



Manitoba Owls Trip Report March 6 -10, 2022

[Link: Manitoba Owls Trip Report March 6 -10, 2022](#)

Day 1 - The group met in the lobby of the Hampton Inn by Hilton at 6:30 p.m. A couple people were arriving late, so they missed the meeting and the dinner afterwards. Rudolf and Ken discussed the plans for the coming days, after which we visited the nearby Greenwood Inn for dinner. Day 2 - We set off before 8 a.m. and headed for the Rosser area in northwest Winnipeg, where we soon found our target species: Gray Partridge and Black-billed Magpie. Both White-tailed Jackrabbits and Eastern Cottontails were also here. Near Oak Hammock Marsh we found a number of Snow Buntings at a reliable feeder, added a few more partridges to the day's list and saw our first Snowy Owl, followed by two more Snowy Owls along Winnipeg's West Perimeter Highway. Numerous snow dump trucks passing at close range made stopping for them a bit hazardous, so we continued to Oak Bluff. Here we enjoyed watching and photographing a flock of Bohemian waxwings.



Gray Partridge



Bohemian Waxwing © Noelle Piron

Continuing southwest, we added more partridges, more Snowy Owls, a dark morph Rough-legged Hawk and the first Horned Larks of the trip. Still more Snowy Owls were added - and photographed - between Brunkild and Domain. One pure white male at Domain was probably admired the most by the group. Our total for the day was 20 Snowies, indicating that it was a great year for observing this species. Also noteworthy was how confiding the birds were. We did not approach too closely,

nor did we linger long, but in other years Snowies had often been easily spooked.



Snowy Owl - pure white male



Snowy Owl

At St. Norbert a perched Bald Eagle was being pestered by two magpies. Nearby three Wild Turkeys strolled on a driveway. After lunch at Tim Horton's, we made our way to the Fraser's Grove Park area of East Kildonan in northeast Winnipeg. We had no luck finding Northern Cardinal, but did locate an Eastern Screech-Owl, thanks to Judith. The bird was not in its usual roosting spot, but scolding chickadees betrayed it.



Eastern Screech Owl © Judith Pelley

We found a Raccoon hanging out of a large hole in a Cottonwood. Opinion was divided as to whether it was sleeping or dead. A Rough-legged Hawk was seen at the intersection of Hwy. 59 and the North Perimeter Hwy., followed by two Bald Eagles. The drive to our destination - Powerview/Pine Falls - was uneventful, until Megali spotted a Great Gray along PR. 304 several km south of Powerview. It stayed long enough for everyone to get great views and photos, enhanced by the late afternoon light. After checking in at the Papertown Inn we enjoyed a nice meal.



Felipe Pimentel © 2022

Day 3 - We woke up to snow, while a stiff breeze blew from the southwest and the temperature was a few degrees below freezing. The conditions were passable and did not interfere with us watching Sharp-tailed Grouse dancing at a lek in the Broadlands Road area. After crossing the Winnipeg River on an ice-road and a stop at St.

Georges to watch feeder birds, we headed back to the hotel for breakfast. This was a leisurely affair - short-staffing due to COVID-19 was still a problem in the service industry.



Sharp-tailed Grouse © Noelle Piron



Sharp-tailed Grouse © Blythe Nilson

Eventually we got underway and drove to Maple Creek Road. The wind had picked up, snow still blew - not conditions conducive to seeing Great Gray Owls, but the hawk-owls did not seem to care much. Of the two birds along this road, one was particularly close along the road.



Northern Hawk Owl © Felipe Pimentel

We then headed east to Lac du Bonnet, picking up a male Common Grackle at a feeder. The bird - rare in winter - had no doubt spent the season there. The feeders at Henry Bellin Road, east of Lac du Bonnet, proved to be productive as always, although the Blue Jays gave Noëlle a hard time, never staying around long enough for good photos. Highlights here were a Pileated Woodpecker, both species of redpoll and both Pine and Evening Grosbeaks. The snow was getting heavier, the wind shifted to the northwest and the temperature dropped. After visiting a few more areas south to Seven Sisters Falls and adding nothing new, we started our way back via Maple Creek Road, but here too was little action. By now the snow was blowing horizontally, visibility at times was very poor, it had gone down to - 11°C and the roads started to ice up, so we made an early end to the day and were back at the hotel at 4:45. Day 4 - The day started mainly sunny with a strong northwest breeze and - 21°C - still very unpleasant conditions for birding. The birds thought so too, as Maple Creek Road was very quiet - a flock of Snow Buntings was at a feedlot and we saw one hawk-owl. We checked other areas in the region where Great Grays had been reported recently, but no luck, until Eugene spotted a bird, hunkered down out of the wind and the sun, in a little wooded dell at Oldenburg. We got out to take photos, then poked around in the area a bit longer, before returning. The bird had shifted somewhat and now was less obscured by twigs. I had given up hope of seeing Great Grays in these conditions, but we were lucky.



Looking for Great Gray Owls © Rudolf Koes

En route back to Winnipeg we found three turkeys perched in a pine at Vivian and then had distant views, in poor light, of a flock of 120 Mallards on a patch of open water on the Red River in south Winnipeg. By popular demand we tried to find some Snowy Owls with their eyes open (for the photographers) and were successful in the La Salle/Domain area. Driving into Winnipeg a Great Horned Owl was spotted on a nest along McGillivray Rd. No luck with “good” birds at Fraser’s Grove Park, but it could be established without a shadow of a doubt that the Raccoon was dead indeed. For dinner we returned to the Greenwood Inn. Considering that we had less-than-ideal weather for much of the time, we did well to find the target species: Snowy, Great Gray and Northern Hawk-Owl, plus a few other species of note. Ken and Rudolf enjoyed your company and hope to see you again in the future.



Great Horned Owl © Judith Pelley

Thank you to our tour participants for sharing their amazing photos!