



Manitoba Owls Trip Report March 2-6, 2022

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Day 1 - The first Manitoba Eagle-Eye Tours trip in two years started with a get-together in Winnipeg. During this get-together we discussed the plan of action for the coming days and we also discussed COVID-19 protocol. Then we drove to the nearby Hilton Hotel for dinner. Day 2 - We set off in two roomy buses before 8 a.m., heading first to the Rosser area on the northwestern outskirts of Winnipeg, to look for Gray Partridge, Black-billed Magpie, White-tailed Jackrabbit and Eastern Cottontail. We found all our targets without difficulty. It was -27°C (-16°F) and the heaters in the buses were working overtime to keep the vehicles comfortable, but could not prevent the windows from fogging up.



A cold day searching for owls

We then turned north to Oak Hammock Marsh, where we enjoyed coffee and snacks at the Interpretive Centre. Two Sharp-tailed Grouse were seen en route. Nearby we saw some Snow Buntings at a feeder. We now drove south to Oak Bluff, spotting our first Snowy Owls - an adult male and two young females - in the area near the Wilkes Sewage Lagoons. They proved to be quite confiding, allowing for close views and photo opportunities. At Oak Bluff, Bohemian Waxwings were added to the list.



Snowy Owl © Alan Curry



Snowy Owl © Alan Curry

Driving southwest to Brunkild we saw more Snowy Owls and some Gray Partridges, then turning east towards Domain more Snowies, Partridges and Snow Buntings. We had a rather late lunch at Tim Horton's, then drove to the Fraser's Grove Park area in northwest Winnipeg. Here the hoped-for Eastern Screech-Owl showed itself in its roosting hole. It took a bit of slogging through deep snow to get close views. A feeder in the area hosted a female Northern Cardinal - a rather rare bird in Manitoba. Continuing north, we spotted a buteo on a lamp post at the junction of Hwy. 59 and the North Perimeter Highway. It was rather distant, in poor light, and could not be positively identified. The remainder of the drive to Powerview/Pine Falls - the location of our accommodations for the night - was quiet. Before heading to the hotel we visited the Broadlands area, in the hopes of seeing some Great Grays, but no luck. Two budding Ruffed Grouse were a small consolation. Day 3 - Before breakfast we returned to the Broadlands area - still no Great Grays, but nine lekking Sharp-tailed Grouse (plus six others nearby in trees) were enjoyed by all. On the way back to the hotel feeders in the small town of St. Georges hosted Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Grosbeaks and redpolls, including a few Hoaries.



Hoary Redpoll © Alan Curry



Common Redpoll © Alan Curry



Pine Grosbeak © Alan

Curry After breakfast we drove southeast along Hwy. 11, where we found our first Great Gray near Silver Falls. It was a 'life bird' for most in the group and also the most-wanted bird for many. Lots of photos were taken. Then we drove south on Maple Creek Road, a stretch that had been productive for northern owls over the years. We were not disappointed: two more Great Grays, two Northern Hawk-Owls, a Pileated Woodpecker, a Northern Shrike and a party of Snow Buntings at a cattle feedlot, plus two Coyotes, provided the entertainment. Cameras were clicking again.



Great Gray Owl © Alan Curry

East of Lac du Bonnet we spent time at a feeder area along Henry Bellin Road. Great looks at Pine and Evening Grosbeaks and both species of redpoll, plus a Canada Jay. Here we also ate our bagged lunches. Afterwards we headed south, picking up more Canada Jays along Power Road and a Pine

Siskin along Homestead Road east of Seven Sisters Falls.



Evening Grosbeak © Alan Curry



Evening Grosbeak © Alan Curry

We returned to Powerview via Maple Creek Road, where we added one new Great Gray Owl. Finally, we made a stop at the hydro dam on the Winnipeg River at Powerview and saw a distant party of eight Common Goldeneyes and a River Otter in open water below the dam. Dinner at the hotel was a

pleasant affair, after a very successful day. Weather today had been a bit milder than the previous day, with light wind, making for excellent viewing conditions.



Great Gray Owl © Danzhu Xu



Great Gray Owl in flight © Danzhu Xu

Day 4 - After breakfast and loading the buses, we departed at 8:20 a.m. and returned to Maple Creek Road. We saw most of the same owls as the previous day, added another hawk-owl near Great Falls,

more sharptails, Coyotes, a shrike, then a new Great Gray along Hwy. 11 near the junction with PR. 408. The Elma area gave us a nice variety of species, but nothing new, while at Vivian nine Wild Turkeys were seen in a yard. Looping north via Hwy. 59, we now got better looks at the buteo we spotted on the 3rd - certainly a roughleg. One of the fieldmarks that had confused us earlier was the all-dark tail. A quick visit to Fraser's Grove Park resulted in the same Screech-Owl as before. Finally, returning the Hampton Inn in Winnipeg, we saw another roughleg along the North Perimeter Highway. The weather today had cooperated: from - 5°C to -2°C (28 to 31 F), with light winds. This was a very successful tour. We found most of the target birds, had great photo opportunities, enjoyed each others company and encountered no difficulties. Many thanks to all for making this tour such a success. Ken and Rudolf hope to see you again in the future. Rudolf Koes and Ken De



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participants for sharing their spectacular images!

Thank you to our tour