

Birds & Conservation in BC's Columbia Valley Itinerary

[Link: Birds & Conservation in BC's Columbia Valley](#)

Tour Overview

The Columbia valley in eastern British Columbia is many things: a place of outstanding beauty, a spectacular Ramsar-recognized wetland ecosystem, an internationally important migration flyway - and home to some wonderful and inspiring conservation projects that protect birds, wildlife, and wilderness.

In this innovative birding & conservation tour you will explore all this! As always, we'll focus on the birds - you'll be awestruck by the diversity and abundance of the birds we see in alpine, forest, and wetland habitats - but we'll take a few hours here and there to be inspired by some of the Valley's leading conservationists, as you experience first-hand the exciting projects they lead to protect swallows, badgers, grizzly bears, and everything in between!

Part of the proceeds from this tour will go towards a conservation project of your choice.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Calgary

We'll all arrive in Calgary at various times, but will rendezvous for dinner this evening at our airport hotel, giving you a chance to get to know your fellow travellers -and allowing our guide to learn about what you hope to see on our birding & conservation tour!

Day 2: Travel to Golden, British Columbia



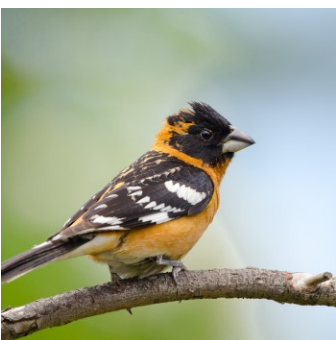
We'll set off from our hotel right after breakfast. As we drive through the foothills we'll look for Swainson's hawks, and mule deer calmly browsing in the fields - and try not to gape as the magnificent front ranges of the Rocky Mountains come into view. Our first chance to connect with the wild nature of the West begins at the Flowing Waters trail in Bow Valley Provincial Park, where we will stroll on boardwalks and gravel trails to explore both wetland and montane ecosystems. Next stop will be in magnificent Banff, Canada's first national park, where we will enjoy a picnic lunch at the Cave and Basin site and hopefully get acquainted with local birds such as Townsend's warbler, Swamp sparrow, and Violet-green swallow. We will continue on through Banff and Yoho National Parks, with a couple of stops to look for mountain birds, and check into our hotel in Golden.

Day 3: Kicking Horse Alpine birding



We'll begin our day at the aptly named Reflection Lake, a wonderful aquatic complex on the outskirts of town. Then we drive up to the base of famous Kicking Horse Mountain Resort, stopping along the way in search of subalpine forest species such as Varied thrush and Clark's Nutcracker, and nesting finches. The gondola then whisks us above the treeline into the Alpine (where Eagle-Eye Tours will buy you lunch in the Eagle's Eye restaurant!) where we'll take in some breathtaking views and look for Alpine species such as Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, and perhaps even a resident Golden Eagle. We've got a good chance of seeing a Grizzly bear, too - the resort's Bear Refuge highlights an orphaned Grizzly bear, Boo.

Day 4: Columbia River wetlands



Today we head south down the length of the fabulous 'Trench,' never far away from the Columbia River. We'll stop at a number of wetlands and river crossings in search of breeding birds including Bullock's Oriole, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Lazuli Bunting - and a breathtaking variety and abundance of other species that will take your breath away! We'll visit with conservationists Chris Bosman and Marcy Mahr, who will share their work to protect bats, badgers, birds, and bears as we explore a wonderful new property outside Edgewater, managed for conservation by The Nature Trust of British Columbia. Later, we'll check into our Invermere hotel.

Day 5: River Float

There is no better way to view birds than from a boat, and the fine folk at Columbia River Paddle will help us there, letting the river do the work as we float lazily down from Althamer to Radium in their large passenger canoe. In Radium members of Wildsight Invermere will lead us through a forest of extraordinary old growth Douglas Firs protected by a caring landowner. Night in Invermere.

DAY 6: Ritchie's Point and Fairmont



Today begins with a look at some jaw-dropping scenery as we visit Ritchie's Point to view Red-necked grebes, Trumpeter swans, and Wood Duck in the Wilmer lagoon. From there we'll check in on our regular Lewis's Woodpecker viewing spot in Fairmont meadows, and visit White-throated Swifts at the Dutch Creek Hoodoo conservancy, where staff will walk us through the meadows and share their work to protect wild nature at this site. We'll end the day at the Source of the Columbia River trail in Canal Flats, in search of Empidonax flycatchers, Calliope Hummingbirds, and perhaps even a Rock Wren. Check into Elizabeth Lake Lodge in Cranbrook.

Day 7: Skookumchuck Prairie IBA



Elizabeth Lake is a highly productive lake, replete with species such as Black Terns and several species of teals and grebes - and is just a hundred metres from our hotel! We'll offer an optional pre-breakfast bird walk - then we'll meet up with our host Dianne Cooper, steward of the nearby Skookumchuck Prairie Important Bird Area. Dianne will orient us to this important site and others, where we'll have excellent opportunities to learn about her work and view southern species such as Long-Billed Curlew, Lewis's Woodpecker, Western and Mountain Bluebirds, and Black-chinned Hummingbird. Night in Cranbrook.

Day 8: Prairie Sloughs and Frank Lake



Our tour ends a high note as we travel back towards Calgary via prairie sloughs and Frank Lake, a 5000 acre hotspot of lake, wetlands, and uplands that boasts spectacular nesting birds such as White-faced Ibis, Ruddy duck, American Avocet, and American White Pelicans. We'll have dinner and our traditional end-of-trip awards ceremony back in Calgary where we began the tour. Night near the Calgary airport.

Day 9: Departure from Calgary

Our conservation and birding tour ends today. Breakfast and departure at your convenience.

What to Expect

- Moderate walking, some hiking
- Hot weather
- Good quality accommodation
- Price includes breakfasts and lunches throughout

- 4 to 8 participants with one leader; 9 to 12 participants with two leaders

On our Birds and Conservation tour, you can expect early morning starts each day, with the occasional before-breakfast trip as we search out breeding birds. On three afternoons we'll spend time with some of the valley's inspiring conservationists as they share their passion projects, dedicated to protecting parts of this important ecosystem, with us. Weather conditions during the trip should include hot and sunny days, possibly some rain, and cool nights.

We walk easy to moderate lowlands and mountain trails, sometimes for periods of up to two hours covering up to 3 km (2 miles). We also bird along roadways and woodland trails, occasionally venturing into low brush and swampy and uneven terrain. During these times, we stop frequently to observe wildlife. We usually have picnic lunches while we soak up panoramic views.

In the evening, we may arrange to go to a local restaurant selected for good food and a comfortable atmosphere. During this time we discuss the day's activities, review the list of birds seen and heard, and set out plans for the next day.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- All accommodation (Good quality)
- All breakfast and lunches
- Ground transportation
- 1 guide with 4 - 8 participants, 2 guides with 9 - 12
- All park, conservation and entrance fees
- Includes a \$150 donation to project of your choice (projects visited during the tour).

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Evening meals
 - Travel Insurance
 - Items of a personal nature
 - Taxes (5% GST)
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