

## **PIB SASKATCHEWAN (June 5 - 10, 2024)**

- Visit one of Canada's least populated provinces, Saskatchewan, located at the edge of the prairie and boreal forest, just to the north of eastern Montana and western North Dakota.

- Birding the beautiful rolling hills and potholes of Grasslands National Park, you will enjoy searching for birds like Baird's Sparrow, Thick-billed and Chestnut-collared longspur, Ferruginous Hawk and variety of nesting waterfowl and shorebirds.

- Further north, at Prince Albert National Park, the boreal forest is home to several sought-after species including Boreal Chickadee, White-winged Crossbill, Spruce Grouse and American Three-toed Woodpecker, as well as many mammals such as Moose, Elk, Red Fox, Black Bear and River Otter to name a few.

**Day 1** – Arrival in Regina, the second largest city in the province, and the capital city of Saskatchewan. Once we have collected everyone, we will drive across the prairie to Grasslands National Park, approximately 3 hours away. Along our route, we will watch out for raptors, such as Red-tailed, Swainson's and perhaps Ferruginous hawks. Spend night Val Marie.

**Day 2** – Today we will have the entire day to explore Grasslands National Park. The park, established in 1981, covers a vast 907 square kilometers of varying habitats, including mixed-grass/shortgrass prairie grassland. Just a few of the target species for this morning include birds like Baird's Sparrow, Sprague's Pipit, Thick-billed Longspur, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Burrowing Owl, Loggerhead Shrike. In addition to birds, we will keep an eye open for interesting mammals as well, including Bison, Coyote, Swift Fox, and the country's only population of Black-tailed Prairie Dogs. Night Val Marie.

**Day 3** – We will have most of the morning to continue our explorations of Grasslands National Park. As we cruise around the park we will keep an eye open for raptors such as Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon and the majestic Golden Eagle. Wetlands and ponds, known as 'prairie potholes', are home to many different species of breeding waterfowl, including Blue-winged and Cinnamon teal, Redhead and Canvasback, to name a few. Shorebirds also inhabit the prairie potholes, and including species like American Avocet, Upland Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Wilson's Phalarope and Willet. In wet meadows we will listen for two interesting sparrow species, Nelson's and LeConte's. In drier grassland habitats, there will be Clay-colored Sparrows, Vesper Sparrows and in some years, Lark Buntings occur. Since it's about a 4 to 4.5 hour drive from here to Saskatoon, our next overnight destination, we will have to depart in the late morning, or early afternoon. Night in Saskatoon.

**Day 4** – Leaving Saskatoon this morning, it will take us about 2 hours to reach Prince Albert. This city lies at the edge of the aspen parkland and boreal forest. About an hour north of Prince Albert is the national park bearing the same name. There will be many target birds to look for here, such as Spruce Grouse, Ruffed Grouse, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Canada Jay, Boreal Chickadee, White-winged Crossbill and Evening Grosbeak. Breeding plumage Common Loons and Red-necked Grebes will be on the lakes. Mammals also should be encountered, Elk, Moose, Fox, Black Bear, and more. We will spend the next two nights in quaint lakeside village of Waskesiu.

**Day 5** – Prince Albert National Park, declared a national park in 1927, encompasses a whopping 3874 square kilometers, mostly of boreal forest. We will continue our search for boreal forest birds today, exploring marshy areas, home to the declining Rusty Blackbird. Mixed forests of Prince Albert National Park, provide breeding habitat for a variety of warblers, like the uncommon and rather elusive Connecticut Warbler, and other stunning gems such as Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, Cape May, and Canada warblers. In the aspens, Ovenbirds sing their loud 'teacher teacher TEACHER' songs and Blackpoll Warblers sing their nearly inaudibly high-pitched songs in spruce bogs. As we investigate tapping and drumming woodpeckers in the forest, we will hope one or more materialize into

Canada's largest woodpecker, the Pileated. Evening outing could produce an interesting owl or two, such as Northern Saw-whet Owl or the impressive and sought-after Great Gray Owl. Night Waskesiu.

**Day 6** – This morning will be dedicated to tracking down any boreal forest birds we have not yet seen, or would like better views of. In the afternoon, we will say goodbye to Prince Albert National Park and its avian occupants, and we will drive back to Saskatoon for our finale.

#### **TRIP DESCRIPTION:**

On this tour we will visit two main different habitat types, starting off with the prairie habitats of Grassland National Park, and finishing off with boreal forests at Prince Albert National Park. The two regions have very different breeding bird species. We can hope to see 150-175 species of birds on this tour.

Grasslands National Park is home to a variety of prairie species, such as Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Thick-billed and Chestnut-collared longspurs, Sprague's Pipits, Baird's Sparrow, and Sharp-tailed Grouse, to name a few species.

At Prince Albert National Park the extensive boreal forests are home to birds like Canada Jay, Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadee and White-winged Crossbill. We have a chance to see Great Gray Owl. Lakes will have breeding Common Loons and bogs might hold Rusty Blackbird, Connecticut Warbler and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.

#### **TOP REASONS TO BOOK TOUR:**

Ruffed Grouse; Sharp-tailed Grouse; Spruce Grouse; Gray Partridge; Yellow Rail; Upland Sandpiper; Wilson's Phalarope; Black Tern; Common Loon; American Bittern; Golden Eagle; Ferruginous Hawk; Great Gray Owl; Short-eared Owl; American Three-toed Woodpecker; Black-backed Woodpecker; Prairie Falcon; Yellow-bellied Flycatcher; Canada Jay; Boreal Chickadee; Sedge Wren; Mountain Bluebird; Sprague's Pipit; White-winged Crossbill; Chestnut-collared Longspur; Thick-billed Longspur; Lark Bunting; LeConte's Sparrow; Nelson's Sparrow; Baird's Sparrow; Rusty Blackbird; Northern Waterthrush; Connecticut Warbler; Cape May Warbler; Bay-breasted Warbler; Blackburnian Warbler.

**Mammals:** Moose; American Elk; Pronghorn; Black Bear; American Badger.

**We're still working out the pricing, but if you have any interest in going on this fabulous trip, let me know and I'll fill you in on more details as soon as I get them.**