

British Columbia Shorebird Migration Itinerary

[Link: British Columbia Shorebird Migration](#)

Tour Overview

The Fraser River estuary and delta south of Vancouver is a wonderful area for shorebirds, with huge expanses of tidal mudflats, bogs, and marshes, and is recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) owing to its diverse habitats and the huge numbers of migrating and wintering waterbirds.

Our British Columbia Shorebird Migration tour will occur when shorebird migration is in full swing in August as Arctic breeding shorebirds head south. Boundary Bay is a key refueling site for shorebirds heading further south. On this birding tour, we explore the marshes, wetlands and coastal mudflats of the Fraser River delta, and our daily itinerary will be determined by tides and by reports of target species.

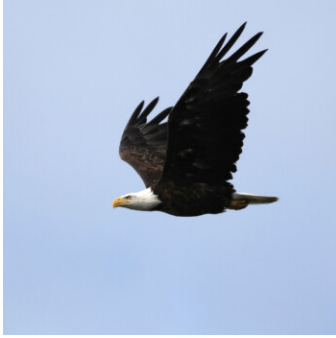
Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Vancouver



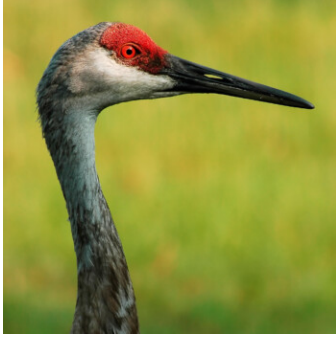
Our British Columbia shorebird migration tour begins in Vancouver. We will meet for dinner in the evening and discuss the plan for the days ahead. Night near the Vancouver International Airport.

Day 2: Iona and Sea Island



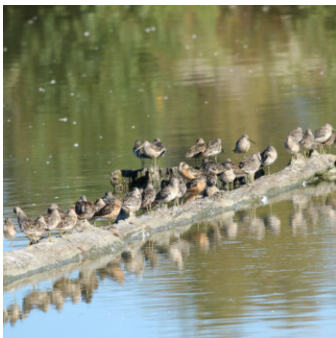
We leave right after breakfast from our hotel. Our first birding localities are Iona and Sea Islands, near Vancouver International airport, both excellent birding sites. Each has wetlands, lagoons and rocky jetties extending out into the delta, and are among the best sites to see migrant birds. Land birds here include Bewick's Wren, Warbling Vireo (western) and Bushtit, but the main focus of our visit will be the vast flocks of shorebirds and the gatherings of waterfowl. Iona Island has long been recognized as one of the best places to study shorebirds. The riverbank, Fraser River tidal flat, marsh, grassland and beach habitats attract a wide range of bird species, including many rare and vagrant species. At lagoons and along the jetties, we can expect Gadwall, American Wigeon, Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teals, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Surf Scoter, Hooded and Common Mergansers, and Ruddy Duck. Marshy areas support Pied-billed Grebes and Virginia Rails as well as Common Yellowthroat and Marsh Wrens, and occasionally a few Yellow-headed Blackbirds to be found in the gatherings of Red-winged Blackbirds. Pelagic and Double-crested Cormorants and Black Turnstones are along the jetty. Raptors are often numerous, ranging from Ospreys and Bald Eagles to Northern Harriers, Red-tailed, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks. Shorebirds are abundant, and with them come both Merlins and Peregrines. The most abundant shorebird is Western Sandpiper, occurring in 1000s, and among them are Semipalmated, Least, Pectoral Baird's, and Spotted Sandpipers. Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers should be here, as well as Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers occur in good numbers. There is always the possibility of a rarity or two showing up. Other species we can expect are Mew, California and Glaucous-winged Gulls, as well as flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls which often have a few Franklin's Gulls among them, Caspian and Common Terns, and up to 7 species of swallows. Depending on timing of tides and what we have found at Iona Island, we may visit Sea Island, and look for species that we have not seen up to now. We spend the night in Tsawwassen.

Day 3: Reifel Bird Sanctuary and Boundary Bay



This morning we visit the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary, a part of the Alaksen National Wildlife Area, located on Westham Island in Delta. A superb birding spot, it is situated on the Fraser River Estuary, just west of the South Arm Marshes Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and east of the Roberts Bank WMA. The Sanctuary contains habitats important for migrating birds, including tidal salt water mudflats, fresh water springs, brackish and salt marshes, and upland fields. These habitats attract a wide range of bird species. Here we will experience a different suite of birds. Wetland species include Wood Ducks among other expected waterfowl; Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Sandhill Cranes, Virginia Rails and possibly Soras, and shorebirds could include phalaropes, dowitchers and Solitary Sandpiper. Eurasian Collared-Dove is now very common, both Anna's and Rufous Hummingbirds could be visiting the hummingbird feeders, and Marsh and Bewick's Wrens are widespread. We have the possibility of finding owls - Barn, Barred, Great Horned, and Short-eared, and Merlins and Peregrines will be hunting shorebirds. Brewer's Blackbirds are here, and there is a chance of finding Bullock's Oriole. In the afternoon, we head for Boundary Bay area, considered by many to offer the best shorebirding in Canada (at least 47 species, over 30 of them occurring regularly). This area is internationally significant and is designated as an IBA. Each year, Boundary Bay is used by 1.5 million birds and day counts of more than 100,000 waterfowl have been recorded. Birds and other wildlife depend on the extensive salt and fresh water marshes, tidal mudflats, grassland, sand dunes and sandy shoreline. Boundary Bay Regional Park offers outstanding bird viewing opportunities. We'll search the bay for Dunlin, Western Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover and there is always the possibility of encountering more uncommon shorebirds that pass through the region such as American and Pacific Golden-Plovers, Bar-tailed, and Hudsonian Godwits, Red Knot, and Buff-breasted and Stilt Sandpipers. At Blackie Spit we hunt for Caspian Tern, Sanderling, Whimbrel, and possibly Long-billed Curlew and Marbled Godwit. This area is excellent for raptors, and we should encounter Northern Harrier, Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks and Bald Eagle. We will be planning our activities around the tides and the best viewing may be in the evening. Night in Tsawwassen.

Day 4: Revisit Shorebird Hotspots and return to Vancouver



We spend the morning revisiting one or more of the marvelous shorebird sites, or perhaps the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal, White Rock Pier, or Brunswick Point, before heading back to Vancouver in the late afternoon and to our hotel near the airport. Night in Vancouver.

Day 5: Departure

Our British Columbia shorebird migration tour ends today and you can catch the free shuttle to the airport for flights departing any time.

What to Expect

The daily travel schedule on our shorebird birding tour will vary to account for weather, tides and reported bird sightings. We may be out into the evening to get the best shorebird viewing. Walking conditions are easy to moderate; most birding is done from roads and well-marked trails. Around noon time we stop for a picnic lunch. The weather in this part of British Columbia can be highly variable from cool and rainy to sunny and warm, but is typically very pleasant in August. In the evening, we arrange to go to a local restaurant as a group. During this time we discuss the day's activities and review the list of birds seen and heard.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- All accommodation (Good quality)
- All breakfast and lunches
- Ground transportation (15-passenger vans)
- 1 guide with 4 - 8 participants, 2 guides with 9 - 12
- All park, conservation and entrance fees

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Flights to and from Vancouver
 - Evening meals
 - Travel Insurance
 - Items of a personal nature
 - Taxes (5% GST)
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