

Manitoba Owls Itinerary

[Link: Manitoba Owls](#)

Tour Overview

Southeastern Manitoba has become one of the premier locations on the continent for locating northern boreal forest owls. The list of owls present during most winters is very impressive; Great Gray, Great Horned, Snowy and Northern Hawk-owl, with always a possibility of Eastern Screech-owl, Short-eared Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl. Numbers of each species, and their locations, fluctuate from year to year, but March is a very good time to be searching for several of these owls as courtship is beginning and the pairs can be very vocal on still nights.

Our leaders on our Manitoba Owls birding tour are local naturalists who will have a very good handle on where each species can be found. In some years, the numbers of owls can be quite amazing. Other boreal species could also be present, including Sharp-tailed Grouse, Spruce Grouse and Black-backed Woodpecker. Songbirds we hope to see include Boreal Chickadee, Canada Jay, Evening Grosbeak, redpolls and crossbills.

Read trip reports and checklists from past tours below.

Please note that the following is our intended itinerary, but we may adjust it from year-to-year to optimize our opportunities for owl sightings on our Manitoba Owls birding tour. Itinerary

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival in Winnipeg



Participants will be arriving in Winnipeg throughout the day. For those that arrive early enough, there are opportunities for birding on your own in and around Winnipeg. Alternatively, there are some great museums worth visiting in the city (Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg Art Gallery, and the Museum of Human Rights). We meet in the evening at our hotel for dinner and to discuss the plan for the days ahead based on the weather and the latest sightings. After dinner, we will have a fascinating presentation by Jim Duncan, who will bring along his live Great Gray Owl. You will get close-up views of this stunning bird, and will learn more about owl research and conservation in the area. Night in Winnipeg near the airport.

Day 2 - Winnipeg/ Lac du Bonnet



After breakfast we leave the hotel. Where we go depends upon where the most reliable locations are for finding our target owls. We usually first head north and southwest of the city to look for Snowy Owls. En route we keep our eyes peeled for Gray Partridges and Snow Buntings. If the weather is right for diurnal raptor migration, we may next spend some time at a hawk watch site just south of Winnipeg, where we should see Bald Eagles and other raptors, including possibly Northern Goshawk. Next we head into the city where we hope to locate an Eastern Screech-Owl at a roost. Late in the afternoon we continue our search for owls and other boreal specialties and may be fortunate in finding Sharp-tailed Grouse en route. After dinner, if the weather is calm, we drive still farther east into the boreal forest to listen for any owls that may be calling. Alternatively, we may head to other locations if we hear of reliable Great Gray Owls sightings. We may stay in Winnipeg, Lac du Bonnet, Pine Falls or Riding Mountain National Park.

Days 3 and 4 - Winnipeg/ Lac du Bonnet



Our day outings typically start around 8 a.m., but we may also opt to go out earlier and have a late breakfast. We cover roads and trails at the edge of the boreal forest, where we have the greatest chance of seeing Great Gray Owls. These birds are usually quite tame and should allow for great photo opportunities. We have a good chance of seeing Northern Hawk Owls also, which are even more confiding than Great Gray Owls. Plus Bald Eagle, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Shrike, Canada Jay and Boreal Chickadee. There are usually a number of small towns and cottages in the area where we visit feeders to look for Common Redpoll and Evening Grosbeak. At this time of year there are usually still some Hoary Redpolls around and we have a slim chance of spotting a late lingering Pine Grosbeak. Crossbill numbers fluctuate enormously; with luck we may see some. Other target birds include Spruce Grouse and both “three-toed” woodpeckers, but finding these species is often more a matter of luck than anything else. Lunches will be in the field or at local restaurants. Weather permitting, and if people are up for it after a long day in the field, we’ll try again for owls on the evening of Day 3. Great Horned, Barred, Boreal and Northern Saw-whet Owls are all possible. We may stay in Winnipeg, Lac du Bonnet or Pine Falls for Day 3. Late afternoon on Day 4 we return to Winnipeg, where we have dinner and spend the night in Winnipeg near the airport.

Day 5 - Departure, Winnipeg

Our Manitoba Owls birding tour ends today and you are welcome to leave anytime.

What to Expect

Overview

The Manitoba Owls tour is a moderately paced birding tour, focused on finding owls and boreal forest species of birds that have been seen recently or are known locally as productive birding locations. The habitat varies from forest to open agricultural areas. The amount of daylight is not long at this time of the year, and we will likely be back at our accommodation by 5pm. Be prepared for patient birding; while the days are not long, the birding can be challenging and may require persistence. There will be opportunities for photography, as many birds and other wildlife allow close approach. That being said, this not a photography tour and while photography is welcome, the group's priority is viewing the birds, and time for elaborate setups or perfect lighting may be limited. For this tour, we typically wait until 60 days out to confirm the trip due to the variable nature of owl migration. Local intel helps us adjust the itinerary if needed, which could involve changes to hotels or birding locations to maximize your chances of seeing target species.

Food

We generally have an early breakfast at the hotel before we head out for the day. We often take a picnic lunch in the field, but will occasionally stop at a restaurant for lunch. Dinner is usually at the hotel or a nearby restaurant. Each evening after dinner we compile the day's checklist, review the day's activities, birds, mammals and other observations, and plan the next day's activities.

Accommodation

Generally we stay in standard hotel rooms in locations close to where we want to go birding

Walking

The walking on this tour is rated as easy. Most walks are less than 1km in length and the terrain is level ground along roads. However the terrain can be snowy or even icy at times. Strong, waterproof footwear is advised and warm clothes to keep you warm are essential.

Driving

There is quite a lot of driving involved on this tour, as we go from location to location in pursuit of birds. We are never travelling long distances, but we will visit many sites during the day.

Climate

Weather conditions are likely to be cold, with the possibility of snow or rain. It is best to dress in clothes that are appropriate for subzero celsius (less than 32°F) weather, although in recent years we have encountered above freezing temperatures for the duration of the tour.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- Good quality accommodation
- All Meals
- Ground transportation
- 4 - 8 Participants will be guided by one guide. 9 - 12 participants will be guided by two guides
- All park, conservation and entrance fees

Tour Price Does Not Include

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

