

Canadian Rockies

14 - 26 June 2008

Leaders:

Don Otter

Sandra Otter

Introduction

This tour, to an extremely scenic part of North America, concentrated on Birds and Mammals. We did very well for these, seeing 138 bird species and a very respectable 22 mammals. However, we did not neglect other aspects of natural history. The group showed a great interest in wild flowers and Sandra managed to identify a significant proportion of those seen. We also found and identified one amphibian species. Oh.....and we mustn't forget the dinosaurs!

Daily diary

Saturday 14 June

The crew met up at Heathrow without any problems and we caught the flight to Calgary. We then picked up the minibus and drove the short distance to the Port o' Call Hotel, arriving mid evening feeling tired and jet-lagged. We retired to bed declining to bother with dinner!

Sunday 15 June

The natural history began before we left the hotel with good views of White-tailed Jackrabbit in the grounds along with the first of many Richardson's Ground Squirrels. We then drove to Inglewood Bird Sanctuary. Although this reserve is within the city of Calgary, it is a splendid little gem of a site, providing a great introduction to North American birding. As we arrived at the car park we saw more of the ubiquitous Richardson's Ground Squirrels and headed off into the sanctuary. We were rewarded with a good variety of birds including Mourning Dove, Black-capped Chickadee, Grey Catbird, our only White-breasted Nuthatch, and the first of many Eastern Kingbirds and Cedar Waxwings. Waterfowl included Wood Duck and American Wigeon whilst Franklin's Gulls hawked over the Bow River. Raptor interest was provided by Swainson's Hawk and an adult Bald Eagle. We also saw a confiding female Mule Deer.

We now "hit the road" heading east of Calgary onto the prairies, stopping for a picnic lunch at Eagle Lake. This proved to be a very birdy site, giving us Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds and a range of water birds including American Coot, Black-necked Grebe and Lesser Scaup. Forster's and Black Terns were flying over the water and Wilson's Snipe was heard "drumming".

Arriving in the vicinity of the town of Brooks, we visited our last site of the day, Tillebrook Island Provincial Park. We had barely left the car park when Tony spotted a couple of recently fledged, but huge, Great Horned Owl youngsters. They were walking about on a mown grass area under some trees – awesome indeed!

Other birds seen included our only Warbling Vireos of the trip.

We retired to the Heritage Inn at Brooks for a two night stay.

Monday 16 June

After an early breakfast we headed for the World Heritage Site of Dinosaur Provincial Park. No description can do justice to this incredible place – one minute one is driving across the flat and

monotonous prairie landscape and then one is looking down on a bizarre but strangely beautiful sight. Rivers have eroded down into soft mudstones creating a world of “badlands”, canyons and hoodoos (pinnacles of mudstone capped with more resistant sandstone). All members of the group were duly impressed!

Birds seen on the surrounding grasslands included Long-billed Curlew and Marbled Godwit but we were keen to get down with the dinosaurs below!

Once in the park, we walked the Cottonwoods Trail where birds included Brown Thrasher, Spotted Towhee, Clay-coloured Sparrow and House Wren. The most stunning bird was a superb male Baltimore Oriole discovered by Cecille.

Lunch at the park’s picnic area was enlivened by great views of Common Nighthawk flying overhead.

Along the Fossil Hunter’s Trail, Lark Sparrows and a Say’s Phoebe were to be seen but were somewhat eclipsed by the story of the discovery of the many dinosaur fossils, referred to as “great grandfather buffalo” by local Native Americans.

Mammal interest in the park was provided by a Mountain Cottontail rabbit near the visitor centre which housed an interesting display about the dinosaurs.

Later in the day, we visited prairies to the south of Brooks where we had close views of the unique Pronghorn Antelope as well as prairie birds including Chestnut-collared Longspur, Western Meadowlark and Vesper Sparrow. Pools of water provided waders such as Willet, Black-necked Stilt and the beautiful American Avocet.

Tuesday 17 June

This morning we visited Kinbrook Island Provincial Park where the emphasis was on wetland birds. As well as a range of ducks and waders, we had good views of American Bittern, Marsh Wren and Red-necked Grebe. Good scope views were had of California and Ring-billed Gulls, allowing for direct comparison. On the open waters of Lake Newell, a couple of Western Grebes were seen. Land birds included good numbers of both Western and Eastern Kingbirds whilst a Least Flycatcher made identification easier by performing its “chibik” song.

Heading west, we crossed the Siksika Nation Indian Reservation and called at Wyndham Carseland Provincial Park where American White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant were seen on the Bow River.

Arriving at Highwood River Inn, we knew that we were close to the mountains as the Richardson’s Ground Squirrels had been replaced by the Columbian species. Also, we were now seeing (and hearing!) Ravens alongside the now familiar American Crows.

Wed 18 June

After a pancake breakfast, we headed into the Sheep River Valley for our first taste of Rocky Mountain birding. At the entrance to the valley, stunning Mountain Bluebirds were much appreciated and we watched a White-tailed Deer effortlessly jump over a fence. Higher up in the conifer forests we saw our first Gray Jays and Red Squirrels. However, it was the tumultuous Sheep River which provided the highlight – close views of a male Harlequin Duck swimming and diving for food in slightly calmer sections of water. Other interesting observations included Bear and Moose dung (!) and a group of Brown-headed Cowbirds living up to their name by following a herd of cattle around.

In the afternoon we drove to Highwood House, a small store and petrol station, where we had very good views of Rufous Hummingbirds at feeders, perched on trees and chasing each other, demonstrating just how aggressive these tiny birds can be.

We also saw a Bald Eagle flying overhead and saw our first Black Bear. This was a distant view on a mountainside but everyone got it in the scope.

Thursday 19 June

At breakfast a bombshell was delivered to us by the proprietor of Highwood River Inn – he had made a double booking! A group of touring cyclists were arriving that evening (our final night there) and he couldn't contact them. He had made arrangements for us to stay in the small town of Longview, 15 minutes drive away.

A bit irritating but everyone accepted this philosophically and we headed out to enjoy another day.

Driving west on highway 40, we saw an immature Northern Goshawk perched in a roadside tree. Further on, whilst ascending to Highwood Pass we stopped to get some good views of Pine Grosbeaks. Whilst looking at these, Sandra suddenly spotted a Grizzly Bear up on the mountain. This was then scoped by everyone – brilliant, we now had both bears under our belts!

We now carried on to Highwood Pass, at 2,227 metres, the highest drivable pass in the Canadian Rockies. Here it was cold and there were no birds so we continued down the other side into the Kananaskis Valley. As we were starting to walk along a trail we met a young lady who had just “bumped into” a Grizzly! We chose another trail (!) where we saw the lovely Calypso Orchid and an Osprey carrying a stick.

A picnic lunch gave us good views of Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Gray Jays and a pair of soaring Ospreys. We then went on a Moose hunt along a gravel road and were rewarded firstly with a magnificent bull and later a cow. We also bagged a new bird in the shape of Townsend's Solitaire.

On the drive back up to Highwood Pass, we stopped at a boulder field where we had good views of the unique Pika. This odd but cute-looking little mammal resembles a hamster but is, in fact, related to rabbits and hares. We also had our first close views of Bighorn Sheep on the road.

That evening, we entered Longview in search of our new accommodation, not really knowing what to expect. We needn't have worried – the Blue Sky Motel was very comfortable and the restaurant where we ate was excellent. In fact, the meal we had was probably the best on the whole trip. It will be some time before I forget the bread pudding!

Friday 20 June

Following a filling breakfast at Heidi's café we picked up our packed lunches at Highwood River Inn and returned over the Highwood Pass, descending into the Kananaskis Valley where we saw a female Moose with a young calf. More parties of Bighorn Sheep were observed and myself and Tony saw a Snowshoe Hare by the roadside. We then crossed the Stoney Indian Reservation and headed into Banff National Park where we obtained park passes for the next few days.

We stopped close to Banff and had a very pleasant walk around the Fenland Trail. The highlight here was a Three-toed Woodpecker which gave fantastic close views for some time. Other birds seen here included Red-breasted Nuthatch, Swainson's Thrush and Dark-eyed Junco. We also watched a Lincoln's Sparrow feeding a well-grown youngster. Lunch at the picnic site here gave us views of a couple of spectacular butterflies – Canadian Tiger Swallowtail and Mourning Cloak, better known to us Brits as Camberwell Beauty.

Proceeding along the Trans-Canada Highway, we crossed the provincial border into British Columbia. A Coyote by the roadside woke the crew from slumber! We found time to stop at the romantically named Kicking Horse Pass and visit the viewpoint overlooking the famous Spiral Tunnels. These incredible feats of engineering were dug in 1909 to reduce a dangerously steep gradient on the recently constructed Canadian Pacific Railway.

We arrived at the stunningly situated Emerald Lake Lodge for a three night stay. Whilst having dinner our first Steller's Jay put in an appearance outside the dining room window. For some reason, I slept fitfully but being awake in the early hours had it's compensation in the form of Common Loons calling out on the lake.

Saturday 21 June

This morning, we set out on foot through the grounds of the lodge and along the western shore of the aptly named Emerald Lake. Birds included Wilson's Warbler and large numbers of Pine Siskins. A pair of Common Loons swam on the lake whilst Barn and Violet-green Swallows hawked overhead. A Least Chipmunk was spotted along the lake shore and a good range of flowers were identified including the stunning Yellow Lady's-slipper Orchid.

We ate our packed lunches at the start of the Wapta Falls trail where a Red-naped Sapsucker was a first for the trip. Along the trail to the falls, few birds were evident in the heat of the afternoon, although Red-breasted Nuthatches announced their presence with their strange trumpet-like call. Much botanising was enjoyed!

Sunday 22 June

Birding began again in the lodge grounds with an Olive-sided Flycatcher, good views of Pine Grosbeaks and some surprisingly elusive Steller's Jays. We then set off east along the Trans-Canada Highway towards Lake Louise. By this busy road we had very close views of a young Black Bear (always exciting!) whilst Sandra caught a view of another Coyote in the rear-view mirror.

We then turned north onto the world-famous Icefields Parkway, one of the most scenic drives in the world. Just north of Bow Lake, three female Wapiti were spotted some distance from the road. These huge relatives of the Red Deer are known as Elk in North America, which is confusing as the word Elk is applied to the Moose in Europe – I guess this is why we have Latin names!

Stopping at Bow Summit we had a brilliant stroke of luck – a Hawk Owl was perched atop a small tree in the car park! This gave superb views in the scope for everyone – magic! We then walked along the short trail to the viewpoint overlooking Peyto Lake. Due to the presence of "rock flour" from glaciers, the waters of this lake are an amazing turquoise-blue and the view is absolutely stunning. As well as the scenery we enjoyed White-winged Crossbills and Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels. Some of us also saw a Coopers Hawk fly quickly past. On arriving back at the car park we were amazed to find the Hawk Owl still there. More botanising was done nearby where the lovely Glacier Lily was seen.

We turned around at The Crossing with its gift shop where some indulged in shopping! Cloud and rain were coming and going today (a new experience on this, so far, sunny holiday!). However, all agreed that this only served to add to the drama of the fantastic scenery. Driving back south, we stopped at Mistaya Canyon where a fairly steep, but short, trail leads to a spectacular scene where the Mistaya River cuts rapidly down into the rocks resulting in the canyon named above. Well worth seeing and we got a new plant, an orchid called Northern Twayblade.

On our way back to Emerald Lake we saw another Black Bear by the Trans-Canada. This animal was sadly frightened into the woods by a rather stupid woman who walked right across both carriageways of the road (!) in order to get a photograph.

When we arrived back at the resident's car park at the lodge, we had good views of a beautiful Varied Thrush singing its simple but haunting song. A couple of us also glimpsed a soaring Golden Eagle.

In the evening, some of us had good views of a bull Moose feeding behind the cabins, whilst also enjoying more Pine Grosbeaks at very close range.

Monday 23 June

After breakfast we had a stroll through the lodge grounds and along the path on the east side of Emerald Lake where we finally got good views of Steller's Jays. Yet more Pine Grosbeaks were seen as well as Swainson's Thrush, Boreal Chickadee and a pair of Ospreys soaring above their nest. We heard Olive-sided Flycatcher giving its distinctive call which has been likened to the appealing phrase "quick...three beers!"

After seeing two or three Black Swifts flying over the car park, we left Emerald Lake Lodge, calling in at the Natural Bridge, an interesting river feature and then at the Yoho National Park Visitor Centre at Field. Here, people did more shopping and looked at a display about the Burgess Shale Beds, an area of sedimentary rocks dating from the Cambrian period and containing some of the world's oldest fossils.

Heading back into Alberta, we stopped for lunch at the car park at Lake Louise. This is a world-famous "beauty spot" but everyone elected to avoid the crowds and just eat lunch in a quiet corner of the car park. It didn't stay quiet for long as we were invaded by a gang of Clark's Nutcrackers who seemed to have a liking for peanuts and cashews!

We now headed east on the Trans Canada and then turned south on Highway 40 back into Kananaskis Country. A short walk at Beaver Ponds picnic site produced good views of Yellow-rumped Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a couple of Cedar Waxwings. Before arriving at the Delta Inn, our accommodation for the last two nights of the trip, we stopped at a bridge over the fast-flowing Kananaskis River. Here we saw the three classic birds of such rivers :- Spotted Sandpiper, Harlequin Duck and American Dipper. A great Blue Heron also put in an appearance. The Dippers only showed briefly and we vowed to return here to get better views. Three White-tailed Deer were seen not far from the hotel which had Violet-Green Swallows nesting under the porch.

Tuesday 24 June

On leaving the hotel, we called back at the bridge over the Kananaskis River. This time, everyone had good views of the American Dippers. We now headed north to Bow Valley Provincial Park. Here we walked around the Many Springs Trail. This is a lovely walk through forest and meadows and around a small lake. The area was alive with wildflowers and we also got good views of some new birds. These included Calliope Hummingbird, Song Sparrow, Blackpoll Warbler, Willow Flycatcher and a superb Belted Kingfisher which even caught a fish. A couple of Northern Rough-winged Swallows hawked over the lake. We ate our picnic lunch near Middle Lake before leaving the Provincial Park.

This afternoon, we explored a gravel back-road called the Sibbald Creek Trail. We spent quite a bit of time at a series of Beaver ponds which proved very productive. We saw two new ducks for the trip – Ring-necked Duck and Bufflehead alongside the now familiar Blue-winged and Green-winged Teals. Another new species we bagged was Solitary Sandpiper and the supporting cast included Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Belted Kingfisher, Red-naped Sapsucker, Kildeer, Willow Flycatcher and Lincoln's Sparrow. We also got two exciting new mammals. Firstly, at the ponds we saw two Beavers, an adult and a youngster. Then on the way back to the main highway, Jane exclaimed and pointed to a boulder field at the side of the road. A bizarre mammal was descending the slope. It then stopped on the road, gave us the "once over" and continued up the hill on the other side of the road. It was a Hoary Marmot, in effect a kind of giant ground squirrel measuring 70cm from nose to tail. A great finale to a very enjoyable day.

Driving back into the hotel at Kananaskis Village, we saw a Mule Deer and then spotted a White-tailed Deer outside the dining room whilst we were having dinner. Both these small deer are very common and easy to see in Kananaskis Country.

Wednesday 25 June

Sadly, our final morning in Canada. We drove up Highway 40 back to Bow Valley Provincial Park where we had a pleasant walk along the Flowing Water Trail. An Eastern Phoebe was a new bird for the trip. Our drive back to Calgary and our overnight flight to London passed uneventfully.

Thursday 26 June

Arriving back at Heathrow we said our goodbyes after what had been a wonderful trip to a very special part of North America. Both Sandra and I would like to thank all the clients for being such pleasant company and sharing our enjoyment of Alberta and its wildlife. I would also like to say a big thank you to Sandra for driving (I had an injured hand) and for being such a great co-leader.

In the following species lists, NP means National Park and PP means Provincial Park.

Bird list

1. **Ruffed Grouse** *Bonasa umbellus* - One at Bow Valley PP on 24/6 was sadly only seen by the leader.
2. **Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus* - A few seen on prairies.
3. **Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis* - A few Inglewood 15/6 and at Kinbrook Island PP 17/6. One at Vermillion Lakes, Banff 20/6 and four at Field 23/6.
4. **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* - Three at Inglewood 15/6.
5. **Gadwall** *Anas strepera* - Small nos seen at various waters on the prairies.
6. **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* - Small nos seen at various waters on the prairies.
7. **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* - Commonly seen especially on prairies but also smaller nos in Rockies.
8. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* - Seen on most waters on the prairies but also two males at beaver ponds on the Sibbald Creek Trail 24/6.
9. **Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* - A few birds seen nr Brooks especially at Kinbrook Island PP.
10. **Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* - Small nos seen on prairie waters including pools south of Brooks.
11. **Green-winged Teal** *Anas carolinensis* - Pair at Kinbrook Island PP 17/6. Three males at beaver ponds on Sibbald Creek Trail 24/6.
12. **Canvasback** *Aythya valisineria* - Four at Kinbrook Island PP 17/6.
13. **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* - A male at beaver ponds on Sibbald Creek Trail 24/6.
14. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* - Seen at Eagle Lake 15/6 and Kinbrook Island PP 17/6.
15. **Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus* - Stunning views were had of a male feeding in the Sheep River on 18/6. At the bridge over the Kananaskis River near Kananaskis Village six were present on 23/6 and three on 24/6.
16. **Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola* - Two on beaver ponds on Sibbald Creek Trail 24/6.
17. **Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* - Only seen at Inglewood 15/6.
18. **Common Merganser (Goosander)** *Mergus merganser* - Seen at Inglewood and at several places in Rockies.
19. **Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* - Seen at Eagle Lake 15/6 and Kinbrook Island PP 17/6.
20. **Common Loon (Great Northern Diver)** *Gavia immer* - Only seen at Kinbrook Island PP (on Lake Newell) and at Emerald Lake, Yoho NP.
21. **Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena* - Seen only at Kinbrook Island PP 17/6.
22. **Horned (Slavonian) Grebe** *Podiceps auritus* - Seen only at Kinbrook Island PP on 17/6.
23. **Eared (Black-necked) Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* - Seen only at Eagle Lake 15/6.
24. **Western Grebe** *Aechmophorus occidentalis* - Two birds seen on Lake Newell from Kinbrook Island 17/6.
25. **American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* - Seen in flight twice at Kinbrook Island PP on 17/6.
26. **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* - One near Dinosaur PP 16/6, one on Kananaskis River 23/6 and at least three at Sibbald Creek Trail 24/6.

27. **American White Pelican** *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* - Several birds at Kinbrook Island PP and at Wyndham Carseland PP 17/6.
28. **Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* - Seen at Kinbrook Island PP and Wyndham Carseland PP.
29. **American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius* - One on roadside wires near Longview on 18/6.
30. **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* - Two near Kananaskis Lakes 19/6, one near Canmore 20/6, two at nest at Emerald Lake 23/6 and two on Sibbald Creek Trail 24/6.

31. **Bald Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* - Three birds seen (all adults and all in flight). One Inglewood Bird Sanctuary 15/6, one Highwood House 18/6 and one Icefields Parkway 22/6.
32. **Northern (Hen) Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* - A female near Dinosaur PP and a male on prairies south of Brooks on 16/6.
33. **Cooper's Hawk** *Accipiter cooperii* - One at Peyto Lake on 22/6.
34. **Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentiles* - Nice views of an immature bird perched near Highwood Pass on 19/9.
35. **Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis* - Seen regularly in all habitats.
36. **Swainson's Hawk** *Buteo swainsoni* - After the first one, at Inglewood in Calgary, a few were seen on the prairies. None in the Rockies.
37. **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* - A couple of us glimpsed one near Emerald Lake on 22/6.
38. **American Coot** *Fulica americana* - Present on prairie waters including Eagle Lake and Kinbrook Island.
39. **Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus* - Small nos on prairie pools south of Brooks 16/6 and at Kinbrook Island PP on 17/6.
40. **American Avocet** *Recurvirostra americana* - Comments as for previous species. A chick present on pools to south of Brooks on 16/6.
41. **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferous* - Seen at Dinosaur PP, Tillebrook Island PP, Bow Valley PP and Sibbald Creek Trail.
42. **Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago delicata* - Single birds seen and or / heard at Eagle Lake, Kinbrook Island, Kananaskis area and Bow Valley PP.
43. **Marbled Godwit** *Limosa fedosa* - One seen near Dinosaur PP on 16/6.
44. **Long-billed Curlew** *Numenius americanus* - Two separate birds on prairies near Dinosaur PP on 16/6.
45. **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* - At least two birds present at beaver ponds on Sibbald Creek Trail on 24/6.
46. **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* - Seen by several lakes and rivers in mountains.
47. **Willet** *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus* - Seen at prairie pools south of Brooks and at Kinbrook Island PP.
48. **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolour* - Seen at prairie pools south of Brooks and at Kinbrook Island PP.
49. **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* - Seen at various places on the prairies.
50. **California Gull** *Larus californicus* - Seen at various places on the prairies.
51. **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* - Seen at a few places on prairies. Present in Calgary eg Inglewood and at Port o'Call Hotel.
52. **Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* - Seen only at Kinbrook Island PP 17/6.
53. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* - Seen only at Eagle Lake on 15/6.
54. **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* - Seen at Eagle Lake and Kinbrook Island.
55. **Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)** *Columba livia* - Seen in Calgary and Brooks.
56. **American Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura* - Seen and heard at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Tillebrook Island PP, Dinosaur PP and Kinbrook Island PP.
57. **Northern Hawk Owl** *Surnia ulula* - Fantastic views were obtained of an individual of this species at Bow Summit on the Icefields Parkway on 22/6.
58. **Great Horned Owl** *Bubo virginianus* - Two fledged youngsters of this huge owl showed very well at Tillebrook Island PP on 15/6.
59. **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* - Seen well at Dinosaur PP on 16/6.
60. **American Black Swift** *Cypseloides niger* - Two or three flying over car park at Emerald Lake Lodge on 23/6.
61. **Rufous Hummingbird** *Selasphorus rufus* - At Highwood House on 18 and 19/6 superb views were had of a very territorial male perched, feeding at feeders and chasing off other individuals. Good views were obtained of a female at Fenland Trail, Banff on 20/6.

62. **Calliope Hummingbird** *Stellula calliope* - Great views of a male at the Many Springs Trail, Bow Valley PP on 24/6.
63. **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* - One at Many Springs Trail, Bow Valley PP and one at Sibbald Creek Trail, both on 24/6.
64. **Red-naped Sapsucker** *Sphyrapicus nuchalis* - One at Wapta Falls Trail 21/6 and one at Sibbald Creek Trail 24/6.
65. **Downy Woodpecker** *Picoides pubescens* - One at Inglewood on 15/6.
66. **Hairy Woodpecker** *Picoides villosus* - One in Sheep River Valley on 18/6.
67. **American Three-toed Woodpecker** *Picoides dorsalis* - Two sightings at Fenland Trail, Banff on 20/6. One bird gave fantastic prolonged views.
68. **Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus* - Seen at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Dinosaur PP, Tillebrook Island PP, Sheep River Valley and Fenland Trail, Banff.
69. **Eastern Phoebe** *Sayornis phoebe* - One bird seen near Flowing Water Trail, Bow Valley PP on 25/6.
70. **Say's Phoebe** *Sayornis saya* - One at Dinosaur PP on 16/6 and one at Wyndham Carseland PP on 17/6.
71. **Olive-sided Flycatcher** *Contopus cooperi* - Only seen and heard at Emerald Lake, Yoho NP.
72. **Western Wood Pewee** *Contopus sordidulus* - One at Tillebrook Island PP 15/6.
73. **Willow Flycatcher** *Empidonax traillii* - Seen at Many Springs and Flowing Water Trails, Bow Valley PP and at beaver ponds on Sibbald Creek Trail.
74. **Alder Flycatcher** *Empidonax alnorum* - Seen only at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary.
75. **Least Flycatcher** *Empidonax minimus* - Seen at Kinbrook Island PP on 17/6 and at Sheep River Valley on 18/6.
76. **Western Kingbird** *Tyrannus verticalis* - Seen at many places on the prairies. Especially common at Kinbrook Island PP.
77. **Eastern Kingbird** *Tyrannus tyrannus* - Widespread on prairies.
78. **Western Warbling Vireo** *Vireo swainsoni* - Two birds seen at Tillebrook Island PP on 15/6.
79. **Gray Jay** *Perisoreus canadensis* - Seen at several places in the montane forests.
80. **Steller's Jay** *Cyanocitta stelleri* - Seen only at Emerald Lake.
81. **Black-billed Magpie** *Pica hudsonia* - Common on prairies and lowlands. The odd bird seen in Kananaskis Country but none seen in the mountain National Parks.
82. **Clark's Nutcracker** *Nucifraga columbiana* - Seen only at Bow Summit, Icefields Parkway and at Lake Louise where several birds joined us for lunch!
83. **American Crow** *Corvus brachyrhynchos* - Seen on most days. Especially common on prairies and lowlands.
84. **Common Raven** *Corvus corax* - Seen and heard every day whilst we were in the mountains.
85. **Cedar Waxwing** *Bombacilla cedorum* - Small parties seen at a few places on prairies and in Kananaskis Country. Largest flock was 20 in Dinosaur PP.
86. **Black-capped Chickadee** *Parus atricapillus* - Seen only at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary on 15/6 and Wapta Falls Trail, Yoho NP on 21/6.
87. **Mountain Chickadee** *Parus gambeli* - Seen only at Peyto Lake on 22/6.
88. **Boreal Chickadee** *Poecile hudsonicus* - Seen at Emerald Lake, Yoho NP and Beaver Ponds day use area, Kananaskis Valley both on 23/6.
89. **Sand Martin (Bank Swallow)** *Riparia riparia* - Seen at many spots on the prairies but not in the mountains.
90. **Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor* - Seen regularly in both prairies and mountains.
91. **Violet-green Swallow** *Tachycineta thalassina* - Seen at a few sites including Dinosaur PP, Emerald Lake and Kananaskis Country. Nesting under the porch at Delta Inn, Kananaskis Village.

92. **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* - Seen only at Vermillion Lakes, Banff and at Bow Valley PP
93. **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* - Seen every day of the trip!
94. **American Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo pyrrhonota* - A colony watched under abridge at Dinosaur PP on 16/6 and many seen feeding at Seebe Pond near Bow Valley PP on 25/6.
95. **Horned (Shore) Lark** *Eremophila alpestris* - Seen only on Prairies south of Brooks on 16/6.
96. **Golden-crowned Kinglet** *Regulus satrapa* - Seen or heard occasionally in the montane forests.
97. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** *Regulus calendula* - Seen a few times and heard often in the montane forests.
98. **Marsh Wren** *Cistothorus palustris* - Several seen and heard at Kinbrook Island PP on 17/6.
99. **House Wren** *Troglodytes aedon* - Showed very well at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary and also seen at Dinosaur PP.
100. **Red-breasted Nuthatch** *Sitta canadensis* - Seen and heard in several places in the montane coniferous forests.
101. **White-breasted Nuthatch** *Sitta carolinensis* - Only one bird seen at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary.
102. **Grey Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis* - Seen only at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary and at Dinosaur PP.
103. **Brown Thrasher** *Toxostoma rufum* - Seen at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Tillebrook Island PP and Dinosaur PP.
104. **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* - Seen at several places on the prairies and in Calgary.
105. **Varied Thrush** *Ixoreus naevius* - We first heard the simple, yet haunting song of this species near Highwood Pass on 19/6. It was again heard singing in the vicinity of Emerald Lake Lodge where we finally got good views of a nice male singing from the top of a tree near the resident's car park on 22/6.
106. **Mountain Bluebird** *Sialia currucoides* - Seen by the roadside in various places where the prairies meet the mountains. Showed especially well where we entered the Sheep River Valley.
107. **Townsend's Solitaire** *Myadestes townsendi* - One seen on the Smith Dorrien / Spray Trail, Kananaskis Country on 19/6.
108. **Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus* - One showed well at the Fenland Trail, Banff on 20/6 and two were seen on 23/6, one at Emerald Lake and one at Beaver Ponds day use area, Kananaskis Valley.
109. **American Robin** *Turdus migratorius* - Common. Seen every day.
110. **American Dipper** *Cinclus mexicanus* - Seen at bridge over the Kananaskis River near Kananaskis Village on 23/6 and 24/6.
111. **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* - Seen in Calgary and Brooks.
112. **Pine Siskin** *Carduelis pinus* - Seen every day in the mountains. Also seen at Dinosaur PP.
113. **American Goldfinch** *Carduelis tristis* - A pair at Dinosaur PP on 16/6.
114. **Pine Grosbeak** *Pinicola enucleator* - Several birds seen near Highwood pass on 19/6 then seen regularly whilst at Emerald Lake Lodge (in lodge grounds).
115. **White-winged Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* - Three or four seen at Peyto Lake viewpoint on the Icefields Parkway on 22/6.
116. **American Yellow Warbler** *Dendroica petechia* - Seen at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Dinosaur PP and Kinbrook Island.
117. **Blackpoll Warbler** *Dendroica striata* - One male seen at Many Springs Trail, Bow Valley PP on 24/6.
118. **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata* - Odd birds seen every day whilst in the mountains.
119. **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* - The only individual of this skulking species seen by clients was at Vermillion Lakes, Banff. However, the leader caught glimpses at Kinbrook Island PP, Bow Valley PP and Sibbald Creek Trail.
120. **Wilson's Warbler** *Wilsonia pusilla* - Seen at Emerald Lake Lodge on 21/6.

121. **Baltimore Oriole** *Icterus galbula* - A couple of stunning males seen at Dinosaur PP on 16/6.
122. **Western Meadowlark** *Sturnella neglecta* - Seen at various spots on the prairies near Brooks.
123. **Brown-headed Cowbird** *Molothrus ater* - Seen at many places especially on the prairies and in Kananaskis but also along the Icefields Parkway.
124. **Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus* - Seen in many wetland areas.
125. **Brewer's Blackbird** *Euphagus cyanocephalus* - Seen at a few places especially on prairies.
126. **Common Grackle** *Quiscalus quiscula* - Commonly seen on prairies including in city of Calgary.
127. **Yellow-headed Blackbird** *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* - Seen at Eagle Lake on 15/6 and at Kinbrook Island PP on 17/6.
128. **Chestnut-collared Longspur** *Calcarius ornatus* - we saw two individuals of this prairie specialist on the prairies to the south of Brooks on 16/6.
129. **Song Sparrow** *Melospiza melodia* - Seen only at Bow Valley PP.
130. **Lincoln's Sparrow** *Melospiza lincolnii* - Birds seen at Bow Valley PP, Sibbald Lake Trail, Emerald Lake in Yoho NP and the Fenland Trail at Banff where we watched an adult feeding a fledged youngster.
131. **White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophrys* - Surprisingly few seen. Noted at Highwood River Inn on 18/6 and on the Icefields Parkway on 22/6. The leader saw one at Highwood Pass on 19/6.
132. **Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis* - Seen at many places in the montane forests.
133. **Savannah Sparrow** *Passerculus sandwichensis* - Noted on the prairies south of Brooks, by the Smith Dorrien / Spray Trail in Kananaskis and at Fenland Trail, Banff.
134. **Chipping Sparrow** *Spizella passerine* - Seen and heard at many places in the mountains.
135. **Clay-colored Sparrow** *Spizella pallida* - Seen mainly on the prairies but also at Emerald Lake.
136. **Vesper Sparrow** *Pooecetes gramineus* - Seen on prairies south of Brooks.
137. **Lark Sparrow** *Chondestes grammacus* - Seen only at Dinosaur PP.
138. **Spotted Towhee** *Pipilo maculatus* - Seen along the Cotton wood Trail at Dinosaur PP on 16/6.

Mammal list

1. **American Pika** *Ochotona princeps* - Several individuals of this unique animal were seen near Highwood Pass on 19/6.
2. **Snowshoe Hare** *Lepus americanus* - One seen briefly in Kananaskis Valley.
3. **White-tailed Jackrabbit** *Lepus townsendi* - Several individuals were seen outside the Port o' Call hotel in Calgary and one near Dinosaur PP.
4. **Mountain Cottontail** *Sylvilagus nuttalli* - One at Dinosaur PP on 16/6.
5. **Hoary Marmot** *Marmota caligata* - Superb views were had of one of these spectacular rodents at Sibbald Creek Trail on 24/6.
6. **Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel** *Spermophilus lateralis* - Seen near Highwood Pass on 19/6 and at Peyto Lake viewpoint on 22/6.
7. **Richardson's Ground Squirrel** *Spermophilus richardsoni* - Extremely abundant on the prairies including the city of Calgary.
8. **Columbian Ground Squirrel** *Spermophilus columbianus* - Replaces Richardson's in the Rockies where it is widespread and common.
9. **Least Chipmunk** *Tamias minimus* - Seen at Highwood House on 18/6 and at Emerald Lake on 21/6.
10. **American Red Squirrel** *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* - Common and widespread in the montane coniferous forests.

11. **American Beaver** *Castor canadensis* - One adult and one youngster seen at beaver ponds by the Sibbald Creek Trail on 24/6.
12. **Long-tailed Vole** *Microtus longicaudus* - Watched behind the cabins at Emerald Lake Lodge on 23/6.
13. **Coyote** *Canis latrans* - Following a probable sighting at Eagle Lake on 15/6 and one seen only by the leader to the east of Calgary on 17/6, one showed well by the Trans-Canada Highway near the border between Alberta and British Columbia on 20/6.
14. **American Black Bear** *Ursus americanus* - Our first sighting was of one on a mountainside above Highwood House on 18/6. Two separate individuals were then seen right next to the Trans-Canada Highway between Field and Lake Louise on 22/6.
15. **Grizzly Bear** *Ursus arctos horribilis* - Fairly distant but good views were had of a Grizzly on a mountainside near Highwood Pass on 19/6. It is always a great privilege to see this iconic symbol of wilderness.
16. **Pronghorn** *Antilocapra americana* - Good, prolonged views of this unique animal were had on the prairies to the south of Brooks.
17. **Wapiti** *Cervus canadensis* - After a very brief view of some crossing the road at Highwood Pass on 19/6, three females were watched near Bow Lake by the Icefields Parkway on 22/6. Five animals were seen high up on a mountain above Kananaskis Village on 24/6.
18. **Moose** *Alces alces* - A magnificent bull and a cow were seen along the Smith Dorrien / Spray Trail in Kananaskis Country on 19/6 and a cow with a calf was seen the following day not very far away. At Emerald Lake Lodge a bull was watched feeding behind the cabins and a cow was seen along the lake shore.
19. **Mule Deer** *Odocoileus hemionus* - Especially common in Kananaskis Country where we had several good sightings. Also seen at Dinosaur PP and Inglewood Bird Sanctuary in Calgary.
20. **White-tailed Deer** *Odocoileus virginianus* - Had a few good sightings in Kananaskis Country including one right outside the dining room at the Delta Inn!
One also seen near Dinosaur PP on the prairies.
21. **Bighorn Sheep** *Ovis canadensis* - Several roadside sightings involving males, females and youngsters, especially along Highway 40 in the Kananaskis Valley.
22. **Mountain Goat** *Oreamnos americanus* - Saw two very distant animals on a mountain above the Smith Dorrien / Spray Trail on 19/6.

Amphibians

Wood Frog *Rana sylvatica* - A couple of individuals seen at Fenland Trail, Banff on 20/6.

Flowering Plants - Canadian Rockies tour 14 – 26 June 2008

Although this was not specifically a botanical tour, the following wildflowers were identified :-

Buffalo Bean	Wind Flower
Wolf Willow	Common Dandelion
Goat's-beard	Blue Flax
Northern Anemone	Bicknell's Geranium
Prickly Rose	Blue-eyed grass
Shooting Star	Calypso Orchid
Baneberry	Star-flowered Solomon's Seal
Blue Clematis	Indian Paint brush
Fairybells	Grass Pink
Sweet-flowered Androsace	Common Pink Wintergreen
Western Stickseed	Bunchberry
Pincushion Cactus	False Solomon's Seal
Low Larkspur	Round-leaved Orchid

Bracted Honeysuckle
Yellow Columbine
Oregon Grape
Bearberry
Common Meadow Rue
Butterwort
Yellow Lady's-slipper Orchid
Northern Anemone
Wild Strawberry
Thimbleberry
Bishop's Cap
Wild Sarsaparilla
Heart-leaved Arnica
Arrow-leaved Coltsfoot
Corn Lily
Brook Ragwort
Clasping-leaved Twisted-stalk
Twinflower
Coralroot Orchid
Red Columbine
Broad-leaved Pussy-toes
Yellow Dryad
Alpine Milk-vetch
Northern Twayblade
Western Chalice Flower
White Globe Flower
Alpine Buttercup
Striped Coralroot
Black Medick
Yellow Hedysarum

Harebell
Western Wood Lily
Smooth Fleabane
Heart-leaved Alexanders
Mouse-ear Chickweed
Tall Lungwort
Elephant's-head Lousewort
False Mitrewort
Pale Comandra
Death Camas
Puccoon
Prairie Groundsel
Western Canadian Violet
Dwarf Raspberry
Old Man's Whiskers
Early Cinquefoil
Twining Honeysuckle
Brown-eyed Susan
Snakeroot
Yellow Avens
Hogweed
Fireweed
Palmate-leaved Coltsfoot
Silky Scorpionweed
Showy Jacob's-ladder
Sticky Purple Geranium
Shrubby Cinquefoil