. We also booked our stay in Elkwater at an early stage – the southeasternmost part of Alberta is remote, and large areas lack any services. It appeared there were limited possibilities of lodging in Elkwater. As an alternative, one could consider Medicine Hat where accommodation is easily found.

In Cold Lake, Jasper, Lake Louise and Banff, hotels are plentiful. In Viking, we stayed in a simple motel along the main road., and in Kananaskis Village we chose a somewhat luxurious lodge.



Literature, recordings and guiding

As mentioned already, the choice of birding sites was originally more or less completely based on information in Field Guide to the Birds of Alberta (Acorn & Fisher, 1998). The book covers over 330 species recorded in the province, with basic information on identification, status and breeding, and also brief mentionings on the best sites for each one. There is also a chapter treating the best locations in more detail. The illustrations, though, are not of the highest quality, on the other hand there are lots of other publications filling that gap.

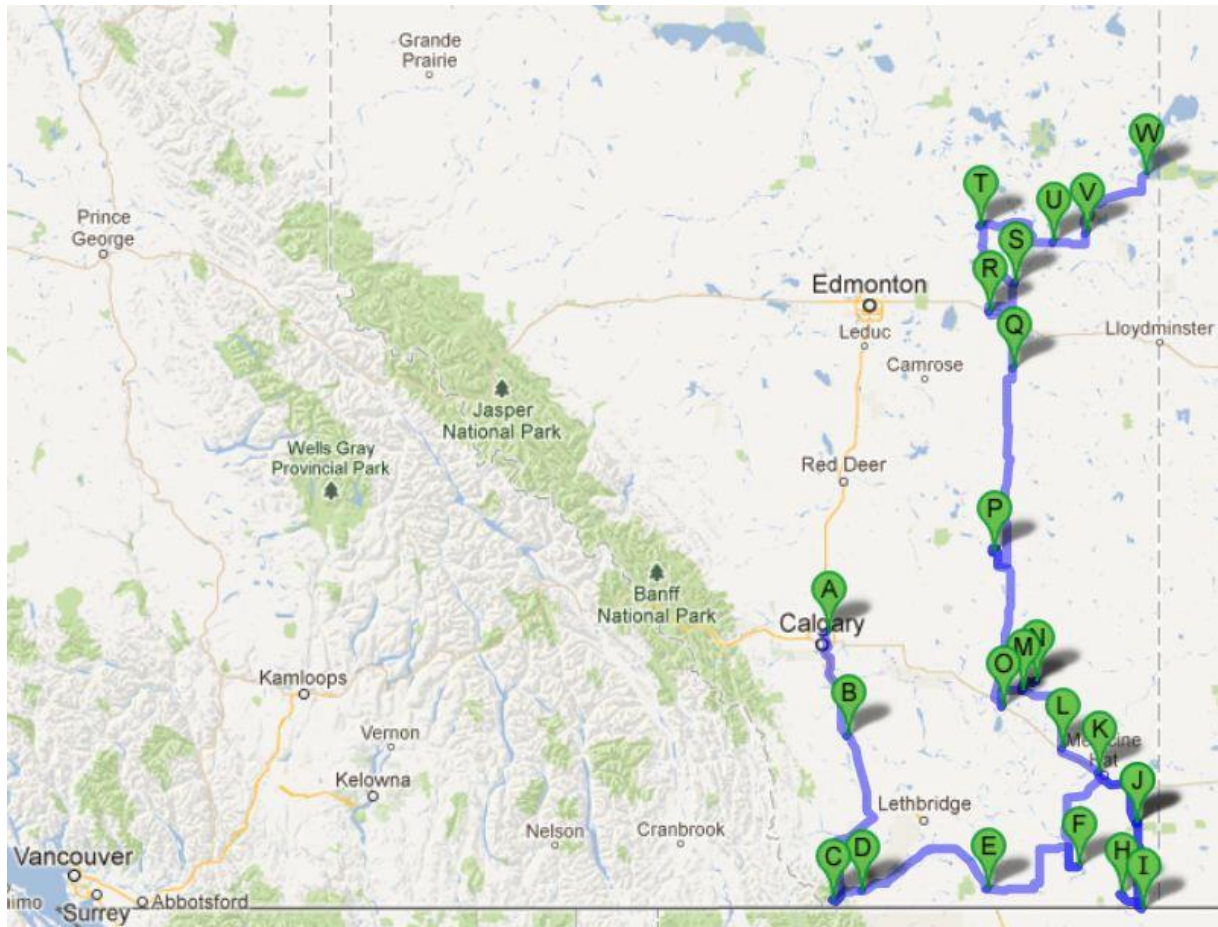
For trip planning purposes, The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta, A Second Look (The Federation of Alberta Naturalists, 2007) was bought. Field studies for the book were conducted from 2001 until 2005, and is a follow up on a similar field study period lasting between 1987 and 1991. Although the Atlas does not mention exactly in which sites the birds appear (with a few exceptions), it does provide lots of other very useful information, such as in what natural region the species occur, and the maps are also quite helpful.

Apart from these two publications, we brought a wide selection of field guides and sound recordings for birds and mammals. Finally, we equipped ourselves with the Hallwag road atlas for Alberta and British Columbia, as well as the very large-scaled Backroad Atlases for, roughly, the southern third of Alberta province. (The software in the GPS that came with the car appeared to be in bad need for an update.)

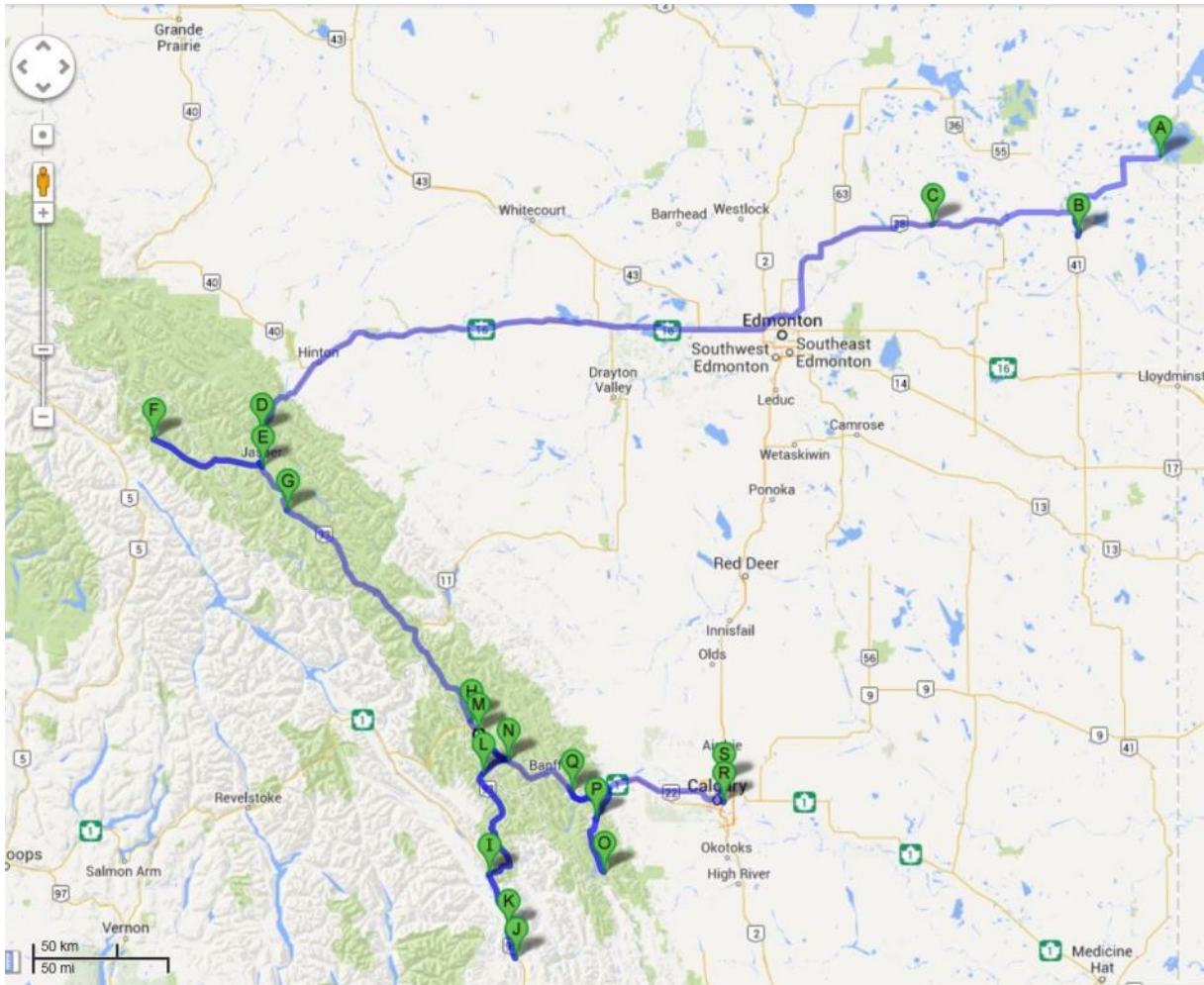
For Cold Lake area, we opted to hire a guide. Mr Richard Klauke was kindly offering his services to the group, so we agreed on three days, chiefly in the Cold Lake area. Richard's vast knowledge of the area and its birds proved invaluable, and it was sheer joy to bird with him, and thus he is highly recommended. On request, we almost instantly handed Richard our list of birds not seen, and when the three days were over, very few of the missed ones possible in this neck of the woods were still blanks. Richard can be reached at rklauke@mcsnet.ca, and is available to guide not only in Cold Lake area, but in the whole of Alberta. He has been guiding birders widely in North, Central and South America.

Itinerary

Key birding areas, and major towns and cities, are shown in the maps.



May 25-30. A: Calgary International Airport. B: Nanton. C: Waterton Lakes National Park. D: Mountain View. E: Milk River. F: Pakowki Lake. G: Elkwater. H: Onefour. I: Wild Horse. J: Elkwater. K: Box Springs Road, Medicine Hat. L: Ralston. M: Patricia. N: Dinosaur Provincial Park. O: Brooks. P: Dowling Lake. Q: Viking. R: Vegreville. S: Two Hills. T: Bellis Lake Natural Area. U: St Paul. V: Kehewin Lake. W: Cold Lake.



May 31- June 5. A: Cold Lake. B: Kehewin Lake. C: Bellis Lake Natural Area. D: Jasper National Park. E: Whistlers Peak. F: Mount Robson Provincial Park. G: Icefields Parkway. H: Lake Louise. I: Radium Hot Springs. J: Columbia Lake. K: Dutch Creek Hoodoos. L: Marble Canyon. M: Lake Louise. N: Bow Valley Parkway. O. Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. P: Kananaskis Village. Q: Canmore. R. Inglewood Bird Sanctuary. S: Calgary International Airport.

May 25

Morning flight from Gothenburg to Amsterdam, then connecting to Calgary flight, arriving there 13.30. About an hour after arrival we were heading south towards Waterton Lakes NP, roughly 250 kms from Calgary, and where the first night was to be spent. Birding stop at Nanton and vicinity during the drive, then directly to our hotel in Waterton townsite. Evening drive in the NP.

May 26

Very early start to maximize possibilities to spot grouse on the roads in the park. Eastward drive to Elkwater was started at lunchtime, with some birding stops en route, e.g. in Mountain View and Pakowki Lake. Shortly before arriving the latter, the rain had started pouring, and thus birding was not very productive. Arriving around 21.00, the only open eatery was the gas station.

May 27

Rain, rain, rain. In spite of the uninspiring weather conditions, we headed south towards the US border for prairie birding. By noon we returned to Elkwater for a much-needed nap, and then birded the town and nearby areas by car, now in a snow-clad landscape.

May 28

This morning rather felt like Christmas Day than a morning in late May. The ground was covered in snow, and we therefore hit the road immediately. Birding stops northwest of Medicine Hat, and then headed on to the amazingly beautiful badlands in Dinosaur PP. Continued to Viking, where we stayed overnight.

May 29

Met up with Richard, our guide for the next few days, birding large areas east of Vegreville, Very late arrival to our hotel in Cold Lake.

May 30

Birding Cold Lake area all day (apart from a mid-day nap).

May 31

Short morning visit to Cold Lake, then birding ourselves southwestwards towards Bellis Lake. At lunchtime, we said farewell to Richard, and headed west for Jasper. Evening excursion for Black Swifts, in vain.

June 1

Early morning at Cottonwood Slough in Jasper. Tramway to Whistlers for high elevation birding (Ptarmigan!), close to 2500 m a s l. After this, heading south to Lake Louise, via the beautiful Icefields Parkway, for a two-nights stay.



Happy! White-tailed Ptarmigans spotted on Whistlers.

June 2

Bow Valley Parkway in the morning, including a visit to Johnston Canyon to get ourselves familiarized with the site for a later visit aiming for Black Swift. Drove westwards over Vermilion Pass in to Kootenay NP in British Columbia, and then further on to Columbia Lake and the interesting Dutch Creek Hoodoos. In Kootenay NP, a large burnt area was considered interesting for Black-backed Woodpecker, and it was decided the following morning would begin here.



Dutch Creek Hoodoos, British Columbia



Badlands in Dinosaur PP

June 3

Early morning arrival (after an unsuccessful try for owls and grouse in Lake Louise) in Marble Canyon in Kootenay NP, this location being situated within the burnt area, and proved to hold the target species. Midday birding at Bow Summit / Peyto Lake. Afternoon ended up in the town of Banff, where we called it a day quite early for some shopping and relaxing.

June 4

Early morning in Marble Canyon, then Bow Valley Parkway. Continued to Kananaskis Country, Highwood Pass being our goal. Not far from the pass, though, the road was closed, and would be so for another week. Aided by the very kind and service-minded Ranger, Carol Mehling, at the desk in the Peter Lougheed PP visitors centre, we were able to work out a decent itinerary for this and the following day. We chose Kananaskis Village for lodging – cheaper alternatives are available in the vicinity. No owls or grouse during our late evening drive, and the attempt was definitely not aided by the rainfall.

June 5

Pouring rain kept us in our beds for a few hours more than planned/hoped. Inglewood Bird Sanctuary in Calgary, situated very close to the airport, was the last site visited before heading back home.

Acknowledgements

First of all, thank you to Gerald Romanchuk, moderator of Albertabird listserve, for letting me join the same. Following this, I was able to get in touch with lots of birders with lots of knowledge of Alberta, which proved to be extremely useful and important to the trip planning. My sincere thank you to all, both Albertans and non-Albertans, who willingly shared information and thoughts: Brian and Lois Lewis, Phil Cram, Gerald Romanchuk, Del Huget, Ted Hindmarch, Paul Jones, Tim Allison, Cam Gillies, Richard Knapton, Yousif Attia, Dianne Cooper, Ken Orich, Steve Ogle and Dick Cannings.

Finally, my travelling companions and I want to express our gratitude to Richard Klauke for his enthusiastic and superb guiding session in the Vegreville and Cold Lake areas. Richard also provided valuable comments on a first draft of this report,

Travellers: Anders Kornestedt, Stephan Sundström, Håkan Thorstensson & Torbjörn Vik

Report compiled by: Håkan Thorstensson (hakan.camilla@telia.com)

Maps compiled by: Torbjörn Vik

Photographs: Håkan Thorstensson © & Torbjörn Vik ©

Species list

All in all, we scored 240 bird species, and 25 mammals (excluding unidentified mice and bats). Better weather conditions in the prairie and in Kananaskis definitely would have added a few more birds. It is worth mentioning that on an Alberta Big Day on June 4th this year (thus, the day before our trip ended), a local duo managed 226 species, which constitutes a new Canadian and provincial record.

Bird names used are primarily the American versions (some scientific names are outdated), and dates where given are written the European way (day/month). Abbreviations used: NP=National Park, PP=Provincial Park. Locations given as “Vegreville area” or similar may cover fairly large areas, but it is guessed the reader will be bored by reading more exact directions, which would inevitably in most cases be stated as road numbers only. Road numbers are therefore mentioned only when it is considered useful to the reader. Regrettably more detailed information is no longer available due to compiler’s original notes having been stolen!

Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens*

3 in Two Hills area.

Ssp: *caerulescens*

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Common.

Ssp: *moffitti*

Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus*

2 in Vermilion Lakes, Banff , 3-4/6. Rare this late in spring.

Ssp: nominate *columbianus*, also known as “Whistling Swan”.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*



~10 in Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, which is *the* site where to find this species in Alberta.

Monotypic.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Recorded six days, most commonly seen while driving from Elkwater to Viking, and also in the Vegreville area.

Monotypic.

American Wigeon *Anas americana*

Recorded seven days.

Monotypic.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common throughout.

Ssp: *platyrhynchos*

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

Common at lower elevations.

Monotypic.

Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera*

Readily seen in the more southerly parts visited.

Ssp: *septentrionalium*

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Common.

Monotypic.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Fairly common to common.

Monotypic.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Recorded five days, most numerous in Cold Lake area.

Monotypic.

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria*

Recorded six days, highest day total was ~25 in Vegreville area.

Monotypic.

Redhead *Aythya americana*

Recorded eight days, generally in slightly higher numbers than Canvasback.

Monotypic.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Readily seen.

Monotypic.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

Easily seen.

Monotypic.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*

A pair of this gem of duck were seen flying low over Vermilion River along Hwy 93 near Paint Pots (north of Vermilion Crossing) in Kootenay NP, BC.

Monotypic.

White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi*

A pair seen in Elkwater Lake was the only record.

Ssp: nominate *deglandi*. Recently split from Old World *M.fusca*.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*

Quite numerous in Vegreville and Cold Lake areas, otherwise spottily seen in smaller numbers.

Monotypic.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Common in Cold Lake area, 1 seen in Kehewin Lake, and 1 in Inglewood Bird Sanctuary.

Ssp: *americana*

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*

Recorded six days in mountainous areas only, highest number 12 in Lower Kananaskis Lake, Peter Lougheed PP.

Monotypic.

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

2 females Mountain View, and a male in Cottonwood Slough, Jasper.

Monotypic.

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*

Common in Cold Lake area, scattered records elsewhere.

Ssp: *americanus*

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

1 in Waterton Lakes NP, and 1 in Inglewood Bird Sanctuary.

Monotypic.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Seen six days in the southern and eastern parts of the province.

Monotypic.

Gray Partridge *Perdix perdix*

2 at a farm along Box Springs Road to Suffield (Medicine Hat area).

Introduced.

Ring-necked Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

3 in Dinosaur PP.

Introduced.

Ruffed Grouse *Bonasa umbellus*

A total of 12 individuals recorded (most of these heard only), e.g. 3 in Waterton Lakes NP and 3 in Vegreville area.

Ssp: *umbelloides*



Spruce Grouse



Sharp-tailed Grouse

White-tailed Ptarmigan *Lagopus leucura*

3 in Whistlers, Jasper. One of the target species for the trip.

Monotypic.

Spruce Grouse *Falcapennis canadensis*

1 female Cold Lake area.

Ssp: *canadensis*

Dusky Grouse *Dendragapus obscurus*

1 seen very early in the morning on Cameron Lake Road, Waterton Lakes NP.

Ssp: *richardsonii*. Previously considered conspecific with Pacific coast population, *D.fuliginosus* (Sooty Grouse).

Sharp-tailed Grouse *Tympanuchus phasianellus*

Only 1 seen, close to the entrance to Dinosaur PP, but what we lacked in numbers, we gained in quality!

Ssp: *columbianus*

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo*

1 heard at Dutch Creek Hoodoos, BC.

Ssp: *merriami*. In Alberta, the species occurs only in two areas, Cypress Hills in the southeast, and Porcupine Hills in the southwest.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

Fewer seen than expected, a pair in Bellis Lake, about 10 in Cold Lake, and 1 Peter Lougheed PP.

Monotypic.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

1 near Waterton Lakes NP, and 4-5 in Pakowki Lake were the only records.

Ssp: *podiceps*

Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Only seen in Vegreville area, where quite common.

Monotypic.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Scattered records in various numbers in the southern and eastern parts of Alberta.

Ssp: *holboellii*

Eared Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Recorded six days.

Ssp: *californicus*

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis*

2 in Pakowki Lake, quite common in Cold Lake area, otherwise only a few singles.

Monotypic. Its close relative, Clark's Grebe *Ae.clarkii*, can be seen in Pakowki Lake, however, the nearby Crow Indian Lake is a more reliable site for that species.

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

Recorded the first six days.

Monotypic.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Very few seen: 1 between Nanton and Waterton Lakes NP, and 5-6 on the following day during the drive to Elkwater.

Ssp: *auritus*

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*

1 in Kehewin Lake, and 1 in Cold Lake area.

Monotypic.

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

Recorded eight days, mostly singles.

Ssp: *herodias*

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

5 at Pakowki Lake.

Ssp: *hoactli*

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Scattered records in plains and grassy areas, nowhere numerous.

Ssp: *meridionalis*

Osprey *Pandion halietus*

About a dozen seen in total at various locations.

Ssp: *carolinensis*



Bald Eagle



Ferruginous Hawk

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

3 in Waterton Lakes NP, 3 at Columbia Lake, BC, 2 between Banff and Kananaskis, and 1 in Peter Lougheed PP.

Monotypic.

Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonicus*

Quite common in the prairies, few records elsewhere.

Monotypic. Sometimes, as here, regarded as a species separate from Old World *C.cyaneus*. Treatment based on distinct plumage differences between the two, especially in males, but split is not widely accepted.

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*

Half a dozen seen in Vegreville & Cold Lake areas.

Ssp: *velox*

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*

1 in Waterton townsite, and 1 in Cold Lake area.

Monotypic.

Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni*

Common during the drive from Calgary to Waterton Lakes NP the first day, elsewhere easily seen though not particularly numerous.

Monotypic.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Commonly seen, except in mountainous areas.

Ssp: Eastern *borealis* and Western *calurus*. 2 Krider's Hawks, the very pale morph of *borealis*, were identified in the Prairies. Eastern birds are primarily encountered in the southeastern parts of the province, while Westerns are the ones most likely to be seen elsewhere.

Ferruginous Hawk *Buteo regalis*

4 between Milk River and Pakowki Lake, and 1 in Wild Horse area. One of the writer's favorite birds of the trip, and *regalis*, royal, is indeed a suitable name.

Monotypic.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

At least 2, possibly 3, in Waterton Lakes NP, and 2 in Onefour area.

Ssp: *canadensis*

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

Recorded seven days in small numbers.

Ssp: *sparverius*

Merlin *Falco columbarius*



2 in St Paul, 2 in Cold Lake area, and 2 in Columbia Lake area, BC.

Ssp: all four Alberta birds pertain to the pale *richardsonii*, colloquially known as “Prairie Merlin”, while those seen in BC were *columbarius*, “Taiga Merlins”.

Prairie Falcon *Falco mexicanus*

1 seen just east of Milk River town was the only record.

Monotypic.

Yellow Rail *Coturnicops noveboracensis*

1 heard Ethel Lake, Cold Lake area. Very local, and notoriously difficult to see.

Ssp: *noveboracensis*

Sora *Porzana carolina*

Recorded five days, most only heard. Learn its voice, and you’ll hear them here and there.

Monotypic.

American Coot *Fulica americana*

Common to fairly common in lower elevations.

Ssp: nominate *americana*

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*

Only singles heard in Vegreville and Cold Lake areas, thus remarkably few records.

Ssp: *rowani*

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

2 in Vegreville area.

Monotypic.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*

Up to 8 in a slough in Vegreville area. The species is declining and is considered endangered in Alberta.

Ssp: *circumcinctus*

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferous*

Easily seen in the southern and eastern parts of the province.

Ssp: *vociferous*

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*

~10 in a pond south of Brooks, along the road to Kinbrook Island PP, 28/5, was the only sighting.

Ssp: *mexicanus*

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana*



Easily seen in the prairies.

Monotypic.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

Singles recorded eight days.

Monotypic.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*

1 on the prairies, and 2-3 in Two Hills area.

Ssp: probably all *solitaria*

Willet *Tringa semipalmata*

4 in the prairies, 3-4 during the drive from Elkwater to Dinosaur PP, and about 10 in Vegreville area.

Ssp: *inornata*, Western Willet, which may be elevated to species rank from its eastern counterpart, nominate *semipalmata*.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*

1 in Cypress Hills, and 3 in Onefour / Wild Horse areas.

Monotypic.

Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus*

3 in Wild Horse area and 2 while driving from Elkwater to Dinosaur PP.

Monotypic.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*

A total of about 16 recorded in the Prairies.

Ssp: *fedoa*

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

A pair plus a flock of 29 in Cold Lake shorelines.
Monotypic.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

1 along road 884 north of Ralston 28/5, and ~25 in Vegreville area.
Monotypic.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris albicollis*

3 in a pond south of Brooks, along the road to Kinbrook Island PP, 28/5, and 8 in Two Hills area.
Monotypic.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*

2 in Two Hills area.
Monotypic.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

1 in Two Hills area.
Monotypic.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*

~30 in Two Hills area.
Monotypic.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

2 in Two Hills area.
Monotypic.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*

Recorded six days.
Monotypic.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*



Pleasantly common in the grasslands.
Monotypic.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

3 between Milk River and Pakowki Lake, and ~30 in a lake in Two Hills area. A very rare breeder in northern Alberta, so birds seen were on migration.

Monotypic.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*

This smart gull was very common, except in the mountains where none seen.

Monotypic.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*

Readily seen in Vegreville and Cold Lake areas.

Monotypic.

Mew Gull *Larus canus*

1 in Pakowki Lake and 2 north of Dowling Lake.

Ssp: *brachyrhynchus*. This ssp is possibly a separate species.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Readily seen.

Monotypic.

California Gull *Larus californicus*

Fairly common to common in the grasslands.

Ssp: *albertainensis*

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*

1 in Pakowki Lake and 2 in Cold Lake were the only records.

Monotypic. Previously included in Herring Gull, *L. argentatus*.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

3 in Cold Lake.

Monotypic.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

3 in Nanton, ~10 in the grasslands 26/5, ~20 in a pond south of Brooks, on the way to Kinbrook Island PP, 28/5, and ~25 in Two Hills area.

Ssp: *surinamensis*

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

One record only of a single bird in Mountain View.

Ssp: *hirundo*

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

6-7 in Pakowki Lake, and 4 in Two Hills area.

Monotypic.

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*

Seen.

Domesticated.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

7-8 in Milk River town.

Introduced and rapidly expanding.

Mourning Dove *Zenaidura macroura*

Primarily recorded from the southern and eastern parts of Alberta.

Ssp: *marginella*

Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus*

1 ad and 1 downy young in Cold Lake area, and 1 in Peter Lougheed PP.

Ssp: those in Cold Lake area almost certainly *subarcticus*, the other possibly *lagophonus*.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

1 on nest west of Cold Lake 30/5.

Ssp: *tuftsi*

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

1 seen hunting at same location as the Long-eared Owl!

Ssp: *flammeus*

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor*

1 in Onefour area, and 1 in Bellis Lake.

Ssp: *sennetti* and *minor* respectively.

Black Swift *Cypseloides niger*

About 100 above Columbia Lake, BC and a few more at Dutch Creek Hoodoos, BC 2/6, and 6 in Marble Canyon, BC 3-4/6. The numbers seen at Columbia Lake really was a surprise find! Obviously, we were at the right spot at exactly the right time, as skies had just started to clear after heavy rain, and temperature was rising, providing excellent conditions for the swifts to continue their migration. Marble Canyon is a known breeding location for the species, a fact we were not aware of at the time. In Alberta, the species is known to breed in Maligne Canyon, Jasper NP, and Johnston Canyon, Banff NP.

Ssp: *borealis*



Marble Canyon, Kootenay NP, British Columbia, breeding site for Black Swift.

White-throated Swift *Aeronautes saxatalis*

~25 around Dutch Creek Hoodoos, BC 2/6.

Ssp: *saxatalis*

Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*



1 in Beaver Crossing, near Cold Lake, was the only record.
Monotypic.

Calliope Hummingbird *Stellula calliope*

1 on Hay Barn Road, Waterton Lakes NP.
Monotypic.

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*

2-3 in Waterton townsite, Waterton Lakes NP.
Monotypic.

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

1 in Kehewin Lake, 3 in Cold Lake area, and 1 in Jasper.
Monotypic.

Lewis's Woodpecker *Melanerpes lewis*

Two observations of this beautiful woodpecker: 1 in Ponderosa Heights, BC and 1 on Dutch Creek Hoodoos, BC.
Monotypic.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Hairy Woodpecker

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

2 in Beaver Crossing, near Cold Lake.

Monotypic.

Red-naped Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus nuchalis*



5 or 6 seen in Watertwon townsite.

Monotypic.

Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens*

1 near Kehewin Lake, and 2 in Inglewood Bird Sanctuary.

Ssp: *leucurus*

Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus*

A total of 4 in Cold Lake area.

Ssp: *septentrionalis*

American Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides dorsalis*

1 at Cameron Lake, Waterton Lakes NP.

Ssp: *dorsalis*. Previously considered conspecific with Old World *P.tridactylus*.

Black-backed Woodpecker *Picoides arcticus*

1 near Bellis Lake 31/5, and 1 in Marble Canyon, BC 3/6. A difficult-to-find species sadly not seen by all in the group.

Monotypic.

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*

Seen most days.

Ssp: Red-shafted *cafer* in the western parts visited, Yellow-shafted *luteus* in the eastern parts. Possibly some were intergrades.

Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus*

A total of 4 in Cold Lake area.

Ssp: *abieticola*



Hairy Woodpecker



Northern Flicker

Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus cooperi*

1 in Vegreville area, 1 in Marble Canyon, and 1 in Bow Valley Parkway.

Ssp: *cooperi*

Western Wood-Pewee *Contopus sordidulus*

1 in English Bay, Cold Lake and 2 at Dutch Creek Hoodoos, BC.

Ssp: *veliei*

Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum*

~10 in Cold Lake area, 2 near Kehewin Lake, and 1 in Cottonwood Slough, Jasper.

Monotypic.

Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*

1 in Cottonwood Slough, Jasper. Restricted to foothills and mountain habitats in southwestern Alberta.

Ssp: *campestris*. Previously, when including preceding species, known as Traill's Flycatcher.

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*

Recorded seven days. For an *Empidonax*, easy to identify.

Monotypic.

Hammond's Flycatcher *Empidonax hammondii*

1 at Dutch Creek Hoodoos, BC. In Alberta, the species is only to be found along the Rocky Mountains.

Monotypic.

Dusky Flycatcher *Empidonax oberholseri*

1 in Mule Shoe picnic site, Bow Valley Parkway. Similar in distribution to Hammond's, but also breeds in the Cypress Hills.

Monotypic.

Pacific-slope Flycatcher *Empidonax difficilis*

1 in Sawback picnic site, Bow Valley Parkway.

Ssp: *difficilis*. The split from Cordilleran, *E.occidentalis*, may have been premature, and the two are perhaps better treated as a single species, Western Flycatcher.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

1 in William's Coulee, west of Nanton, and 2 in English Bay, Cold Lake.
Monotypic.

Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya*

1 in Hay Barn Road, Waterton Lakes NP, and 1 along road 884 north of Ralston 28/5.
Ssp: *saya*

Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus*

3 near Kehewin Lake 31/5. This is about as far west this species breeds.
Monotypic.

Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis*

1 at a pond south of Brooks, on the way to Kinbrook Island PP 28/5.
Monotypic.

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*

Quite easily seen in the prairie areas.
Monotypic.

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*

Two seen on 28/5: 1 near Patricia, and 1 along the approach road to Dinosaur PP.
Ssp: *excubitorides*

Cassin's Vireo *Vireo cassinii*

1 in Bow Valley Parkway. In Alberta only to be found in foothills of the Rocky Mountains.
Ssp: *cassinii*

Blue-headed Vireo *Vireo solitarius*

4 in Cold Lake area, and 1 in Whistler Tramway parking area.
Ssp: *solitarius*

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*

Recorded five days, in Two Hills area, Bow Valley Parkway and Inglewood Bird Sanctuary.
Ssp: *swainsoni*. Western and eastern populations may prove to be separate species.

Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*

2 near Kehewin Lake.
Monotypic.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

Encountered in Dinosaur PP, and in Vegreville and Cold Lake areas.
Ssp: *olivaceus*

Gray Jay *Perisoreus canadensis*

Recorded six days: Waterton Lakes NP, Cold Lake area, Banff NP, Peter Lougheed PP and Kootenay NP, BC.
Ssp: *bicolor* or *albescens* in Waterton Lakes NP, elsewhere *albescens*.

Steller's Jay *Cyanocitta stelleri*

Fairly common in Waterton townsite, this area being the eastern limit for the species in Canada.
Ssp: *annectens*

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata*

Surprisingly few seen, with a total of only four individuals in Vegreville and Cold Lake areas.
Ssp: *bromia*

Clark's Nutcracker *Nucifraga columbiana*

1 very confiding individual at the Bow Summit parking area, Banff NP.
Monotypic.

Black-billed Magpie *Pica hudsonica*

Common.

Ssp: *hudsonia*. Split from Old World *P.pica*.

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Common.

Ssp: *hesperis*

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

Common.

Ssp: *principalis*, and possibly *sinuatus*.



Gray Jay



Clark's Nutcracker

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

Abundant in grasslands in the southeastern parts, also 3 in Whistlers, Jasper.

Ssp: *hoyti* in Jasper, elsewhere *leucolaema*.

Purple Martin *Progne subis*

Seen only at and around Cold Lake Marina.

Ssp: *subis*

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

Common.

Monotypic.

Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*

Recorded in Waterton townsite, Lake Louise village and at Dutch Creek Hodoos, BC.

Ssp: nominate *tachycineta*

Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

Quite easily seen in the southern portion of Alberta.

Ssp: *serripennis*

Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia*

Scattered records, and in small numbers.

Ssp: *riparia*

Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Common in the lowlands, one single individual in higher elevations.

Ssp: nominate *pyrrhonota*

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Easily seen.

Ssp: *erythrogaster*

Black-capped Chickadee *Poecile atricapillus*

Recorded in Waterton townsite, Elkwater, Cold Lake area, Jasper and Bow Valley.

Ssp: *septentrionalis*

Mountain Chickadee *Poecile gambeli*

1 in Waterton townsite, 2 in Sawback picnic site, Bow Valley Parkway, 2 in Banff town, and 2 in Sawmill, Peter Loughheed PP.

Ssp: *baileyae*

Boreal Chickadee *Poecile hudsonicus*

2 of this pleasant species at English Bay, Cold Lake.

Ssp: *farleyi*

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*

Recorded six days.

Monotypic.

Rock Wren *Salpinctes obsoletus*

2 at Williams Coulee, west of Nanton, was the only record.

Ssp: *obsoletus*

Northern House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*



Seen in Elkwater, Dinosaur PP and Vegreville area.

Ssp: *parkmani*. Here regarded as a separate species from populations from Mexico and south.

Winter Wren *Troglodytes hiemalis*

1 in Cold Lake PP, and 1 near Kehewin Lake.

Ssp: nominate *hiemalis*. Together with the following species previously treated as conspecific with Old World *T.troglodytes*.

Pacific Wren *Troglodytes pacificus*

2 along Cameron Lake road, Waterton Lakes NP, 2 in Whistler Tramway Parking area, 2 in Johnston Canyon Lower Falls, and 1 in Kananaskis village.

Ssp: *salebrosus*. Split from previous species on basis of distinct vocal differences.

Sedge Wren *Cistothorus platensis*

2 in Ethel Lake, Cold Lake area.

Ssp: *stellaris*. In its vast range in the Americas, probably more than one species is involved.

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*

2 in Elkwater Lake.

Ssp: *laingi*. Western and eastern populations are possibly different species.

American Dipper *Cinclus mexicanus*

1 in Waterton townsite, 1 along Cameron Lake Road, Waterton Lakes NP, and 1 in Marble Canyon, BC.

Ssp: *unicolor*

Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa*

Recorded in Waterton Lakes NP, Cold Lake area, and Marble Canyon, BC.

Ssp: *satrapa*

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*

Recorded eight days, primarily by voice.

Ssp: nominate *calendula*

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis*

1, possibly 2, male at Elkwater Lake. This is as far west as this species reaches, and probably not even each year as its normal western limit is in south-central Saskatchewan. Beware that female birds with Easterns in this area are more likely to be Mountains than Easterns.

Ssp: *sialis*

Mountain Bluebird *Sialia currucoides*

This beautiful bird was recorded eight days.

Monotypic.

Townsend's Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi*

Only 3 seen, and none very good, all in Waterton Lakes NP. Far fewer records than expected.

Monotypic.

Veery *Catharus fuscescens*

3 at Kehewin Lake.

Ssp: should be *levyi*

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

Vocally not uncommon.

Ssp: *incanus* and *swainsonii*

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

2 at different locations near Kehewin Lake.

Ssp: *faxoni*

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*



Common.

Ssp: *propinquus*

Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius*

What a bird!! About a dozen in Waterton Lakes NP, 1 above Lake Louise, 1 Marble Canyon, and 1 Kananaskis.

Ssp: *godfreii*

Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*

2 in Dinosaur PP were the only ones seen.

Ssp: *ruficrissa*

Sage Thrasher *Orescoptes montanus*

1 in Sage Creek, north of Wild Horse. In Canada, the species can only be found in this, the southeasternmost, part of Alberta, and in a small area in southern British Columbia.

Monotypic.

Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*

Only 4 seen, all in Dinosaur PP.

Ssp: *longicauda*

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common, except in the interior of the Rockies.

Introduced.

American Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

1 in Whistlers, Jasper, was the only one seen.

Ssp: *pacificus*

Sprague's Pipit *Anthus spragueii*



2 along Box Springs Road to Suffield (Medicine Hat area). Mission completed!!
Monotypic.

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

Recorded seven days, highest number around 100 in Inglewood Bird Sanctuary.
Ssp: *larifuga*

Tennessee Warbler *Oreothlypis peregrine*

Recorded five days, most commonly seen in Cold Lake area.
Monotypic.

Orange-crowned Warbler *Oreothlypis celata*

1 at Dutch Creek Hoodoos, BC.
Ssp: *orestera*

Nashville Warbler *Oreothlypis ruficapilla*

1 near Kehewin Lake, 1 at Dutch Creek Hoodoos, BC. A rare breeder in Alberta.
Ssp: *ruficapilla* and *ridgwayi* respectively, and the latter may be a separate species.

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*

Quite common.
Ssp: *aestiva* in southeastern Alberta, *rubiginosa* elsewhere.

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*

1 in Cold Lake PP. Alberta is in the western end of the species distribution.
Monotypic.

Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia*

1 in Cold Lake PP.
Monotypic.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*

Fairly common.

Ssp: *coronata*, “Myrtle Warbler” in Vegreville and Cold Lake area, *auduboni*, “Audubon’s Warbler” in the Rockies, BC and Elkwater / Cypress Hills. Formerly regarded as two different species.

Black-throated Green Warbler *Dendroica virens*

3 in Cold Lake PP.

Ssp: *virens*

Townsend’s Warbler *Dendroica townsendi*

Fairly common in the Rockies.

Monotypic.

Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca*

1 in Cold Lake PP. A full adult male in spring is always a treat. Alberta is as far west as this species reaches.

Monotypic.

Palm Warbler *Dendroica palmarum*

1 in Vegreville area, and 1 near Kehewin Lake.

Ssp: *aplmorum*

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*

1 in Bow Valley Parkway 4/6.

Monotypic.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*

1 in Cold Lake PP.

Monotypic.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*

Scattered records.

Monotypic.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

5-6 in Cold Lake area, and 1 near Kehewin Lake.

Ssp: *auriicapilla*

Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis*

2 along Cameron Lake Road, Waterton Lakes NP, and 1 at Moose Lake, Mount Robson PP, BC.

Monotypic.

Connecticut Warbler *Oporornis agilis*

1 in Cold Lake area.

Monotypic.

Mourning Warbler *Oporornis philadelphia*

1 in Cold Lake PP, and 1 at Kehewin Lake.

Monotypic.

MacGillivray’s Warbler *Oporornis tolmiei*

2 in Waterton townsite.

Ssp: *tolmiei*

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

Fairly common in Vegreville and Cold Lake areas, other records were 3 in Dinosaur PP and 2 at Moose Lake, Mount Robson PP, BC.

Ssp: *campicola*

Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla*

4-5 in Marble Canyon, and 1 above Bow Lake.

Ssp: *pileolata*

Canada Warbler *Wilsonia canadensis*

1 in Cold Lake PP.

Monotypic.

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana*



1 in Waterton townsite, and 1 in Elkwater.

Monotypic.

Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus*

1 in William's Coulee, west of Nanton, and 6-7 in Dinosaur PP.

Ssp: *arcticus*

Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerine*

Common.

Ssp: *arizonae*

Clay-colored Sparrow *Spizella pallida*

Fairly common in Dinosaur PP, and in Vegreville and Cold Lake areas.

Monotypic.

Timberline Sparrow *Spizella taverneri*

3 near Icefields Parkway Center.

Monotypic. Usually treated as a ssp of Brewer's Sparrow, *S.breweri*, but, apart from differences in voice and morphology, occurs only at high elevations, and is isolated from lowland *breweri*.

Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetus gramineus*

Common in grasslands of the south, also seen in Dinosaur PP and Dutch Creek Hoodoos.

Ssp: *confinis*

Lark Bunting *Calamospiza melanocorus*

Very common in Onefour and Wild Horse areas.

Monotypic.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*

Very common in the prairies.

Ssp: *nevadensis*

Lark Sparrow *Condestes grammacus*

Common in Dinosaur PP, up to 5 at Bellis Lake, and 1 Dutch Creek Hoodoos.

Ssp: *strigatus*



Lark Sparrow



Vesper Sparrow – more often than not were the conspicuous rufous lesser covers clearly visible on perched birds.

Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum*

5 or 6 along Box Springs Road to Suffield (Medicine Hat area). In Canada, occurs only in the southeast of Alberta.

Ssp: *perpallidus*

Baird's Sparrow *Ammodramus bairdii*

1 in Cypress Hills above Elkwater was the only record of this much-desired species.

Monotypic.

LeConte's Sparrow *Ammodramus leconteii*

2 in Two Hills area, and 2 in Cold Lake area.

Monotypic.

Nelson's Sparrow *Ammodramus nelson*

1 in Ethel Lake, Cold Lake area.

Ssp: *nelsoni*

Slate-colored Fox Sparrow *Passerella schistacea*

2 above Bow Lake.

Ssp: *altivagans*. This species is the result of a recent four-way split of the Fox Sparrow, *P. iliaca*, which is the form found in boreal forests of northern Alberta.

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*

Only 3 seen, all in Cold Lake area.

Ssp: *melodia*

Lincolns's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii*

1 in Vegreville area, and 1 in Ethel Lake, Cold Lake area.

Ssp: *lincolnii*

Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana*

Like preceding species, 1 in Vegreville area, and 1 in Ethel Lake, Cold Lake area.

Ssp: *ericrypta*

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*

Several in Vegreville and Cold Lake areas.

Monotypic.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Readily seen in Rocky Mountains and Elkwater.

Ssp: *oriantha* and probably also *gambelii*.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*

Easily seen, although only one record of the "Pink-sided" form, in Elkwater village.

Subspecies are divided into five major groups, out of which three can be, and was, seen in Alberta. In The Rockies, *shufeldti* "Oregon" were the ones seen, in Elkwater were the "Pink-sided" *mearnsi*, and in Vegreville and Cold Lake areas they were *hyemalis* "Slate-colored".



"Oregon Junco"



LeConte's Sparrow

McCown's Longspur *Rhynchophanes mccownii*

5 in Wild Horse area were the only ones seen. A grassland speciality of the southeast.

Monotypic.

Chestnut-collared Longspur *Calcarius ornatus*

Fairly common to common in the prairies. The males are stunning!

Monotypic.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

A total of 10 in the Vegreville and Cold Lake areas, and 1 Bow Valley Parkway.

Monotypic.

Black-headed Grosbeak *Pheucticus melanocephalus*

5 in Waterton townsite. Very local in southernmost Alberta.

Ssp: *melanocephalus*

Lazuli Bunting *Passerina amoena*

1 male Dutch Creek Hoodoos.

Monotypic.

Bobolink *Dolichonic orizyvorus*

3 in Mountain View and 4 in Two Hills area. Very local in Alberta.
Monotypic.

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*

Common.
Ssp: *arctolegus*

Western Meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta*

Common in the southern parts.
Ssp: *neglecta*

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*

Common in lowland wetlands.
Monotypic.

Brewer's Blackbird *Euphagus cyanocephalus*

Common.
Ssp: *brewsteri*

Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula*

Probably overlooked since very few seen: singles during driving from Elkwater to Dinosaur PP, and 1 in Cold Lake area.
Ssp: *versicolor*

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*

Common.
Ssp: *artemisiae*

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*

3 in Dinosaur PP, and 3 in Vegreville area.
Monotypic.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte tephrocotis*

2 on Whistlers. A high-altitude breeder.
Ssp: *tephrocotis*

Purple Finch *Carpodacus purpureus*

A pair in Beaver Crossing near Cold Lake.
Ssp: nominate *purpureus*

Cassin's Finch *Carpodacus cassinii*

5 in Waterton townsite. A western species, southwestern Alberta is the eastern limit of its distribution.
Ssp: *vinifer*

House Finch *Carpodacus mexicanus*

2 in Inglewood Bird Sanctuary. Expanding its distribution in southern Alberta.
Ssp: *frontalis*

White-winged Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*

1 in Cold Lake PP.
Ssp: *leucoptera*

Pine Siskin *Carduelis pinus*

Common in coniferous forests of The Rockies, many also seen in Elkwater.
Ssp: *vagans*

American Goldfinch *Carduelis tristis*

Recorded six days, invariably at lower elevations.
Ssp: *pallida*

Evening Grosbeak *Coccothraustes vespertinus*



1 in Beaver Crossing, near Cold Lake. What a stunner!!
Ssp: *vespertinus*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Seen in towns and villages.

Introduced.



Cottonwood Slough, Jasper NP

Mammals

Mountain Cottontail *Sylvilagus nuttallii*

1 Waterton Lakes NP.

Snowshoe Hare *Lepus americanus*

1 near Kehewin Lake, also seen in The Rockies.

White-tailed Jackrabbit *Lepus townsendii*

Singles in the prairies.

American Pika *Ochotona princeps*

Heard on Whistlers.

Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*

Many observed.



Least Chipmunk



Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel

Least Chipmunk *Tamias minimus*

1 in Bow Summit parking area.

Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus lateralis*

Half a dozen in The Rockies.

Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*

1 in Cold Lake Marina.

Franklin's Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus franklinii*

1 in Vegreville area.

Columbian Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus columbianus*

Recorded four days in The Rockies.

Hoary Marmot *Marmota caligata*

3 on Whistlers.

American Beaver *Castor canadensis*

2 in Waterton Lakes NP, and 2 in Cold Lake PP.

Common Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus*

3 in Mountain View, and 1 in Vegreville area.

Gray Wolf *Canis lupus*

1 in Waterton Lakes NP.



Gray Wolf



Coyote

Coyote *Canis latrans*

A total of four seen.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

1 in Cold Lake area.

Puma *Puma concolor*



2 in southwestern Alberta.

Black Bear *Ursus americanus*

A dozen seen in total.

Grizzly Bear *Ursus arctos*
1 in Waterton Lakes NP.



Grizzly Bear



Black Bear

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*
Common.

Mule Deer *Odocoileus hemionus*

Recorded six days, highest daily count about 30 (during the drive from Waterton to Elkwater).

Moose *Alces alces*

1 in Waterton Lakes NP, 1 in Marble Canyon, and one more (on 4/6) but where has slipped my mind.



Moose



Elk

Elk *Cervus elaphus*
Recorded seven days.

American Bison *Bison bison*
~20 (fenced-in) on the prairies between Mountain View and Milk River.

Bighorn Sheep *Ovis canadensis*
2 in Waterton Lakes NP, and about 10 in Jasper NP.

Pronghorn *Antilocapra americana*
Common in the grasslands.

Mountain Goat *Oreamnos americanus*
2 along Icefields Parkway.



Bighorn Sheep



Mountain Goat



Morning in Waterton Lakes NP, May 26.



Morning in Elkwater, May 28.