

ITINERARY  
**OWLBERTA: ALBERTA'S OWLS & MORE**  
*Feb 13 - 19, 2027*



*The Great Gray Owl is a much-wanted species for many birders. Some years are better than others for these impressive owls, but we've had luck finding them on our tours. Photograph by local guide Dan Arndt.*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2027 Field Guides Owlberta: Alberta's Owls & More tour:*

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

*These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:*

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable sightings
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing and noting the birds we see
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

**T**he Canadian province of Alberta may not be the obvious choice as a winter birding destination. Located above the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, at the eastern foot of the Rocky Mountains, Alberta may instead seem like a place that birds, and thus birders, would likely want to avoid until spring. In reality, though, the province actually boasts some excellent winter birding thanks to its geographical location and climate. The combination of boreal forest, aspen parkland, mountains, and prairies provides a wonderful winter home for a rich assortment of northern birds, and owls, diurnal raptors, woodpeckers, and winter finches are all well-represented here, though numbers vary from year to year.

Our tour begins in the provincial capital of Edmonton, on the edge of the vast boreal forest regions to the north. While basing ourselves in a modern, comfortable hotel in the city, we'll have easy access to one of the province's premier areas for Great Gray and Northern Hawk owls, both of which are resident in the area. Though numbers can vary considerably from winter to winter, there are generally at least one or two of each species present each winter, with some winters

seeing good numbers of either or both. While finding these species will be our main goal in the region, we're sure to come across a number of other northern specialties that could include Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing, Pine and Evening grosbeaks, Black-backed Woodpecker, and others.

From Edmonton we'll move southward to Calgary, situated along the Bow River, at the eastern foot of the Rockies, and the western edge of the prairies. Calgary's location between these two major ecozones makes it an ideal base from which to explore both regions. To the east, the broad, open prairies host Snowy and Short-eared owls, Golden Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, Gray Partridge, Horned Larks, and Snow Buntings, while the foothill forests to the west hold American Three-toed Woodpecker, Mountain and Boreal chickadees, Canada Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, and a variety of winter finches including Pine Grosbeak, Redpoll, Pine Siskin, Red and White-winged crossbills, and, in exceptional years, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. Open water along the Bow River can attract good numbers of wintering waterfowl (with the possibility of Barrow's Goldeneye and Harlequin Duck among the more common species), Bald Eagles, and the occasional American Dipper. And, if the Edmonton region has failed to produce Great Gray and Northern Hawk owls, we'll have an excellent back up location in another nearby area. Plus there's always the possibility of something like Gyrfalcon, American Goshawk, Northern Saw-whet Owl, or Northern Pygmy-Owl, to liven up most winters in the area.



*The Snow Bunting is found in open areas, where they forage on the ground for seeds. These hardy little finches breed in the Arctic and winter as far south as the northern US. Photograph by guide Dan Arndt.*

*We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.*

### **Physical requirements of this tour**

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Short walks (less than 1 mile) on flat roadways at slow pace. In Calgary, we may do a short walk or two in parks where the trails may have ice and snow (snow boots with adequate grip are needed).
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We will likely stand for long periods to observe birds. Getting in and out of vans and walking for short stretches may be among the most strenuous aspects of this tour. Walking on snow, and ice requires a good sense of balance (walking sticks recommended).
- **PACE:** Moderate early mornings (7:00AM departures or later), with birding at moderate pace during daylight hours, with break for lunch. No mid-afternoon breaks; the vehicles will be nearby, in case we need to warm up.

- **WEATHER:** Weather conditions vary considerably, with temperatures ranging from a low of -25 to a high of 60 F. Average daily temperatures in the Edmonton area reach into the low 20s, in Calgary into the low 30s (cold-weather clothing and gear recommended, including warm, waterproof winter boots and gloves).
- **ELEVATION:** Elevation at Calgary is 3428 feet; in the foothills to the west, we may ascend as high as about 4500 feet.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Bathroom stops at indoor restrooms will be made as opportunity allows, though note that some areas are somewhat remote with no easily accessible bathrooms available. In emergency situations, you might need to make an outdoor pit stop.
- **OPTING OUT:** Participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day except on travel days.

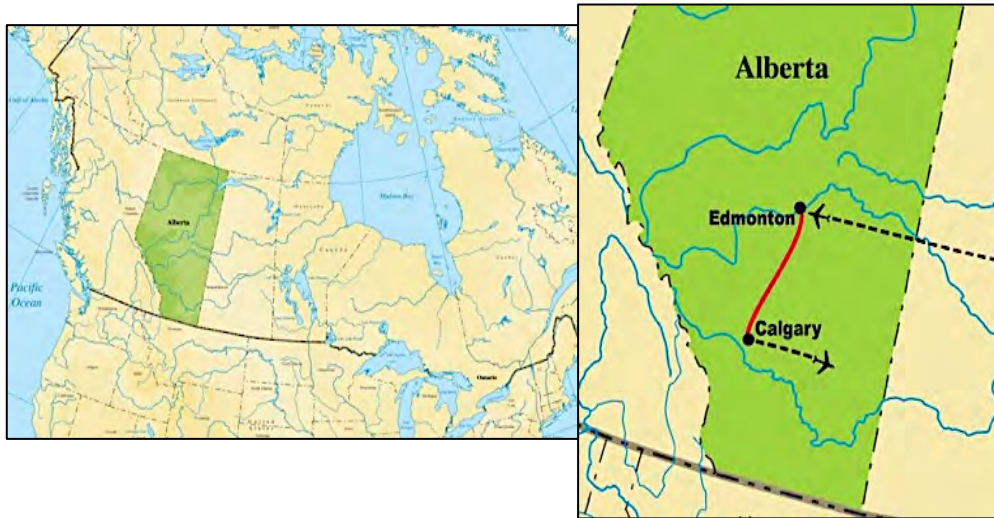


*We won't do a lot of hiking, but we will venture out into the elements a time or two, so it is important to be prepared! Here, a Field Guides group checks the woods at Fishcreek Park. Photograph by participant Nancy Buck.*

Participants need to come prepared for cold conditions, with adequate clothing for the climate, including warm, waterproof winter boots and warm gloves. Though no mid-afternoon siesta breaks will be possible, we will retreat to the warmth of a café or restaurant for our lunches, and the vehicles will generally always be nearby for anyone who feels the need to remain inside to keep warm.

This tour is designed to find winter specialties, particularly several owl species, not to compile a large list of birds, and so we will often spend a fair bit of time with the target species once they are found. This should allow for some good photographic opportunities, but please note this is not a photographic tour per se. The welfare of the birds is of primary importance, and any actions that place unnecessary stress on the birds, including approaching too closely for a better photograph, will not be tolerated.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide for the tour.



## About the Birding Areas

**Edmonton region**— Birding around Edmonton will be primarily from the roadside as we travel the back roads northeast of the city through a mosaic of farmland and forest in search of Great Gray and Northern Hawk owls, Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Grosbeak, and other northern specialties. The remainder of our time here will be spent where conditions and needs dictate.

**Calgary region**—The city of Calgary provides easy access to a good variety of habitats, and we'll divide our time between birding in the prairies to the east, the foothill forest to the west and the riverside parks within the city itself, as conditions dictate, and based upon our needs and what target species are present. Prairie birding will be primarily roadside, as we scan the open country for Snowy Owl, Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, and other species of the windswept plains. In the forested regions and within Calgary's parks we may spend more time on foot as we search for a variety of waterfowl, raptors, woodpeckers, and winter finches.



*Numbers of the lovely Bohemian Waxwing can vary greatly from year-to-year, but we'll hope for a good sighting of these beauties. Photograph by participant James Coyne.*



*The Northern Hawk-Owl is another much-wanted species on the tour. These small owls are boreal nesters, and movements seem tied to the abundance of small animal prey. Photograph by guide Dan Arndt.*

## Itinerary for Owlberta: Alberta's Owls & More

**Day 1, Sat, 13 Feb. Arrival in Edmonton.** Please plan to arrive in time to meet your guides in the hotel lobby at 6:30 p.m. for introduction and dinner. Night in Edmonton.

**Day 2, Sun, 14 Feb. Edmonton region.** We'll start as early as conditions allow, heading north/northeast of Edmonton, to regions where Great Gray and Northern Hawk owls are resident, and some winters, fairly numerous. Our exact locations will be dependent on which areas have had the most regular sightings in the time leading up to the tour. Driving the back roads, we'll scan the forests and fields for these magnificent birds, all the while keeping our eyes peeled for other species such as Ruffed Grouse, Merlin, Canada Jay, Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill, and Redpoll. This area also offers us our best chance to see Moose! Night in Edmonton.

**Day 3, Mon, 15 Feb. Edmonton region; to Calgary.** Our plan today will depend largely on our success the previous day. If need dictates, we'll continue our owl search in the Edmonton region before making the roughly 3-hour drive south to Calgary; if not, we'll leave Edmonton early and begin birding the Calgary region today. Night in Calgary.

**Day 4, Tue, 16 Feb. Calgary region.** We'll begin our exploration of the Calgary region with a trip west of the city into the forested regions, though our exact destination will be determined by weather conditions and need. In any case, we'll be searching for a variety of forest birds that could include American Goshawk, Great Gray and Northern Hawk owls (if we still need them, or even if we don't!), Northern Pygmy-Owl, Pileated, Black-backed and American Three-toed woodpeckers, Canada Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain and Boreal chickadees, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper, Pine and Evening grosbeaks, Pine Siskin, and both Red and White-winged crossbills. Night in Calgary.

**Day 5, Wed, 17 Feb. Calgary region.** Today will find us heading out east into the prairies. This wide open country allows for limitless vistas, and an abundance of rodent life in the grasslands and agricultural areas can attract a good number of raptors. Snowy Owl numbers vary from year to year, but there are almost always a few around somewhere. Other aerial predators that we can encounter include Short-eared Owl, Golden Eagle, and Rough-legged Hawk, and Gray Partridge, Black-billed Magpie, Horned Lark, Snow Bunting, and Redpoll are among the other open-country species we may see today. Night in Calgary.

**Day 6, Thu, 18 Feb. Calgary region.** We'll have a final day to bird in the Calgary region, which we'll use to target whatever local species we are still missing. Most likely we'll spend at least part of this day at a local park where the Bow River remains open through the winter, attracting in a variety of overwintering waterfowl which most winters includes Harlequin Duck and Barrow's Goldeneye, as well as at least one or two winter rarities. Bald Eagles are usually staking out a territory here by this time, and American Dippers may be found here in some winters as well. Night in Calgary.

**Day 7, Fri, 19 Feb. Departure from Calgary.** Please take the hotel shuttle to the airport for your flight home. Safe travels!

## About Your Guide

Born and raised in Calgary, **Dan Arndt** graduated from the University of Calgary's Natural Sciences program in 2006. Working a desk job for a few years after graduating led him to develop a passion for photography and for birds. In 2013 he launched his career in environmental consulting. He then began guiding birding groups locally in 2015 and farther abroad the following year.

Dan has been a co-leader for the Field Guides *Owlberta: Alberta's Owls & More* tour since 2019 and the *Canadian Rockies: Alberta* tour since 2022, and he has also guided privately throughout central and western Canada. When he's not guiding or consulting as a wildlife biologist, he spends his time skiing, biking, and taking care of his two cats and two crested geckos at home in Calgary, Alberta.

*"The tour was fantastic—it exceeded my expectations in terms of guidance, scenery, and camaraderie. I loved it! **Dan Arndt** was a fantastic birding guide—skilled, knowledgeable, tireless, and patient. I would highly recommend him and would definitely travel with him again." S.H., Canadian Rockies: Alberta*

**Sam Wilson** grew up in New Jersey and had his spark moment as a young adult visiting Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. On his first visit he witnessed an epic migration of 10,000 Broad-winged Hawks as they took to the skies over the Appalachian ridges. He was hooked, and his fascination with bird migration has only grown.

Sam spent four years working in Cape May, New Jersey, for New Jersey Audubon developing bird migration programs for school groups and families and leading group trips for Cape May Bird Observatory and New Jersey Young Birders Club. He enjoyed a stint in the Hawaiian Islands doing breeding bird surveys in the remote Alakai Swamp for the Kauai Forest Birds Recovery project (though his gear didn't recover!).

Eventually, wanderlust led him to Alaska, where he led backcountry trips focused on birds and wildlife in Denali National Park, as well as guided trips for birding festivals along the Kenai Peninsula and Copper River. He has since led group trips as a naturalist-guide in most regions of the country with a special focus on National Parks and Wilderness areas. Sam is an eBird reviewer in Alaska and contributor to both *Cape May Magazine* and ABA's *Birding* magazine.

When not experimenting with flight photography, investigating nocturnal migration, or researching biodiversity hot spots, Sam enjoys backpacking, growing super-hot peppers, discovering new music, and creating experimental dishes (usually Asian cuisine). Sam and his wife, Margeaux, have spent months traveling around the world seeking out rare birds and wildlife. They currently reside in Anchorage, Alaska.

*"**Sam** is an expert guide and one of the best spotters we've ever experienced. He was great to get us on hard-to-see birds. He worked well with all the participants and was knowledgeable about the birds and plants." A.D., Texas Coast Migration Spectacle*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for complete tour schedules for Dan and Sam; just click on their photos.

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$3150 per person from Edmonton to Calgary**

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$450**

**DEPOSIT: \$325 per person**

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 17, 2026**

**LIMIT: 10**

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Maria Zaslavskaya. Maria will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact her!

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** This tour begins in Edmonton, Alberta (Edmonton International Airport, YEG) and ends in Calgary, Alberta (Calgary International Airport, YYC).

**Arrival: Edmonton (YEG) on February 13, in time to meet the group at 6:30 p.m.**

**Departure: Calgary (YYC) on February 19, at any time.**

Please wait to purchase airline tickets until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate. At that time, we'll be glad to assist with your flight arrangements at no service fee.

**DOCUMENTS:** Be sure to verify the latest entry requirements for each country you will visit or transit.

**Passport:** A valid passport is required for international travel. It should be in good condition, valid beyond your return date (6 months recommended), and contain at least one blank page for each country on your itinerary.

**Visa:** U.S. citizens are not required to obtain a visa for a short tourist visit. Non-US citizens should consult the consulates of each destination for current entry requirements.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** **The tour fee is \$3150 for one person in double occupancy from Edmonton.**

It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 6, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 7, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

**The above fee does not include** your airfare to Edmonton and from Calgary, airport taxes, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

**The single supplement is \$450 for those requesting a single room.** If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** **To register for this tour, please contact us at [fieldguides.com/contact-us/](https://fieldguides.com/contact-us/).** Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

**Please send your deposit of \$325 per person;** see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or by August 17, 2026.** We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later. Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**TOUR LIMITS:** Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open.

**SMOKING:** Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refund of deposit and full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or

change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to protect your investment in case of injury or illness to you or an immediate family member before or during a trip. Because we must remit early and substantial deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer refunds for cancellations outside of our Cancellation Policy. If a participant is unable to join or continue a tour due to illness, all related expenses will be their responsibility, and no refunds can be issued for missed days. Please wait to purchase insurance until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate, as most policies are non-refundable.

For full details, visit our Trip Cancellation Insurance page at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/>.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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