



Ultimate British Columbia: Boreal Extension Trip Report 2025

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For our 2025 Ultimate BC: Boreal Tour, our group encountered a solid 94 species. Although smoky conditions from the regional fires hampered our species total, we made up for it with quality, with many of the most sought-after birds being seen. Highlights included a very cooperative Rock Ptarmigan, excellent views of the notoriously skulky Connecticut and Mourning Warblers, a great group of Black-throated Green Warblers, and a very exciting find of five Bar-Tailed Godwits, well out of range on our inland tour. With many lifers and first regional sightings, this was a trip to remember!

7 June

Taking advantage of the good weather, we headed to Pink Mountain on our first day. After an early start, we arrived at our first rest stop before making our way up the mountain road. Though few, singing birds including Yellow-Rumped Warbler and Pine Siskin, alongside Merlin, Black-Billed Magpies, and Common Ravens were a sign of things to come. After venturing forward onto Pink Mountain Road, we made a stop to try for Connecticut Warbler. We initially heard plentiful Least Flycatcher and Warbling Vireo but were soon rewarded with additional species including Ovenbird and Tennessee Warbler. After walking down the road a short way, we heard the distinctive song of a Connecticut Warbler! A short wait proved successful, providing excellent—if brief—views of this often-difficult bird.



Connecticut Warbler © Blair Dudeck

Moving forward, we headed up the mountain, scanning for birds along the way. Our efforts were rewarded with new birds, most notably a Townsend's Solitaire that provided good views as it flew along the roadside. As we approached the treeline we discovered a Dusky Grouse, displaying proudly amongst the few remaining spruce on the upper slope. This very trusting bird provided excellent photo opportunities and great chance to observe and learn his display and song.



Birding on Pink Mountain © Robyn Bowles



Pink Mountain © Blair Dudeck



Dusky Grouse © Blair Dudeck



Rock Ptarmigan © Blair Dudeck

Arriving near the top, we finally stopped to try our luck at finding one of our primary targets for the trip: Rock Ptarmigan. After sifting through the rocks and alpine flora, we were soon met with success! Another obliging bird, everyone on the tour were rewarded with an excellent photo opportunity and terrific views of a phenomenal lifer. Further searching yielded a few additional bird species such as Dark-Eyed Junco and Horned Lark and local wildlife including a lone Least Chipmunk and several Hoary Marmot.



Horned Lark © Blair Dudeck

After a picnic lunch, we began our trek down the mountain, stopping along the way at promising sites. The heat of the day put a damper on the birding, but we were able to pick up a few additional species including singing Swainson's Thrush and the beautiful Black-and-White Warbler. All in all, a very successful day!



Hoary Marmot © Blair Dudeck

June 8

For our second day of birding, we started with Beatton Provincial Park, an excellent location for eastern warblers, a few other eastern specialties, and a mix of water birds. After leaving our vehicles, we were met with the song of several Clay-Coloured Sparrows, followed shortly by Rose-Breasted Grosbeak. A beautiful male Baltimore Oriole provided exceptional views. Further along, we were greeted by a multitude of singing Ovenbird and Northern Waterthrush, alongside a handful of Black-and-White and other warblers.



Canada Warbler © Blair Dudeck

Stopping at the shore of Charlie Lake, we scanned the shoreline and water, catching glimpses of Olive-Sided Flycatcher, distant Franklin's Gull, and a nice group of Barrow's Goldeneye. We soon moved on down the shoreline and were greeted by a singing Mourning Warbler that indulged us with brief appearances along the forest's edge. Further on, we were greeted by the song of another trip target: a Canada Warbler that after a furtive first few minutes, treated us with frequent bouts of song out in the open, providing another great photo opportunity.



Black Spruce forest © Blair Dudeck

Spurred on by our success, we ventured to a small clearing in the hopes of finding a few more boreal specialties. We were pleased to find a terrific show of woodpeckers, with three Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker and two American Three-Toed Woodpecker making an appearance and providing great photo opportunities for the group. Rounding out our visit were several Western Tanager and a single cooperative Blue-Headed Vireo.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker © Blair Dudeck

After another picnic lunch, we headed to the famed Big Bam Road in Taylor to search for a few more eastern specialties. Following the beautiful cottonwood path, we were treated to good views of Northern Waterthrush and Hairy Woodpecker. Further along we met with our targets: a group of Black-Throated Green Warblers and a single singing Eastern Phoebe, more great additions to an already successful day. After this, we headed for some rest and dinner before visiting the south end of Charlie Lake, where we observed several firsts for our trip, including Blue-Winged Teal, Wilson's Snipe, and Common Grackle. A lovely end to another good day of birding.



Blue-winged Teal © Blair Dudeck

June 9

For our final day, fires south of Dawson Creek scuttled our plan to visit a few sites in the vicinity of Swan Lake. We elected instead to visit alternative sites to the north. This decision would soon prove fortuitous. Arriving at McQueen Slough, we were greeted with the now-familiar sounds of Clay-Coloured Sparrow and Least Flycatcher. Moving towards the boardwalk produced singing Common Yellowthroat and Swamp Sparrow alongside a good collection of dabbling ducks and Trumpeter Swan. Venturing to a better vantage-point, we caught tantalizing glimpses of what proved to be another highlight for the trip. On the far shore was a group of five godwits showing extensive brick-red colouration. We continued along the shore and encountered good views of Franklin's Gull, a duo of Northern Harrier, and a trio of Wilson's Phalarope. Before long, we were treated to wonderful close-up views of our target: FIVE Bar-Tailed Godwit! A terrific find for a day that started with concessions.



Bar-tailed Godwit © Blair Dudeck



Bar-tailed Godwit © Blair Dudeck

To cap off our day, we visited Lakeview Marsh and Donaldson Farm. At these sites, we observed several Black Terns whirling over the water, a pair of Sandhill Cranes, and an Eared Grebe, more good birds for an already great day.

June 10

For the tour's final day, our hopes of revisiting Beatton Provincial Park to uncover a few remaining passerines were dashed by heavy smoke, but it was not enough to put a damper on the success that we'd enjoyed over the preceding days. Despite a short tour and forest fires, we'd been very successful in uncovering not just the typical birds of the Peace River, but many of its specialties and a genuine rarity. While there is surely more to discover in this beautiful region, our adventure was certainly a success.



Our group 2025

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