Eagle-Eye Tours



Manitoba Owls Trip Report (Mar 3 - 7, 2026)

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Day 1 – March 3rd

We met with the group and went over the plan for the trip; we quickly got acquainted over dinner. Following dinner, we had a presentation from Jim Duncan about his work with Great Grey Owls, and were joined by his educational bird, Oska.

Day 2 – March 4th

Our day started with a drive down to the town of Oak Bluff, where we had seen a Snowy Owl with previous groups. After a little driving, we found one perched atop a sign along the highway. After some quick observation we headed off to find some more.



Snowy Owl © Mitch Doucet

Soon after, we were able to get eyes on two more, one Snowy owl was perched on a railroad crossing sign, the other on a more naturalistic perch, a large tree. The latter bird was most likely a young male, as its heavy barring was giving way to more traditional plain white on the breast area.



Snowy Owl © Mitch Doucet

With our fill of Snowy Owls, we made our way back towards Winnipeg, where we stopped briefly at a besting pair of Bald Eagles. The female gave great looks as she watched over the nest, while the male sat close by keeping a watchful eye. Following this, we headed over to the main entrance to

Fort Whyte Alive for a rest stop, to look at the gift shop and observe the bison. Just before leaving, we were seen off by a trio of friendly Black-billed Magpies who posed very nicely for us in the parking lot.



Bald Eagle © Mitch Doucet

We then went over to St. Vital Park, where we enjoyed a filling lunch, after which we checked the local Screech-Owl roost. With nobody home, we moved on to Harris Park in hopes of spotting the resident Barred Owl. While we were unsuccessful this time around, we managed to get excellent views of a Red-bellied Woodpecker.



Red-bellied Woodpecker © Mitch Doucet

Following this, we made a visit to a resident Great Horned Owl pair along Bunn's Creek. The female was doing a fair amount of shifting, indicating she some owlets she was keeping warm below. The father sat close by, keeping a watchful eye on us while pretending to sleep.



Great Horned Owl © Mitch Doucet.

After this we made our way back towards the hotel, and then had dinner.

Day 3 – March 5th

The night before, we received word of a rare Townsend's Solitaire visiting a birder's backyard in Winnipeg. With that in mind, we adjusted our itinerary to try for this unexpected highlight and were rewarded with excellent views within just 30 minutes.



Townsend's Solitaire © José M. Ordax

After breakfast, we started our birding day along road 317, where we were greeted with our first Northern Hawk Owl. The same bird seen on earlier tours, this owl was hunting along a clear-cut area adjacent to an open field.



Northern Hawk Owl © Mitch Doucet

Moving on up Maple Creek Road, we unfortunately weren't able to spot any owls, though we had some great views of Sharp-tailed Grouse perched in trees along the road. We ended this route with a quick stop at a cattle farm, which was absolutely teeming with Black-billed Magpies, with a handful

of European Starlings thrown in for good measure. From here we made a quick stop at a set of feeders in Silver Falls, where Evening Grosbeaks, Black-capped Chickadees, and Blue Jays were present. Just before leaving we got a brief glimpse of a Red-breasted Nuthatch as well. We made our way up Maskwa Road, but things were relatively quiet there. We did however spot our second Hawk Owl just past the river, being mobbed by a Black-capped Chickadee, and had quick views of a Bald Eagle and North American River Otter before we stopped for lunch. From Powerview we took a drive up Wendigo Road and then down to Pinawa, though things were quiet, no doubt due to the increasing wind.

Day 4 – March 6th

Starting early, we filled up on breakfast before making our way up to Grindstone Provincial Park. Things proved to be fairly quiet here, though the evidence of two boreal woodpeckers were clear. Black-backed and Three-toed Woodpeckers can be seen here, and the obvious “scaling” where they flake the bark of the conifer trees to find tasty insect beneath was seen on many of the trees we passed by. Making our way down south to Hecla Island, we were surprised to see a lone Meadow Vole sitting on the ice of Grassy Narrows Marsh. A risky manoeuvre! On the island we cruised the loop of roads in search of boreal birds. We could see many ravens and magpies out on the ice of Lake Winnipeg, feasting on the leftovers from ice fishers. Some of us also had a great view of a Bald Eagle.



Bald Eagle © Mitch Doucet

After a quick lunch stop at the northern point of the island, we made our way down to North Shore Road. Here we took a little walk, and were rewarded with views of several White-tailed Deer, and a very cooperative Black-billed Magpie and eventually three Boreal Chickadees! These shy birds are much harder to see then their Black-capped relatives, as they tend to be fairly quiet and stick to the dense inner branches of conifer trees. We were happy to get views of these, even if they were very quick!



Black-billed Magpie © Mitch Doucet

With things being quiet up in the boreal, we decided to start making our way to Oak Hammock Marsh. We were welcomed by the staff here, who were elated to have 14 visitors show up on such a quiet day. We spent a couple hours learning about the marsh, the conservation work they do here, and enjoying their wonderful, newly renovated museum. We weren't done birding though! A set of feeders provided some entertainment, with dozens of Redpolls present, and two overwintering Red-winged Blackbirds. These last two were young males, with squeaky voices and plumage that was transitioning from mottled juvenile browns to the classic all black.



Redpoll © José M. Ordax

Satisfied with our birding for the day, we headed back to the hotel and had our last dinner.

Day 5 – March 7th

After a fantastic trip, full of great memories and great birds, everyone headed home.



Our group

Manitoba Owls species list (Mar 3 - 7, 2026)