Eagle-Eye Tours

Saskatchewan Cranes & Geese Trip Report (Sep 28–Oct 3, 2026)

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Day 1: Saskatoon

The group gathered in the evening for our first dinner together, where we laid out plans for the following day and took the opportunity to get to know one another.

Day 2: Blaine Lake and Marcelin

After an early breakfast at our hotel, we drove north of Saskatoon to search the agricultural fields between the communities of Blaine Lake and Marcelin in search of Whooping Cranes and other migrating wildfowl. It did not take us long to find our primary target when, at our first stop by a small lake, we had a family—two adults and a juvenile—of Whooping Cranes fly by. When we drove to the field in which they had landed, we found that there was a second family group there as well! We had distant but good views of these two families as they calmly walked around in the freshly cut fields. While we were here, we also got to watch a few pairs of American Avocets walk around the lakeshore. Our next stop was for a massive flock of geese made up mostly of Snow Geese; the flock also contained many Ross's Geese, Cackling Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese and Canada Geese. The main part of the flock consisted of over ten thousand birds roosting on a small lake, while a subsample of several thousand roosted much closer in a cut wheat field. We spent over an hour just watching these birds fly back and forth between the two locations and enjoying the spectacle! In addition to the geese, we also got to observe several thousand Franklin's Gulls as they too migrated south, passing overhead in large flocks.

Snow Geese in flight© Blair Dudeck

Snow Geese © Blair Dudeck

Ross Geese © Blair Dudeck

After a picnic lunch, we made a few stops at several crowded prairie ponds where we added many waterfowl species, including Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead and Ruddy Duck, as well as hundreds of American Coots and Pied-billed, Eared and Horned Grebes! We finished the day by finding the main Whooping Crane flock in a large wheat field near a wetland where we counted 146 Whooping Cranes! It is truly incredible to watch that many of these beautiful and special birds dance and fly around the beautiful golden farmland.

Whooping Cranes in flight © Blair Dudeck

Whooping Cranes © Blair Dudeck

Day 3: Farmland South of Saskatoon

We started our day of birding with a stop at Donna Birkmaier Park, a lovely little park with trails and wetlands inside the city of Saskatoon. Our primary target here was the Harris's Sparrow; these large sparrows only breed in the Canadian subarctic and are typically very rare to see in the rest of Canada, but most of the population migrates through the Central Flyway, with many stopping over in Saskatchewan. It did not take us long to find this special bird, with us spotting several as soon as we stepped out of the vans! We then walked around the park, adding several more passerine species to our list, including Dark-eyed Junco, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, Common Grackle, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Hairy Woodpecker.

Harris's Sparrow © Blair Dudeck

Our next stop was Blackstrap Reservoir, where we were greeted by great looks at a flock of American White Pelicans that were roosting very close to the road. We also found Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Ruddy Duck, Redhead and Hooded Mergansers. We then had lunch in the lovely Blackstrap Provincial Park campsite.

American White Pelicans © Blair Dudeck

After lunch, we spent the rest of the day exploring the farmland and roadside ponds where we observed tens of thousands of Snow Geese, hundreds of Sandhill Cranes, and watched flocks of

several thousand Lapland Longspurs fly over us and flushed several groups of Gray Partridge from the roadside! Our final stop was at Bluchers Salt Sloughs where, in addition to 15,000 Snow Geese, we marvelled at huge flocks of nearly a thousand each of Canvasbacks, Gadwall and Northern Shovelers! Among the thousands of ducks, we also managed to pick out two tiny Red-necked Phalaropes also making their way south from the High Arctic alongside all these gigantic waterfowl.

Big skies © Michele Musil

Day 4: Prince Albert National Park

After a lovely breakfast at our hotel, we packed up our belongings and started the drive towards Saskatchewan's boreal forest and Prince Albert National Park. Of course, we broke the drive up with a few stops for massive flocks of Snow Geese and were even able to marvel at their numbers as we watched flocks pass over the highway as we drove! Before getting to the park, we made a quick stop at Emma Lake where we spotted some late Forster's Terns, Red-necked Grebes, Blue Jays, Pine Siskins and a Merlin. Once we arrived in the park, we had a picnic lunch at a lovely riverside stop. Here we added Canada Jay, Northern Flicker and Ruffed Grouse and watched several Sharp-shinned Hawks and a flock of Double-crested Cormorants migrating over. After dinner, we tried a bit of owling in the park and very quickly had great luck in finding a Barred Owl and then a Long-eared Owl, which made everyone's night!

Barred Owl © Blair Dudeck

Day 5: Prince Albert National Park and More Cranes

We packed up after breakfast ready to explore more of the park. Before we were even out of the parking lot, we had to stop and get out to watch a flock of Boreal Chickadees in the trees across the street from our hotel, always a special bird to see! We then drove out to the Narrows Peninsula Trail, which we then explored. We quickly found not one but four American Three-toed Woodpeckers all chasing each other around! As we walked around the trail, we enjoyed the fall colours in the boreal and added several more new species, including Pileated Woodpecker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Rusty Blackbird and Palm Warbler! We then departed the park and started our way back to Saskatoon. However, on our way back, we made a detour to go back to the crane fields where we spent our last hours together watching over 150 Whooping Cranes jumping and dancing as the sun set behind them. After this, we returned to our hotel in Saskatoon and celebrated a very successful tour with a lovely final meal. Overall, we finished the tour with 96 species, over 160,000 Snow Geese seen and over one eighth of the world’s Whooping Cranes!

Our group