

Ultimate British Columbia trip report May 28 - June 9, 2022

[Link: Ultimate British Columbia trip report May 28 - June 9, 2022](#)

On Friday, May 27, 4 tour guests met our guide for the start of the Ultimate British Columbia experience that would last two weeks. After introductions we had our first meal in Fort St. John before resting up for our first day of birding the Peace Country. The next day, heavy rains had arrived overnight, but our tour group was up early and ready as we headed to Charlie Lake for a variety of warblers and good views of Franklin's gulls standing in the driving wind. As showers subsided we took in a grand view of the mighty Peace River, spotting Olive-sided Flycatcher and finished the day at a large wetland getting great views of a Sora and completing our list of interior swallows.



Olive-sided Flycatcher

Day 2 had the group searching high and low for warblers, vireos and tanagers in the boreal forest at Beaton Park. In the afternoon, we traveled to the grasslands and marshes near Dawson Creek, where we had good views of Yellow-headed blackbird with Red-necked phalaropes and Black terns. A beautiful Leconte's sparrow singing in the late afternoon completed our two days in northern British Columbia.



Beaumont Provincial Park

We then made our way by plane to Vancouver, heading to a sand spit on the Fraser River estuary. We got our first glimpses of coastal species like Anna's Hummingbird, bushtit and Glaucous-winged gull. Later that evening, we surveyed an inlet on the ocean at sunset. The whole group was elated to see some of our first real seabirds like cormorants, scoters and Caspian terns. This prepared us well for our first ocean ferry crossing the next morning. But first we picked up coastal forest birds on Cypress mountain, which offered us great views of Band-tailed pigeon and Black throated grey warbler.



Riding the ferry

That afternoon we reached the temperate rainforest environment of the west coast of Vancouver Island. The next few days around Tofino had some showers, but they did not slow us down. A wonderful pelagic adventure awaited us and everyone had a blast seeing a wolf, sea otters, humpback whales, albatrosses, shearwaters and two species of puffin! The following days we explored wet rainforests finding fox sparrows, pacific wrens and elusive pacific slope flycatchers. We sampled some unique local food venues and explored several of the west coast's most famous beaches. The pacific ocean was an awesome backdrop to take in a group of Brown pelicans flying above the surf and sandpipers scurrying along the beach.



Tofino pelagic



Pigeon Guillemots



Cathedral Grove

Down in beautiful Victoria, another whale watching adventure was filled with nesting seabirds, seals and more humpback whale action. We spent an afternoon exploring the coastal douglas fir forest and it's birds and enjoyed the fine dining available in the city.



Mandarte Island

Another ferry ride across the strait brought us back to the mainland and our final week in the interior of the province. After stopping at a coastal marsh, we headed towards the Cascade mountains and Manning Park Lodge. The subalpine forests were still in the early stages of spring, and our first birds were mixed flocks of warblers near the ground for all to enjoy. An early morning in the montane forests produced many species of warbler, finch, and woodpecker all very active in various stages of breeding. We even heard the booming of a male Sooty grouse.



Brunswick Point



EET group at Chopaka

We headed downslope to the Okanagan valley, into a different world filled with sun and shrubby grasslands. Our first stop we observed the birds that inhabit the sagebrush country near the border with the United States. We found western kingbirds, lark and brewer's sparrows in the late afternoon. Early in the morning we birded the hills and mountains, filled with wildflowers aspen and ponderosa pine trees. Colourful Black headed grosbeaks and bluebirds were some of the new additions to our trip list. A surprise Lewis' woodpecker on a fencepost just meters away delighted everyone especially the photographers of the group. Our second day in the dry valleys we searched riparian, forest and cliff habitats for regional specialties like Yellow-breasted chat, Lazuli bunting, Canyon wren and Pygmy nuthatch. A successful day was topped off with a night tour in search of the cryptic Common poorwill. After some searching, we finally had great looks of a poorwill sitting nicely on the ground. The final day of birding began early in grassland near a saline lake, where we continued our admiration of bluebirds and meadowlarks, and had a bonus Burrowing owl pair to observe. Our long trip to Vancouver began, and the rain held off until we were on the road through the scenic Coast mountains. After settling in at our hotel we had our final dinner and finalized our trip list (218 species!) and chatted about our favorite experiences after an epic two weeks. Breakfast was served on the morning of June 10, to a group of birders turned friends and well wishes were given all around. It was an experience of a lifetime to explore this huge province from top to bottom and in between. Until next time, safe travels. Eagle Eye Tours <https://ebird.org/tripreport/62582>