Eagle-Eye Tours



Saskatchewan Whooping Cranes with Canadian Geographic Trip Report (Oct 3–9, 2026)

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Day 1: Saskatoon

The group gathered in the evening for our first dinner together. We discussed 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, we drove north of Saskatoon to the agricultural region favoured by Whooping Cranes during their southward migration. Our first stop was a small lake just south of Marcelin, where we enjoyed excellent views of a wide variety of waterfowl, including Tundra Swans, Northern Shovelers, Gadwalls, Ross's Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese, and thousands of Snow Geese. Other highlights included American Avocets, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, a Northern Harrier, Horned Larks, American Pipits, and a flock of Rusty Blackbirds flying overhead. As we watched the incredible numbers of birds, a family of Whooping Cranes flew almost directly over us, much to everyone's delight.



Ross's Geese © Blair Dudeck



Whooping Cranes in flight © Blair Dudeck

Next, we stopped along a road lined with shrubs and found mixed flocks of sparrows, including Harris's, American Tree, White-crowned, White-throated, and Song Sparrows. As we continued along the farm roads, we encountered many flocks of American Pipits, Lapland Longspurs, and Horned Larks. Then came a truly spectacular sight: a large flock of Whooping Cranes, likely having just taken off from a nearby field. The majestic birds circled directly overhead, giving us amazing

views and treating us to their melodic calls. They climbed higher and higher before drifting south, likely continuing their migration toward the coastal United States.



Whooping Cranes © Blair Dudeck



Whooping Cranes © Blair Dudeck

Day 3: Marcelin and Prince Albert National Park

After breakfast, we packed our bags and set off for Prince Albert National Park, in Saskatchewan's boreal forest. We stopped along the way to look for more Whooping Cranes and flocks of geese. Our suspicion that the cranes we had seen the previous day were migrating seemed to be confirmed: we found only three individuals in the farmland. We added a few new species, including Black-bellied Plover and Pectoral Sandpiper. We then continued to Prince Albert National Park. On the drive into the park, we saw several Ruffed Grouse along the roadside and, remarkably, a beautiful American Goshawk flying across the road in front of the vans.

Day 4: Prince Albert National Park

After a lovely breakfast at our hotel, we set out into the park. We had made it only about 50 metres from the hotel before stopping to watch a small herd of elk moving through the waters of Waskesiu Lake. Next, we walked the Boundary Bog Trail, a lovely path through a mix of boreal black spruce and aspen stands, past the bog and a beautiful little lake. The beginning of the walk was fairly quiet, but we had excellent views of a Boreal Chickadee and a Hairy Woodpecker. The real highlights came as we left the bog boardwalk and returned to the forest, where we encountered four Spruce Grouse. These charming birds walked right in front of us, allowing us several minutes to take photos and enjoy their presence.



Boreal Chickadee © Blair Dudeck



Spruce Grouse © Blair Dudeck



Spruce Grouse © Blair Dudeck



Spruce Grouse © Blair Dudeck

Minutes later, we added another major target: a female American Three-toed Woodpecker. We spent the rest of the day exploring the park and its trails, seeing many Ruffed Grouse and Horned Larks, and adding Red-necked Grebe and Golden-crowned Kinglet to our list.



American Three-toed Woodpecker © Blair Dudeck

Day 5: Prince Albert National Park and Marcelin

We spent the morning driving a remote road through the park, once again stopping to watch a herd

of elk beside the road. As we explored, we added several new species, including Redpoll, Lincoln's Sparrow, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, and Trumpeter Swan. We also watched an impressive migration of Double-crested Cormorants, with nearly 3,000 birds flying overhead in a matter of minutes. As we left the park, some of the group spotted a fisher before it ran off into the forest.



Ruffed Grouse © Blair Dudeck

Later in the morning, we left Prince Albert National Park and headed back toward Marcelin in search of cranes. We checked the usual agricultural fields but had no luck. We did, however, find a Northern Shrike and several American Tree Sparrows. We were running short on time and still needed to return to Saskatoon, check in to our hotel, and have dinner. But just before we reached the highway, we spotted a large flock of Whooping Cranes in an open field. There were 114 in total!



Whooping Cranes © Blair Dudeck

As amazing as it was to see these majestic birds, we were soon overwhelmed by the spectacle of Snow Geese arriving from every direction and landing in the same field. We spent nearly two hours watching the scene and estimated 400,000 Snow Geese. Eventually, we pulled ourselves away and headed to Saskatoon, where we celebrated the day over a wonderful dinner.



Snow Geese © Blair Dudeck



Snow Geese © Blair Dudeck



Snow Geese © Blair Dudeck

Day 6: Blackstrap Lake and Surrounding Area

We began the day exploring the small prairie pothole ponds south of Saskatoon, where we found thousands of waterfowl. The highlights included 180 Sandhill Cranes. At our next stop, we were surprised by two Sabine’s Gulls. These small, Arctic-breeding gulls are always a rare sight on the

prairies. We also found American Golden-Plovers, American Avocets, and Pectoral Sandpipers. We had lunch at the Blackstrap Provincial Park campground. Along with a delicious picnic, we enjoyed sightings of Bonaparte's Gulls, Western Grebes, Common Loons, Hooded Mergansers, Cedar Waxwings, and Surf Scoters. We finished the day birding the south end of Blackstrap Lake, where we had excellent views of a lone American White Pelican. We also added Common Goldeneye, Marsh Wren, and Yellow-headed Blackbird to our list. Overall, this tour showcased the incredible scale of fall migration on the prairies. We recorded 94 bird species, including more than 100 Whooping Cranes, over 12% of the world's population, and more than 500,000 Snow Geese over the course of the tour. It was truly an amazing week in the heart of Canada's Central Flyway!



Our group © Myrna Pearman