Eagle-Eye Tours

Manitoba Owls Itinerary

Link: Manitoba Owls

Tour Overview

Southeastern Manitoba is one of the premier destinations in North America for winter owl watching. Great Gray, Snowy, Northern Hawk and Great Horned Owls are among the species we hope to find, while Eastern Screech-Owl, Short-eared Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl are also possible. Numbers and locations can vary considerably from winter to winter, but late winter can be an excellent time to search for owls as courtship begins and some species become increasingly vocal.

Our **Manitoba Owls Tour** is led by experienced local naturalists with up-to-date knowledge of recent sightings, allowing us to adjust our daily plans to make the most of current conditions. In good owl years, the birding can be exceptional.

Beyond the owls, we'll search Manitoba's boreal forests and open country for other northern specialties, including Sharp-tailed Grouse, Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, Canada Jay and Evening Grosbeak. Redpolls, crossbills and other winter finches may also be encountered, with numbers varying from year to year.

This short five-day tour offers a wonderful opportunity to experience Manitoba's winter birdlife and search for some of North America's most sought-after owls.

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

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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 Mueseum, 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 set out in search of the most reliable owl sightings. Our exact route will depend on current conditions and recent reports, but we may begin in the open agricultural country around Winnipeg in search of Snowy Owls. Along the way we'll keep watch for Gray Partridge, Snow Bunting, Bald Eagle and other wintering or early migrating raptors. We may also explore areas within Winnipeg in search of a roosting Eastern Screech-Owl before continuing toward the boreal forest. Sharp-tailed Grouse and other northern specialties are possible along the way. Later in the day, our attention increasingly turns toward Great Gray and Northern Hawk Owls. If conditions are calm after dinner, we may venture into the boreal forest to listen for calling owls. Our itinerary remains deliberately flexible, and we may concentrate on entirely different areas if recent reports indicate particularly productive locations. Depending on current sightings, we may stay in Winnipeg, Lac du Bonnet, Pine Falls or another suitable location.

Days 3 & 4: Winnipeg/ Lac du Bonnet



Our days typically begin around 8:00 a.m., although we may occasionally start earlier and have a later breakfast. We explore roads, forest edges and trails through southeastern Manitoba, concentrating on areas where Great Gray Owls and other northern species have recently been reported. Great Gray Owl is one of our primary targets and can sometimes provide superb views as it hunts along forest edges and open areas. Northern Hawk Owl is another important target and, when present, can also offer excellent viewing opportunities. As we travel through the boreal forest and surrounding countryside, we'll watch for other northern birds such as Sharp-tailed Grouse, Spruce Grouse, Pileated Woodpecker, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Northern Shrike, Canada Jay and Boreal Chickadee. Bald Eagles are also regularly encountered. We may visit feeders in small communities and cottage areas, where we search for Evening Grosbeak and Redpoll. Both the darker "Common" and paler "Hoary" forms of Redpoll may occur, although they are now treated as a single species. Pine Grosbeak is another possibility, while crossbill numbers fluctuate considerably from winter to winter. Lunches will either be taken in the field or at local restaurants. Weather permitting, and if the group is interested after a full day of birding, we may head out again on the evening of Day 3 to listen for owls. Great Horned, Barred and Northern Saw-whet Owls are all possible. Depending on current bird activity, we may stay in Winnipeg, Lac du Bonnet, Pine Falls or another suitable location on Day 3. Late in the afternoon on Day 4, we return to Winnipeg for dinner and our final night 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 other northern and boreal species. Our itinerary is deliberately flexible, allowing our guides to concentrate on areas with recent sightings as well as locations that have traditionally been productive.

Days are relatively short at this time of year, and we will often be back at our accommodation by around 5:00 p.m., although optional evening outings may be offered when conditions are suitable for listening for owls. Finding winter owls can require patience and persistence, and sightings vary considerably from year to year.

There should be good opportunities for photography, but this is primarily a birding rather than a photography tour. Our priority is ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to see the birds, and we may not always be able to remain in place for extended photography sessions.

Because owl numbers and distribution can vary significantly between winters, we typically wait until

approximately 60 days before departure to confirm the tour. Current sightings and local knowledge help us fine-tune the itinerary, and accommodations and birding locations may change to maximize our opportunities for finding 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.

Accommodation

We generally stay in comfortable, standard hotel rooms in locations that provide convenient access to the most productive birding areas. Because the distribution of owls varies from winter to winter, our accommodation locations may change depending on recent sightings. In some years, we may stay in Winnipeg for the duration of the tour.

Walking

Walking on this tour is rated as easy. Most walks are less than 1 km (0.6 miles) and are on relatively level roads and trails. However, conditions can be snowy or icy, so sturdy, waterproof winter footwear with good traction is strongly recommended. Although the walking itself is not strenuous, participants should be prepared to spend time outdoors in cold winter conditions. Warm clothing is essential.

Driving

There is a considerable amount of driving on this tour as we travel between different areas in search of owls and other target birds. Although individual drives are generally not long, we may cover considerable distance over the course of a day as we check multiple locations. Photographers should note that the windows in our vans do not roll down.

Climate

Late February and March in southern Manitoba are still very much winter. Daytime temperatures are often around -10 to 0°C (14–32°F), with colder conditions possible, while overnight and early-morning temperatures can fall below -20°C (-4°F). Wind can be a significant factor on the open prairies and may make conditions feel considerably colder than the actual air temperature. Snow, ice and rapidly changing weather are all possible.

Participants should come prepared for full winter conditions. Warm layers are essential, including insulated outerwear, a warm hat, gloves or mittens, and insulated waterproof footwear.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes
• All accommodation
• All meals and soft drinks
• 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
• Alcoholic beverages
• Taxes (5% GST)