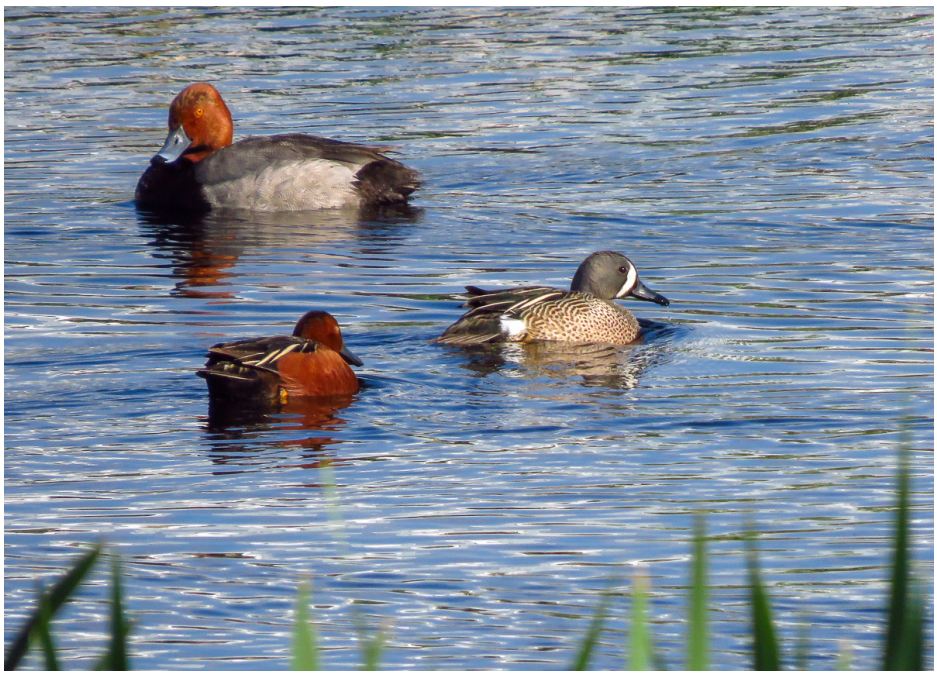
Eagle-Eye Tours



Alberta Birds and Dinosaurs Trip Report (May 26 - 29, 2023)

Link: Alberta Birds and Dinosaurs Trip Report (May 26 - 29, 2023)

Our four-day tour of Alberta birds and dinosaurs was an unmitigated success! We enjoyed a tour at the Royal Tyrrell Museum and beautiful, consistent sunny days at just the right temperature - and no wind, the better to hear the spring songs of hundreds of brightly coloured birds, singing their heart out for all to hear… We began the tour with a veritable bird festival, travelling east from Calgary, and exclaiming over 52 species viewed at Bruce Lake in just over an hour! Mother nature put on a show for us, and with three guides and three telescopes, our clients had unparalleled opportunities to view some spectacular birds in breeding plumage.



We viewed Redhead, Cinnamon Teal and Blue-winged Teal at the same time © A Buck



American Avocet © A Buck

We then continued east across the prairies, until a vast gulf opened up in front of our vans and we descended into the endlessly fascinating Badlands. The jewel in the crown of this ecosystem is the Red Deer river, still carving its way into the sedimentary rock, gaily bordered with a ribbon of bright green cottonwoods and other bird friendly trees and shrubs.



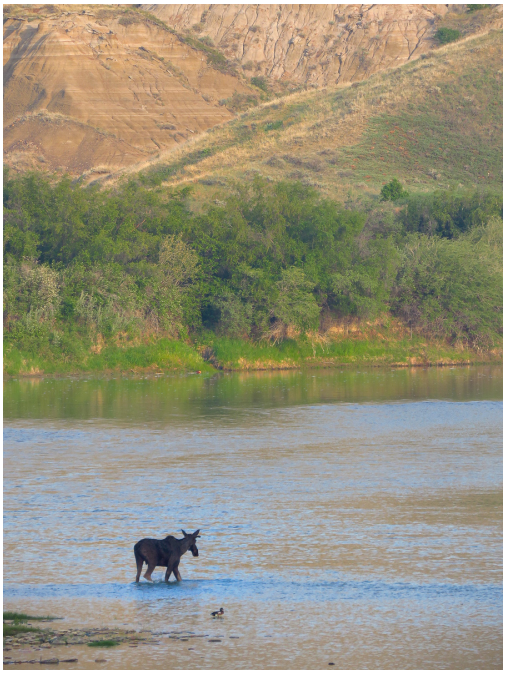
Overlooking the Red Deer River and Badlands © B Palmer



Birding in the Alberta badlands © Gareth Thomson



Birding in the cottonwoods © Gareth Thomson



Moose going for a swim © A Buck

Days two and three found us leapfrogging around eastern Alberta, viewing some superb prairie species. We were in the backyard of lead guide and Birds Canada's Jody Allair, who demonstrating all the hallmarks of an excellent Eagle-Eye guide: Making birds accessible and interesting to clients. Check. Sharp eyes and ears. Check. Seemingly endless bird knowledge, passion for nature and for conservation, and great sense of humour. Check, check, and check!



Alberta's short grass prairie: an endangered ecosystem with its own subtle and haunting beauty © Gareth Thomson



Guide Gavin McKinnon evokes yet another 'WOW!' from a client © Gareth Thomson

We saw many of the expected birds - plus some oddities! An out-of-place Olive-sided Flycatcher, who accompanied our riverside lunch in Dinosaur Provincial Park. A spectacular flyover of two White-winged Scoters, not normally found here in migration. Bird guide talent Gavin McKinnon found us two Red-necked Phalaropes bouncing on the waves of a local slough, taking on valuable fuel for their

flight to their nesting grounds in the high Arctic.



Wilson's Phalarope © A Buck

A tree-loving Black-crowned Night Heron described confused figure-of-eight circles over our heads as we peered up at it from our spot in the middle of hundreds of hectares of endless short grass prairie…



This Black-Crowned Night Heron seemed a little lost in the prairies © A Buck

Our clients were promised dinosaurs as well as birds, and we delivered with a tour of the Royal

Tyrrell Museum, and a wonderful hike that mashed together vibrant living birds and fascinating – and extinct - dinosaurs at nearby Horsethief Canyon.



A short wander into the endlessly interesting Badlands © Gareth Thomson



A client gets up close and personal with a meat-eating Theropod © Gareth Thomson



Guide Jody Allair considering a new career in dentistry © Gareth Thomson

We enjoyed a memorable dinner together at the Last chance Saloon in beautiful Wayne Alberta (population 27), accessible only by 11 bridges spanning the Rosebud River. Several of us cooked our own steaks, glancing over to the elegance Lark Sparrow scratching in the dirt just feet away.



Lark Sparrow © A Buck

The thing that gives me the most satisfaction as an Eagle-Eye Tours guide is knowing that we are able to show our clients an authentically good time - and I feel we achieved that. I relish all the happy murmurs of appreciation in the van as we drive to the next birding spot – but my favourite

indicator is the involuntary “WOW!” as a client put their eyes to our birding scope and sees a view filled with, say, a spectacular orange Baltimore Oriole piping away in the top of a cottonwood. Or a male Mountain bluebird, bluer than even the bluest Alberta sky…



Guides Gavin McKinnon, Jody Allair, Gareth Thomson



EET AB Birds and Dinos group 2023