

Churchill

20 – 28 October 2006

Trip Report

Leaders:

Tim Earl

Highlights

Blue and white phased Snow Geese as part of a continual parade of birds at Oak Hammock marsh.

Great views of Muskrats which were numerous, swimming like mini-Beavers and posing in the watery sunlight, their golden fur shining.

Seven Polar Bears on our first tundra buggy trip.

White:-

- Snowy owls, five on the first tundra buggy trip.
- Arctic Fox which trotted past us.
- Willow Ptarmigan eating willow buds.
- Arctic Hares that sat tight believing they were invisible.

Seventeen Polar Bears on our second trip ending with a female and two cubs.

Being in the tundra habitat with its special trees, lichens and shrubs was terrific.

A Red Squirrel chasing a Snowshoe Hare in circles was amazing and hilarious.

The visit to Lake Winnipeg with its Great Northern Divers, Bald Eagles, Western Grebes and Leopard Frogs.

A young Peregrine attempting to take one of a flock of Bonaparte's Gulls.

Watching the sunset and skeins of geese while waiting for a Beaver to appear.

Diary

Friday 20 October

We all arrived at Gatwick south terminal successfully and the flight to Minneapolis took off on time. Minneapolis airport was vast but we were greeted at the Winnipeg gate by a fly-past Peregrine which got the trip off to a good start.

We had dinner in Minneapolis airport as our scheduled arrival in Winnipeg was rather late in the evening. Our waitress Keely was entertaining and lifted our weary spirits no end. This left us free to turn in early (by Canadian standards) ready for the morning's outing.

Saturday 21 October

The prospect of breakfast at 7am was a little daunting but with the time change we all met after a good night's rest for the day's activities. Oak Hammock marsh is a fabulous reserve boasting good summer and winter birding. It lived up to its name and we had a super, though cold, day.

Leaving the hotel at 8am we were soon out of Winnipeg and enjoying the flat open prairies with huge fields of deep black loam. We went straight into the interpretation centre intending to have just a comfort stop but were seduced by the scene from a roof-top observation area.

The lake was crowded with ducks and Canada Geese. Pintail were up-ending, Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers and Lesser Scaup diving. The reeds were quartered by hunting Hen Harriers and we saw a few distant Bald Eagles. The presence of small-bird flocks tempted us down to walk the trails near the centre.

A passing Goshawk gave good views as we emerged from the warm building and led us to a party of seven Trumpeter Swans which were dropping in to a nearby pond. They had arrived the previous day.

Although the temperature was hovering around freezing the cold north-westerly wind made it feel much colder. Our rewards were great, however... small flocks of American Tree Sparrows were watched in the reeds where they were joined by Arctic and Common Redpolls, a delightful surprise. Flocks of up to 25 Snow Buntings were flying around, no doubt disturbed by hunting harriers.

An adult Bald Eagle was perched within scoping distance with a Black-Billed Magpie putting in the occasional appearance nearby. We saw lots of Bald Eagles during the morning and were able to study the juvenile plumage on several – the adults' white heads and tails stood out at a great distance.

Holes of Richardson's Ground Squirrels were sadly empty; the cold spell had ensured that even the young males were sleeping well below ground.

Eventually we were driven back inside (well the leader was, suffering unexpectedly from the loss of a good layer of insulation after a year-long diet) where a liquid lunch was enjoyed. In fact, we ate all the minestrone soup and extra thick pea was cooked for us.

We decided to drive around the reserve perimeter in search of distant Snow Geese. They are timid birds and tend to stay well away from people and buildings, unlike the Canada Geese which were passing over in skeins continuously and on every bit of open water. We found a white phased Snow Goose near the north observation mound but it and four blue phased birds were flushed by other visitors. Two returned giving good scope views. We left to find more and in our attempt to locate a big flock of Snow Geese found about 10 in with Canadas feeding in a field. The adult blue phased geese had white heads, juveniles were all 'blue' and there was one lone white bird (spotted originally by Margaret thus leading us to discover the rest).

We returned to the centre for a hot drink during which a Ruddy Duck was found along with several Canvasbacks. An obliging Muskrat was nick-named Murgatroyd. An American Bittern was seen briefly as we were leaving the café section of the centre.

We returned to the hotel and, unable to get a reservation at our preferred restaurant, walked to 'Earls' where the good omens were well founded. After taking a picture of me under the sign we returned to the hotel and turned in after a call-over.

Sunday 22 October

The day dawned with a sprinkling of snow across Winnipeg's streets and pavements. Undaunted we set off for a birdwatching walk along the river and enjoyed a varied number of species in our two hours. First to fall (and they continued throughout the walk) was a flock of Dark-eyed Juncos which were foraging along the bank. We struggled to get good views at first as fine snow was falling.

Three Downy Woodpeckers were watched at close quarters as they picked away for grubs and insects, before two star birds put in an appearance – Yellow Rumped and Cape May warblers – both of which allowed good views for quite a while. A flock of foraging Black-capped Chickadees was most responsive to 'pishing' bringing a few juncos with them.

An American Red Squirrel looked as if it had been locked out of its drey after a night of drunken karaoke and was kipping in the branches nearby. Several others in varying degrees of cuteness were seen during the walk.

We found a flock of foraging finches and sparrows towards the end of our walk and managed to record American Robin, Swainson's Thrush and House Sparrow. Judy saw a Fox Sparrow but none of us could get on to it.

American Crow ended a pleasant stroll as we returned to the hotel to pack. Lunch was al fresco in The Forks shopping mall and we returned to the hotel in time for a bus to the airport and our mid-afternoon flight to Churchill. The plane had to be reconfigured and we were 45 minutes late taking off on the near three-hour flight.

Sleet was falling as we landed, it was mild (by Churchill standards) and overcast. Things did not look good for our first tundra buggy ride.

Monday 23 October

Fog shrouded Churchill as we left and lasted all day, although it was breaking up on our return. In contrast, the sun came out for us and we had a brilliant day exploring the tundra and observing its wildlife. Polar Bears were the highlight with seven seen well... one even climbed up on its hind legs to investigate a tundra buggy nearby. Others were snoozing in the warm sun, one was chewing washed up kelp as if it were his favourite twist of tobacco, and another was plodding towards the peninsular at Churchill – where the sea will freeze first.

We looked in vain for two females which had been seen a few days earlier with their cubs. Such searches take time as the buggies move slowly allowing us to watch a variety of birds including five Snowy Owls, a record for one day on the tundra. All were found perched on rocks observing the surroundings as they looked for Arctic Hares, Lemmings or Willow Ptarmigan. Two, however, decided to shift perches and we had glorious views of these most magnificent of all the owls in flight. There were moments which combined David Attenborough with Harry Potter.

The bears gather on Churchill's coast to wait for the sea to freeze at which time they move off to hunt Ringed Seals which keep holes open in the ice. Polar Bears wait by these holes and pounce on the seals as they come up to breathe. Understandably, they are shy creatures. Before the ice forms, however, the tables are turned as the bears cannot reach them and we were delighted to see two relaxing on rocks, soaking up the autumn sun.

Arctic Hares were having a hard time. Their coats had turned white but recent rain had melted the snow making the poor animals more easy for us and Snowy Owls to spot. We saw two plus about 10 Willow Ptarmigan – these were also in their white winter garb but cleverly most were feeding on the buds of willows under which the snow had remained. One ventured out onto the tundra giving us excellent views.

The sea was still quite busy with Mallards, Goosanders and Eider, while the ponds inland held three juvenile Tundra Swans, a few Long-tailed Ducks and several Canada Geese. We saw Herring Gulls, Dunlin, Grey Plover and Purple Sandpipers on the beaches while the tundra was alive with Snow Buntings.

All too soon our tundra buggy headed back to its 'launch pad' at the end of our eight-hour adventure and we returned to Churchill with the group of 30 other folk who had shared the day. We had eaten well with soup and sandwiches for lunch and lots of tea, coffee, hot chocolate and sticky buns in between bear sightings. We saw the day out with a stroll down to the granary where a ship was being loaded with grain from a huge train. The empty wagons were dispatched down the line to smash into others with a loud crash. This disturbed a big flock of Snow Buntings which were feeding on weeds along the track but did not ruffle a hair on any of several Muskrats which were swimming in a partly frozen pond nearby. A few Herring Gulls and Ravens were seen and a single Greater Yellowlegs was noted by a pond.

Dinner at Gypsy's Bakery was fun with impromptu guitar music and folk songs for entertainment. A check was made on the clear sky for signs of the Northern Lights but none was seen. A dark 'silver fox' – a form of Red Fox – was seen on the way back to the hotel.

Footnote: Judy set her alarm for 12.40am and was rewarded with views of a green Aurora Borealis. Her attempts to rouse me were unsuccessful (quiet knocking on my door was useless) and she remained the only one of us to witness the event.

Tuesday 24 October

We had a free morning for retail therapy, souvenir hunting, writing cards and relaxation. A few of us did venture out – the weather had turned bitterly cold – and were rewarded with a superb fly-over grey phase Gyrfalcon and hundreds of Snow Buntings feeding on wheat dropped from the train wagons entering the granary. Lots of Ravens and House Sparrows were also taking advantage of the free feed.

A few Eider were seen offshore on the sea side of Churchill while many more were on the river along with a flock of Canada Geese and a lone white phase Snow Goose, a rare bird in the town at this time of year. This group was seen later in the day also feeding on the spilled wheat.

Warning signs were up keeping us out of areas where there might be Polar Bears, including a children's playground built on the bears' migration route. We heeded them without question. Ironically, the bus which took us on a tour of the town in the afternoon drove through this area but we saw no bears. Some were heard rattling the bars of their cages in the 'bear jail' barn we visited later in the afternoon. Those which enter Churchill are caught and locked up in the barn where they are given water but no food. They are released once the sea freezes, or occasionally taken by helicopter to an area where they will not be a nuisance or danger,

Our tour started (after I had cleaned the windows outside and issued kitchen roll for everyone to remove condensation) with a visit to the granary and dock area where we learned about the development of Churchill as a port and railhead. A ship was being loaded with wheat, one of the last to use Churchill before the sea freezes. At the same time a train was being unloaded into the vast hoppers which hold the grain.

Fort Merry was our next stop with its view across the Churchill River mouth to Fort Prince of Wales. Both Merry and Churchill were heads of the old Hudson Bay Trading Company, the latter a forefather of our own great prime minister. We saw a few White-winged Scoter and two Greater Scaup on the water but there was no sign of the Arctic Foxes which we were looking for. A Willow Ptarmigan flew over our heads and across the river and another was watched as we left.

David Hatch showed us a black Crow Berry and red Dry Ground Cranberries, fruit which had kept some of the early settlers alive through the atrocious winters. Sea Lime Grass was also seen along with a variety of arctic lichens.

After stopping to photograph a litter of husky puppies we drove out of the town to see a freight plane which had crashed in the 1970s carrying building materials. Nobody had been killed and the aircraft was in one piece, a remarkable sight. Two Arctic Hares were photographed sitting on a patch of snow apparently completely confident in their camouflage. A few flocks of Hoary Redpolls were around the area.

We ended the trip at a feeding station for birds... or so we thought. One of the first arrivals after our somewhat noisy school-bus transport had clattered in was an American Red Squirrel which proceeded to feed on the grain. It was followed by a nervous Snowshoe Hare, brown and white in almost equal amounts as it was changing from summer to winter coat. To our amazement, the squirrel lunged at the hare which leaped into the air and a circular chase began. It was a comical sight but the two animals eventually settled down to feed in relative peace.

They were joined by Grey Jays, Dark-eyed Juncos and American Tree Sparrows. A Boreal Chickadee put in a brief appearance at a feeding table before the quiet calls of Pine Grosbeak were pointed out to us. A juvenile female appeared and we had good views of this enormous finch. A second bird appeared and was seen by some. Quiet trilling calls alerted us to a White-winged Crossbill which perched on a spruce long enough for us to get reasonable views.

We returned to town where some of us went to see if the Gyrfalcon was roosting on the granary (it was not) while others had an early supper before leaving to hear two presentations of life in Churchill and pictures of Polar Bears. The walkers saw hundreds of Snow Buntings which had gathered to feed on the fallen wheat, and said farewell to at least 10 Muskrats which were busy in their pond. It was amazing to see them in such a hostile environment apparently dry and warm. Within a day or two the Big Freeze would set in and their lives would be entirely under the ice.

Wednesday 25 October

Our second tundra buggy ride was better than the first with 15 sightings of Polar Bears, many of them active and one female with two cubs to cap the experience. We watched heavier bears assert themselves over the youngsters, one of which broke into a run so intimidated was he, and an old skinny bear which still bore the gore of a seal kill the day before. The female with cubs was spotted by chance when we stopped to watch a large male some distance away. She was hiding with the cubs in a willow thicket

and popped up her head to see what was causing the commotion. Some of us saw a cub climb onto her back but the activity soon stopped.

We were delighted to see our first Arctic Fox soon into the day's activity, a splendid brilliantly white animal which trotted past the buggy giving us all excellent views. A second, juvenile fox was seen soon after and we were able to contrast its greyish dusty pelt with the earlier adult's. A few Arctic Hares were also seen looking out of place on the dark tundra in their white winter coats. They were wonderful animals, however, with black tips to their ears, and black eyes peeking out of spiky-furred heads.

Birds continued to demand a starring role in this tundra wildlife experience with super views of a juvenile Snowy Owl, the second seen during the trip, and several White-rumped Sandpipers on their way to winter in the Falklands, 12,000 miles away, where I will catch up with them in January. A large dark Peregrine perched on a prominent rock was found by Margaret. It was probably responsible for the many flocks of waders seen dashing up and down the coast.

We missed seeing Horned Larks and Water Pipits which zipped past the buggy during lunch. David Hatch identified them on call but they disappeared before scopes could be set up.

The trip ended a little earlier as we returned to the hotel for an early dinner before catching the 6.30 flight to Winnipeg. A 15-seater bus was collected from the airport ready for the morning's trip to Lake Winnipeg. We were glad to return to the comfort of Fort Garry Hotel and turn in for the night.

Thursday 26 October

Our trip out to Lake Winnipeg turned into one of the highlights of the trip. The weather was glorious, we saw lots of birds and animals, enjoyed the countryside and met some hospitable people. An early start was called for and dawn was breaking as we left at 8am. We made good progress on the 100km journey to Grand Beach with a tea-stop in Grand Marais, just down the road at a friendly diner (so friendly that we went back for lunch). A couple of Sharp-tailed Grouse were seen from the bus.

A walk at Grand Beach produced good views of Great Northern Divers, a Red-necked Grebe, lots of Goosanders and a Beaver lodge on the far bank. Buffleheads were so close we could see the beautiful purple sheen on their plumage and a small flock of Bonaparte's Gulls was found feeding over the lake. We drove around to the far side and attempted to walk to the Beaver lodge but shaking sands prevented success. There were many flocks of Snow Buntings feeding in the car parks and on the beach, as on many occasions during the holiday. A Northern Flicker was feeding on the ground as we approached it and flew up into a tree revealing its yellow-shafted flight feathers.

Judy found a pair of stunning but distant Western Grebes (we saw more much closer at Patricia Beach later in the day) but we were unable to locate Piping Plovers which breed in the area.

Grey Jay was seen over lunch before we moved on to Patricia Beach. Here frogs dominated the scopes and conversation for a while. Leopard Frogs were hopping, somewhat torpidly, towards the lake where they were about to start hibernating. This led us into conversation with Rick Northwood who told us about a beaver pond in Bird Hill Park, a provincial park we were planning to visit.

"I'll meet you there later in the afternoon and show you," he said.

He departed and we continued to watch an adult Bald Eagle, flocks of Greater and Lesser Scaup, Western Grebes and Bonaparte's Gulls roosting on the beach with Ringed-bills and a few Herring Gulls. Suddenly, they all leapt up as an immature Peregrine moved in making a half-hearted stoop at some of the gulls. They deployed the standard defence technique of circling high into the air thus depriving the falcon of a chance to stoop on them.

Driving out of the park we disturbed a Ruffed Grouse in the verge. It flew across the road and disappeared into a small copse. Another was seen a few minutes later but this time I pulled up the bus giving excellent views of this normally shy bird. Several White-tailed Deer were seen as we travelled south toward Bird Hill.

On arrival we phoned Rick who was waiting for us when we reached the car park rendezvous. He took us through the wood showing us brightly coloured scarves which had been hung in the trees by a

witches' coven. All sorts of offerings are left in the woods but if anyone disturbs the participants in the practice of their dark arts they flee into the trees.

Trees were lying all over the area close to the pond, all felled by Beavers and stripped of their branches. Quite large branches had been dragged to the pond and a huge lodge built. We climbed a clay mound to watch for the animals as the sun dropped. Canada Geese flew over honking, a Richardson's Canada Goose flew into the pond and a pair of ravens went past calling loudly and grappling every so often. Whether they were displaying or one bird was seeing off a competitor, I was not sure. A few Muskrats gave false alarms as we strained to see a Beaver but most of us did get great views of a Snipe feeding in the mud.

"There's a Beaver!" Rick whispered suddenly and we all searched for the animal. It looked like a log on the surface until my attempts to get people onto it disturbed the creature. It dived and disappeared.

We went back to the bus soon after, returned to Winnipeg and had our final dinner together in The Keg.

Friday 27 October

A free morning gave some of us the opportunity to visit Assiniboine Park where the birdwatching was surprisingly good. The English Garden had lots to see including Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Brown Creeper, and a few Dark-eyed Juncos.

A cherry tree was a focal point for visiting fruit-eating birds and we had a delightful time watching a flock of 25 or more Bohemian Waxwings, a few House Finches, several American Robins and an Eastern Cottontail. This bunny seemed to be eating the wind-fall cherries. A flock of House Finches added to our excitement.

All good things come to an end and it was with reluctance we dragged ourselves away, back to the hotel to pack and shower ready for our flight. After lunch with Lois Farley we were picked up in a stretched-limousine and transferred to the airport for our uneventful flight home. [What about the buggy-race around Minneapolis Airport – Ed?]

THE SPECIES CHECKLIST

BIRDS

DIVERS

1 **Great northern Diver**

Gaviiformes Gaviidae

Gavia immer Three at Grand Beach, Lake Winnipeg.

GREBES

2 **Pied-billed Grebe**

Podicipediformes Podicipedidae

Podilymbus podiceps Two at Oak Hammock marsh; one at Grand Beach, Lake Winnipeg.

3 **Red-necked Grebe**

Podiceps grisegena One at Grand Beach, Lake Winnipeg.

4 **Western Grebe**

Aechmophorus occidentalis Two at Grand Beach, two at Patricia beach, Lake Winnipeg.

HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERNES

5 **Great Blue Heron**

Ciconiiformes Ardeidae

Ardea herodias One at Oak Hammock marsh.

6 **American Bittern**

Botaurus lentiginosus One seen briefly at Oak Hammock marsh.

WILDFOWL

7 **Trumpeter Swan**

Anseriformes Anatidae

Cygnus buccinator A group of seven dropped in to Oak Hammock marsh. We were able to see one family on the water.

8 **Tundra (Bewick's) Swan**

Cygnus columbianus A few at Oak Hammock marsh including a young bird near the interpretation centre; three juveniles on both tundra buggy rides.

9 **Snow Goose**

Chen caerulescens A few big flocks seen at a distance but great views of two white phased, several blue phased and a few

10	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	juveniles at Oak Hammock marsh; one with a flock of Canada Geese on the Churchill River. Abundant – 300 in Assiniboine Park. A few of the small race <i>B.c. richardsonii</i> were seen, the best at Bird Hill Park beaver pond.
11	American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	A few at Oak Hammock marsh.
12	Gadwall	<i>Anas streper</i>	A few at Oak Hammock marsh.
13	Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>	Several at Oak Hammock marsh.
14	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Common in and around Winnipeg; a few on the sea during both tundra buggy rides.
15	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Common at Oak Hammock marsh.
16	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas chrypeata</i>	Common at Oak Hammock marsh.
17	Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>	Two pairs at Oak Hammock marsh.
18	Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	
19	Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	Good numbers in mixed flocks at Oak Hammock marsh; a pair on the Churchill River; scores at Patricia Beach, Lake Winnipeg.
20	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	About 20 on both tundra buggy rides; 30 on the Churchill River.
21	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Two on the first tundra buggy ride.
22	White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	Five on the Churchill River.
23	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	A few at Oak Hammock marsh.
24	Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	Lots of these beautiful ducks at Oak Hammock marsh.
25	Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	Quite common at Oak Hammock marsh.
26	Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	A party of six on the first tundra buggy ride.
27	Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	One at Oak Hammock marsh.
	HAWKS, EAGLES & KITES	Falconiformes Accipitridae	
28	Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	At least 20 at Oak Hammock marsh.
29	Hen (Northern) Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Lots quartering the reed beds at Oak Hammock marsh.
30	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	One gave good views as it flew past at Oak Hammock marsh.
31	Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	One seen well coming back from Lake Winnipeg.
	FALCONS & CARACARAS	Falconiformes Falconidae	
32	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	One dashed in front of the bus near Lake Winnipeg.
33	Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	One grey phased bird flew overhead, Churchill.
34	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	One at Minneapolis Airport; a dark bird on rocks during the second tundra buggy ride; a juvenile made a rather inexperienced pass at Bonaparte's Gulls at Patricia Beach, Lake Winnipeg.
	GROUSE, PTARMIGAN	Galliformes Tetraonidae	
35	Willow Ptarmigan (Red Grouse)	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Ten on the first tundra buggy ride, 21 on the second; three near Fort Merry, Churchill.
36	Ruffed Grouse	<i>Bonasa umbellus</i>	Two separately feeding on the grass verge near Patricia Beach, Lake Winnipeg. The second gave super views.
37	Sharp-tailed Grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>	Two flew towards the bus near lake Winnipeg.
	RAILS, GALLINULES & COOTS	Gruiformes Rallidae	

38	American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	Common at Oak Hammock marsh; one at Grand Beach, Lake Winnipeg.
LAPWINGS & PLOVERS			
39	American Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	Quite a few in mixed flocks at Oak Hammock marsh.
40	Grey (Black-bellied) Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	A mixed flock with Golden Plover at Oak Hammock marsh; more than 20 on each of the tundra buggy rides.
SANDPIPERS			
41	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Two at Oak Hammock marsh; one at the beaver pond in Bird Hill Park.
42	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	About 25 at Oak Hammock marsh; one near the granary in Churchill.
43	White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>	A total of about 30 on the second tundra buggy ride, five close enough to see their white rumps.
44	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	One on the first tundra buggy ride, about eight on the second.
45	Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	Two on the first tundra buggy ride, at least 30 on the second.
GULLS			
46	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Common in Winnipeg and a few at Oak Hammock marsh.
47	American Herring Gull	<i>Larus smithsonianus</i>	Two at Oak Hammock marsh; a few on both tundra buggy rides and around Churchill.
48	Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Larus philadelphia</i>	Six at Grand Beach, about 30 at Patricia Beach, Lake Winnipeg.
PIGEONS & DOVES			
49	Rock (Feral) Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Common in towns near Winnipeg.
OWLS			
50	Snowy Owl	<i>Nyctea scandiaca</i>	Amazingly, five on the first tundra buggy ride and two on the second... one of the star birds.
WOODPECKERS			
51	Downy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>	Three in our riverside walk in Winnipeg; two in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.
52	Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides villosus</i>	Two females and a male in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.
53	Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted)	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	One in the Grand Beach car park, Lake Winnipeg.
LARKS			
54	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	A flock shot past as we watched American Golden and Grey plovers at Oak Hammock marsh; two on Patricia Beach, Lake Winnipeg.
WAXWINGS			
55	Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	A flock of 25 feeding on ripe cherries in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.
THRUSHES			
56	Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	One on our riverside walk in Winnipeg.
57	American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	One on our riverside walk in Winnipeg; three during our Lake Winnipeg trip; three in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.
TITS & CHICKADEES			
58	Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>	About six during our riverside walk in Winnipeg; at least 20 in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.
NUTHATCHES			
59	White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	About six in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.
CREEPERS			
		Passeriformes Certhiidae	

60	Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>	Two in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.
CORVIDS (including JAYS)		Passeriformes Corvidae	
61	Grey Jay	<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>	Several on the Churchill town tour; a few near Lake Winnipeg; one in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.
62	Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	Singles on the way to Oak Hammock marsh and during our riverside walk in Winnipeg; a few near Lake Winnipeg; several in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg. Three in Oak Hammock marsh; several near Lake Winnipeg.
63	Black-billed Magpie	<i>Pica hudsonia</i>	Three in Oak Hammock marsh; several near Lake Winnipeg.
64	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	One during our riverside walk in Winnipeg; one in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.
65	Common Raven	<i>Corvus cora</i>	Common around Winnipeg and Churchill; about 30 feeding on spilled wheat at the granary, Churchill.
STARLINGS		Passeriformes Sturnidae	
66	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	A few in Winnipeg, fewer still in Churchill.
OLD WORLD SPARROWS		Passeriformes Passeridae	
67	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	A small flock near The Forks; plenty around Churchill feeding on fallen wheat; six feeding on ripe cherries in Assiniboine Park.
FINCHES		Passeriformes Fringillidae	
68	Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	Two immatures near a feeder on the Churchill town tour.
69	House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	Four in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.
70	White-winged Crossbill	<i>Loxia leucoptera</i>	One near a feeder on the Churchill town tour.
71	Common Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	A few small parties in Oak Hammock marsh; one or two in flocks of Hoary Redpolls on the Churchill town tour.
72	Hoary Redpoll	<i>Carduelis hornemanni</i>	One or two in the Common Redpoll flocks at Oak Hammock marsh; one or two flocks on the Churchill town tour.
NEW WORLD WOOD WARBLERS		Passeriformes Parulidae	
73	Cape May Warbler	<i>Dendroica tigrina</i>	One during our riverside walk in Winnipeg.
74	Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	One during our riverside walk in Winnipeg.
TRUE BUNTINGS & ALLIES		Passeriformes Emberizidae	
75	American Tree Sparrow	<i>Spizella arborea</i>	Several Oak Hammock marsh; three at a feeder near Churchill.
76	Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella iliaca</i>	One during our riverside walk in Winnipeg.
77	Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	Lots on our riverside walk and Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg; three at a feeder near Churchill; lots around Lake Winnipeg.
78	Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	Several small flocks in Oak Hammock marsh; lots on both tundra buggy rides; hundreds feeding on fallen wheat near the granary, Churchill; lots around Lake Winnipeg.
TROUPIALS & ALLIES		Passeriformes Icteridae	
79	Rusty Blackbird	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	About six in the reedbeds at Oak Hammock marsh.
80	Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	One in Oak Hammock marsh.

MAMMALS

RABBITS & HARES

1 **Snowshoe Hare**

Lagomorpha Leporidae

Lepus americanus

One at a feeding station near Churchill was chased in circles by an American Red Squirrel.

2 **Arctic Hare**

Lepus arcticus

Two on each tundra buggy ride, three on the Churchill town tour.

3 **Eastern Cottontail**

Sylvilagus floridanus

One under a cherry tree in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg, make have been feeding on windfalls.

SQUIRRELS

4 **American Red Squirrel**

Rodentia Scuridae

Tamiasciurus hudsonicus

Two seen in the woods near The Forks, Winnipeg; two at a feeding station near Churchill - one chased a Snowshoe Hare in circles; more than 20 in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg.

BEAVERS

5 **American Beaver**

Rodentia Castoridae

Castor canadensis

One seen near its lodge in Bird Hill Provincial Park.

MICE, RATS, VOLES & GERBILS

6 **Muskrat**

Rodentia Muridae

Ondatra zibethicus

Lots at Oak Hammock marsh, at least nine plus one baby in a little pond near the granary, Churchill; three in a Beaver pool at Bird Hill Provincial Park..

DOGS & FOXES

7 **Arctic Fox**

Carnivora Canidae

Vulpes lagopus

One adult, one juvenile on the second tundra buggy trip.

8 **Red Fox**

Vulpes vulpes

One from the bus on our first tundra buggy ride; another later that evening in Churchill; one beauty as we returned from the second tundra buggy ride.

BEARS

9 **Polar Bear**

Carnivora Ursidae

Thalarctos maritimus

Seven seen well on our first tundra buggy ride; about 15 on the second including three males interacting and a female with two cubs.

EARLESS SEALS

10 **Ringed Seal**

Carnivora Phocidae

Phoca hispida

Two sunning on rocks and at least one more in the sea on our first tundra buggy ride.

DEER

11 **Red Deer (Elk)**

Artiodactyla Cervidae

Cervus elaphus

Two in Bird Hill Provincial Park..

12 **White-tailed Deer**

Odocoileus virginianus

About 40 on our trip out to Lake Winnipeg including 30 or more in Bird Hill Provincial Park.

AMPHIBIANS

1 **Leopard Frog**

Rana pipiens

Several in Patricia Beach Provincial Park appeared to be about to hibernate.

HEAVENLY BODIES

1 **Aurora Borealis**

Judy saw green Northern Lights in Churchill after setting her alarm to 12.40am.

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Tim Earl, Guernsey

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