



Alberta Birds & Dinosaurs Trip Report (May 27 - 31, 2025)

[Link: Alberta Birds & Dinosaurs Trip Report \(May 27 - 31, 2025\)](#)

Day 1 - May 27

We gathered at the Best Western Freeport Inn, excited to meet our fellow birders and begin our journey. That evening, we enjoyed a warm, welcoming meal at the hotel restaurant, sharing stories and expectations for the days ahead.

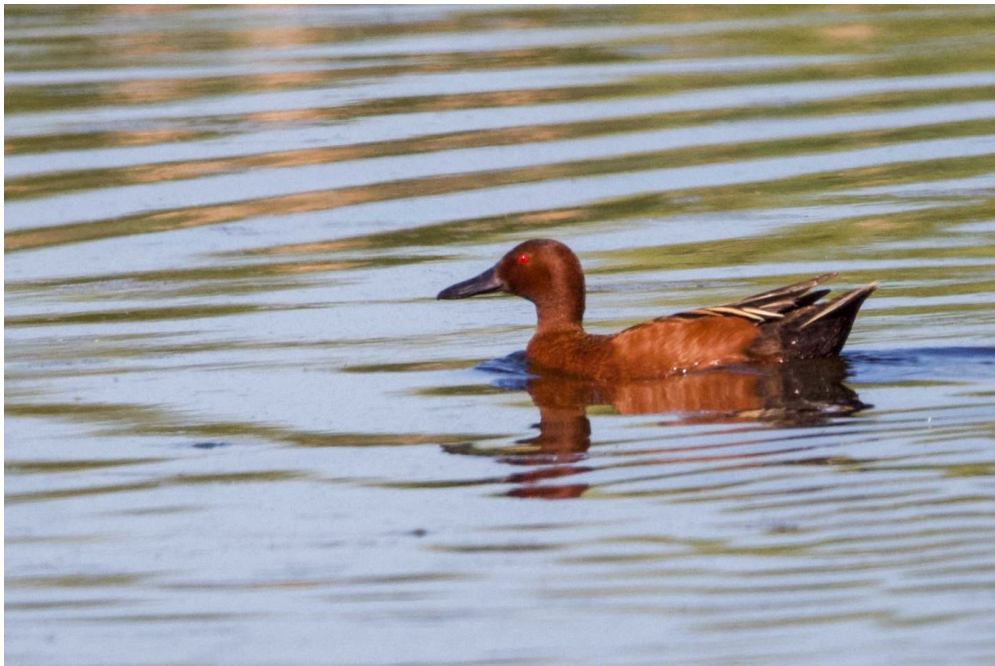
Day 2 - May 28 - Irricana Sloughs

After a quick breakfast, we loaded our gear and set out from Calgary. Our first destination was Bruce Lake, where we were greeted by a lively mix of waterfowl—teals, shovelers, and coots among them. The marshes were alive with the calls of Soras and the sight of Black Terns gliding over the water. It was a wonderful introduction to the region's rich wetland habitats.



Yellow-headed Blackbird © Carol Reid

From Bruce Lake, we continued past the Irricana Sloughs, where we ticked off all the grebe species and were treated to sightings of American White Pelicans soaring overhead and Trumpeter Swans elegantly drifting on the water. Shorebirds added their voices to the morning, with Willets and Marbled Godwits calling from the mudflats.



Cinnamon Teal © Josh Dewitt

A rest stop in Beiseker offered a chance to stretch our legs and reflect on the morning's highlights. Soon, we arrived at Horseshoe Canyon, where we enjoyed a picnic lunch among the dramatic

badlands scenery. A pair of Mountain Bluebirds captured our attention, ferrying insects to a nest box—a delightful sight that reminded us of the wonders of breeding season. Some of the group ventured into the canyon itself, discovering Least Flycatchers calling from the shrubs, Rock Wrens hopping along the rock faces, and even fragments of fossils and petrified wood.



Fossil fragment © Jody Allair



Mountain Bluebird © Carol Reid

Those who stayed at the rim were rewarded with views of Vesper and Chipping Sparrows, a Spotted Towhee in full song, and a couple Say's Phoebes.



Horseshoe Canyon © Josh Dewitt

Later, at Horse Thief Canyon, we watched Violet-green Swallows flit gracefully overhead and scoped out a potential Prairie Falcon nest, adding a sense of mystery to the day's adventures. We wrapped up our day's birding with a hearty meal at Happy Belly, sharing laughs and stories from the field. To top it off, a Mountain Cottontail was waiting to greet us back at the hotel—a perfect ending to an eventful day.

Day 3 - May 29 - Prairies and Dinosaur Park

Following breakfast, we departed Drumheller and headed onto the open prairies, where wildlife and wide-open skies awaited us. Pronghorns, some in small bachelor groups and others alone, dotted the landscape. As we approached Cessford, the prairie came alive with birdlife. At our first stop, Upland Sandpipers posed on fenceposts while a feisty Marbled Godwit chased a Ferruginous Hawk away from its nest site. Nearby, a Swainson's Hawk watched intently as an American Badger rummaged through ground squirrel burrows, and a Long-billed Curlew passed overhead. Continuing down the road, we found Chestnut-collared Longspurs displaying on the grasslands, their songs floating on the wind. A pair of Long-billed Curlews hunted insects, giving us a close look at their elegant bills. The highlight of the morning was a brief but thrilling glimpse of a Sprague's Pipit, its cryptic plumage blending perfectly with the prairie.



Chestnut-collared Longspur

Next, we headed south to Dinosaur Provincial Park for a picnic lunch. Among the cottonwoods, Western Wood-Pewee called, Pine Siskins hopped along the gravel road, and the call of a Northern House Wren carried from a nearby bush. As we walked through the badlands, saw a Prairie Rattlesnake moving close to the trail, and we observed it from a safe distance before turning around and left it undisturbed.



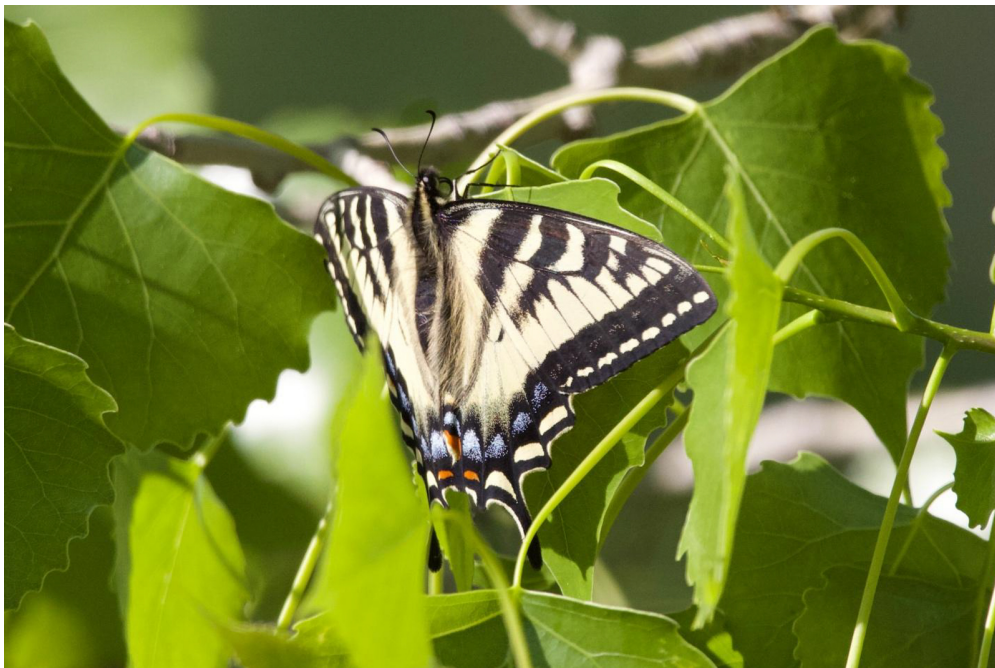
Prairie Rattlesnake © Josh Dewitt

Prairie Rattlesnake © Josh Dewitt A short stop at an in situ hadrosaur skeleton brought the

prehistoric landscape to life, reminding us of the park's unique geological history. Later, we enjoyed a meal at the Last Chance Saloon, where birds and history mingled in an unforgettable setting.

Day 4 - May 30 - McMullen Island and The Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology

After breakfast and packing up, we headed to McMullen Island, eager to explore its riparian forests. Black-capped Chickadees flitted among the trees, while all the local woodpecker species—including nesting Pileateds and shy Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers—made appearances. A Western Wood-Pewee gave us a brief but memorable show, and a White-breasted Nuthatch made a quick appearance as well. Along the river, an Osprey hunted overhead, and a Canadian Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly added a dash of color to the forest. As we left, a Cooper's Hawk displayed dramatically overhead—a fitting farewell to this special place.



Canadian Tiger Swallowtail © Josh Dewitt

Our final destination was the Royal Tyrrell Museum, where paleontologist Don Henderson led us on an enthralling behind-the-scenes tour. We learned how fossils are excavated, prepared, and displayed—truly a window into Alberta's prehistoric past. Afterward, we roamed the museum's galleries, marveling at the diversity of creatures that once roamed these lands.



Don showing the group a Tyrannosaur skeleton © Josh Dewitt



Moosaur skeleton © Jody Allair

Before leaving Drumheller, we made a last birding stop at Orkney Viewpoint, soaking in the valley's grandeur. Common Mergansers, Mallards, and Gadwalls bobbed on the river before scattering at the approach of a Bald Eagle—a dramatic end to our birding adventure.



Our group

We then returned to Calgary for a final meal together, celebrating the camaraderie, discoveries, and memories that made this trip unforgettable. [Alberta Birds and Dinosaurs Tour \(May 27-31, 2025\)](#)
[eBird list](#)