

# BC & Alberta

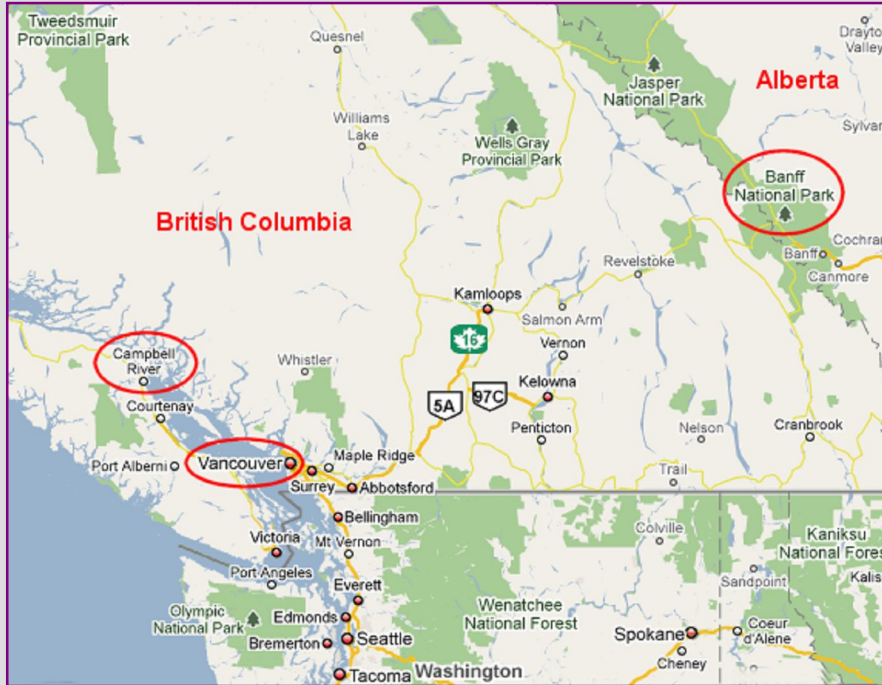


# Canada



11<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2009





Sunday, 13th	Stanley Park, Vancouver	9.30 - 18.00
Tuesday, 15th	Grizzly Bear trip to Orford River, Bute Inlet	9.00 - 17.00
Wednesday, 16th	Whale watching trip to Johnson Strait	10.00 - 17:00
Wednesday, 23rd	Marsh Loop, Banff Vermilion Lakes, Banff	10.00 - 11.30 11.30 - 12.15

# British Columbia & Alberta, Canada

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## Introduction

The prime reason for this trip to Western Canada was to see Grizzly Bears hunting salmon in the autumn, prior to hibernation. While this could be done in Alaska, using Vancouver as a base would combine the city itself, some whale watching from the Vancouver Island base, and also a trip to the Canadian Rockies. We found that all this could be combined quite easily, and at a relatively good cost, from this base. Very little specific birdwatching was conducted, so most sightings were secondary to the activities we had planned.



For the Grizzly Bears, it is necessary to travel over to Vancouver Island, and then use one of the tour companies to be transported back to the BC mainland for the day where the bears can be found (there are generally only Black Bears on the island, although 5 Grizzlies had been reported recently). One of the best known viewpoints is at Knights Inlet. To get here, there is either a float plane and overnight stay (which is very expensive), or day tours by boat using Riptide Tours. Both are from Telegraph Cove, which is quite a trek up the eastern roads of the island from the ferry. We decided to go for the next option, which was to stay at Campbell River, and use one of the tour companies which take you to Bute Inlet, which is the next one down on the mainland from Knight's Inlet. This is to be recommended, since it not only is more or less a guaranteed spot for bears in September, but is also cheaper, a shorter drive from the ferry, and a better base for whale watching.

The Rockies section of the trip took some decisions, from where to visit, to how many nights in one particular place. Final plan was to drive to Banff, and use this as a single base for the remainder of the holiday. Birds were in low numbers here, but the impact of the National Parks was awe inspiring (a pass is required for each day spent at any of the Canadian National Parks).

## Timing and weather

Since the trip was based around the Grizzlies, the timing had to coincide with their peak activity. The salmon usually start their upstream runs towards the end of August (although it has been slightly later the last couple of years), and end mid October. So the middle of September seemed to be the optimum time. The tour company who we used and could thoroughly recommend is Aboriginal Journeys ([www.aboriginaljourneys.com](http://www.aboriginaljourneys.com)), who include a free return trip if no bears are seen on the paid for trip (during September).

Most of the Summer visiting birds have left by this time, and only a scattering of Winter visitors have arrived, but it is also a good time for Killer Whales, since the resident population are supplemented by the more carnivorous transients. It is worth booking a trip with an enclosed boat for this due to the high possibility of rain (Discovery Marine Safaris at [www.adventurewhalewatching.com](http://www.adventurewhalewatching.com) provide this - I would not recommend

Campbell River Whale Watching, since they not only use Zodiacs which are open to the elements, but also do not value customers enough by cancelling long term bookings, such as ours, for more lucrative short term group bookings). We did have rain and cold weather during our whale watching tour, although overall the sun and temperatures were much higher than the temperate ones expected for the time of year.

## Getting around

With the demise of Zoom airways, Canadian Affair ([www.canadianaffair.com](http://www.canadianaffair.com)) is about the only budget airline left flying to Canada. They use Thomas Cook as one of the main providers of planes, and offer an excellent, good value service to some of the prime locations in Canada, including Vancouver. It would seem that the pricing is done in the old fashioned way - cheaper flights can be had the nearer to the date of departure you book).

British Columbia (and the adjacent part of Alberta which we visited) is huge, leaving long driving times between stops). We picked up a car in Vancouver, and drove to Campbell River on Vancouver Island via the Horseshoe Bay to Nanaimo BC ferry ([www.bcf ferries.com](http://www.bcf ferries.com)). This is a slightly shorter crossing than that from Tsawassan to Nanaimo. We travelled on a Monday and Friday, when it is worth booking the journey ahead of time, since not all were guaranteed a place, and those with bookings go to the front of the queue.

Petrol in Canada is still a lot cheaper in the UK (about half the cost), but the distances driven put up the total eventual cost (apart from the fact that we had a free upgrade to a Ford Mustang GT - heavy on the gas, but a total treat). It is also worth planning ahead for petrol stations, particularly in the Rockies, where there can be some distance between fuel stops.

## Accommodation



**Vancouver** offers a mass of varied prices, locations, and quality of accommodation. We were recommended the Sunset Inn & Suites ([www.sunsetinn.com](http://www.sunsetinn.com)), and they were both spacious and in a good location. The latter since we were a stone's throw away from the waterfront and ferry to Granville Island, with downtown about 20 minutes walk. Breakfast was included, which was of the continental type.

There are one or two chain motels in downtown **Campbell River**, but we were much happier with our choice - Hidden Harbour B&B ([www.hiddenharbour-bb.com](http://www.hiddenharbour-bb.com)). It is located about 20 minutes walk South of downtown, but has an excellent location overlooking the water. If you book early enough, you can get the very spacious 2 bedroomed suite for the same price as the non-en suite rooms. One of the biggest selling points is the superb breakfast served every morning between 6-10 am. And Freddy's Pub 5 minutes walk way does good inexpensive food and decent local beer.







Again frowning on downtown accommodation in **Banff**, we stayed at the base of tunnel mountain drive, with another spacious suite at Douglas Fir Resort ([www.douglasfir.com](http://www.douglasfir.com)). One of the benefits of this location is that it is a little nearer the forest for wildlife (although deer and elk do sometimes pass through Banff main street).

## Vancouver



Two full days were spent in Vancouver, and wildlife wise it can be separated into two individual districts - downtown and Stanley Park. Our hotel was located to the South of the downtown area, so the first day was either within the confines of the streets and blocks of urbanisation, or the occasional break offered by the shoreline surrounding here.

No surprises were offered by the paved streets and occasional tree lined avenues. Northwestern Crows are abundant throughout, only being interspersed with introduced Starlings and House Sparrows. American Herring Gulls seem to be the most frequent of the roof dwelling gulls. Occasionally, the throaty calls of Black-capped Chickadees can be heard.

The waters prying their way among the densely inhabited streets offer Ring-billed & Glaucous-winged to the American Herring Gull fair. Cormorants are extremely common. At first, these were mainly Double-crested, with a sizable roosting colony under the supports of one of the main bridges. Pelagic Cormorants can eventually be picked out from their larger cousins. Best bird by far over one of the beaches was a hunting Cooper's Hawk, although its impact may have been lessened when a Striped Skunk was chanced upon as it ambled its way around one of the smaller parks during the dark of evening not far from our accommodation.

The day spent walking Stanley Park offered a much greater variety of species. The drill was to walk the circumference, which was in effect the full walking track encircling the park. This was done, with no particular significance, in a clockwise direction, along with a tide of walkers and joggers. Most of the route had cyclists, roller bladers, and assorted other wheeled carriages separated on to a separate track. This offered a view of the sea inlets to our left, with the vegetation of the park on the right.

Early successes were separating Glaucous-winged Gulls from American Herring, and Pelagic Cormorant from Double-crested. Amongst the numerous moulting eclipse

Mallards scattered amongst the rocks of the shoreline was an almost unobtrusive female Harlequin Duck. A single sparrow in reedy vegetation was a Song Sparrow.



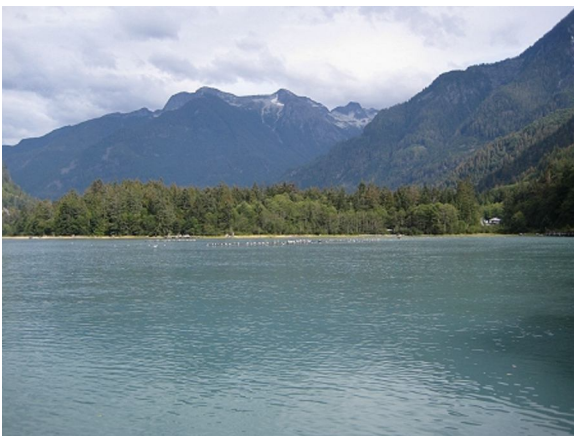
As we completed the outer part of the walk, forays were made into the interior, with first blood going to a Sharp-shinned Hawk, chasing an American Crow before landing in a tree briefly as we snacked. A Red-necked Grebe was almost below us in the marina area, before Eastern Grey Squirrels (introduced and mainly of the melanistic form) became reasonably common along the interior trails.

Lost Lake was mainly good for common wildfowl, although a single Wood Duck was picked out from the accompanying Mallards. Best spectacle was a pair of Northern Raccoons playing about at the apex of the lagoon, enticing a crowd to watch. Birds were picked up while here, with a Grey Catbird among mainly Black-capped Chickadees. Best move of the day was not only to take one of the trails back to the beach route home, but also to follow up a small group of photographers peering up at a bush. It contained a superb Barred Owl, generally unconcerned with the attention it was receiving. Just along from here, a couple of Douglas Squirrels were busily collecting and hoarding food for the winter.

## Grizzlies

The whole holiday had been based around seeing Grizzly Bears in the wilds of the salmon rivers, hopefully seeing them catching the fish in fast flowing rivers. The original plan to drive the 3 plus hours to Telegraph Cove was scrapped in favour of Campbell River, since the latter offered a small platter of companies organising boat trips to the BC mainland in search of the designated prey, landing at Bute Inlet rather than the better known Knight's Inlet. The final experience of the day would suggest that the extra money and time invested in Knight's Inlet was perhaps unnecessary, since we had excellent encounters with bears in close up and more.

After arriving at the departure point a little early, I wandered along the top of the marina for a short while, where a couple of Sparrows (Song & Savannah) were flitting between bushes, with a female McGilvray's Warbler a little more obliging.



The two of us were accompanied by nine others on the boat, which was not the usual one used by Gary of Aboriginal Journeys, since his own was in the repair dock after having run into a log a few days earlier. Nevertheless, Bjorn and his trusty, and nifty, boat was an adequate replacement. The journey to the dock at the Orford River took about 2 hours, with some titbits of birds on the way. A separate brace of Bald Eagles represented a poor showing for these magnificent birds. Seabirds were difficult to identify from the speeding boat, although a



pair of Marbled Murrelets obliged when we stopped to play with some Pacific White-sided Dolphins. Near to our goal, rafts of hundreds of Surf Scoters were passed.

Just as we were about to manoeuvre for docking, the first Grizzly was spotted on the shore, ambling along between discarded logs, one of which sported a Bald Eagle. A Belted Kingfisher flew overhead as we boarded the bus.

Some hours were spent flitting between 3 of the 5 observation towers provided for safe viewing of the bears. Each of the towers had at least one bear to observe, and this was generally at very close quarters. The salmon had apparently come late to the rivers following a dry summer, but numbers were now up on last year. Conversely, the numbers of bears seems to be down. Yet they performed well for us, with one obliging by taking a huge salmon from the shore.



One or two species of birds were also seen from the platforms. Pick was perhaps the brace of female Harlequin Ducks feeding contentedly directly in front of platform 5, while 2 Goosanders were passed by. A Belted Kingfisher used a large dead log in the centre of the river for its dining lookout. A pair of American Dippers were a further resident of this particular stretch of water.

The return journey added a small number of Western Grebes (in Winter plumage) and a Great Northern Diver, but these were topped by a small posse of Dall's Porpoises playing around the boat, looking for all the world like mini Orcas due to their pied markings.

### Whale watching

Lying just behind the grizzlies as the focal point of the planned holiday was a trip out to see Killer Whales. Thus it was that we had a trip booked for the second day at Campbell River to hunt down Orcas, which didn't start quite as planned. We had booked with Campbell River Whale Watching tours in March, and I had just happened to check emails from the previous evening to find that this had been cancelled. The apparent reason was that they had had a better offer from a larger group who insisted on a private trip, so we had been "bumped". This may have been a blessing in disguise, since we were rebooked on a covered boat, as opposed to the open Zodiacs, and the day started with constant rain.



This continued on our journey up the Inner Passage, where a pair of Rhinoceros Auklets were the only auks out of a small offering to be positively identified. Such is the problem of picking out characters from a speeding boat. The flocks of Surf Scoter were somewhat smaller than yesterday, but did contain one or two lines of Velvet Scoter. Searching through the many Gulls also revealed the presence of good numbers of Glaucous.

Cetaceans were again regularly chanced upon, but not of the main quarry. A small group of Dall's Porpoises followed an obliging posse of Pacific White-sided Dolphins, but it was the finding of a single Humpback Whale which caused us to pause in our pursuit of Orcas for some time. This whale characteristically made 3-4 short surface breaths before a prolonged dive.

The quest seemed to be fruitless, since the boat powered on far up the Johnson Strait, beyond the sightings of previous days. Then a rather large collection of White-sided Dolphins was spotted in front of the opposite shore, and this throng of at least 50 animals playfully danced between the 3 boats in attendance. During the show, I spotted what looked to be a large dorsal fin next to the distant shore, and this proved to be one of the resident A30 family, which was said to consist of 11 Killer Whales. This group entertained us for over an hour, content to generally stay within a few hundred metre length of shoreline waters (although at least one of the larger males broke off to the Vancouver Island shoreline). It was also here that we downed lunches, with the boat bobbing along to the cetacean entertainment.

## Banff

Our resort accommodation was located below Tunnel Mountain, outside of the main hubbub of the small town centre. It was surrounded by Douglas Fir, with some open areas. Dark-eyed Juncos (and a Red Squirrel) were seen from inside the living room, but most obvious birds were crows - Black-billed Magpies, American Crows & Ravens in good numbers. A small manicured area outside of the Mountain Lodge opposite had a mix of only half a dozen bushes and small trees, but was a regular spot for Sparrows (White-crowned & White-throated), as well as Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Pine Siskin, and Wilson's Warbler. Adjoining conifers held Grey Jay, more Red Squirrels, and a Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel. Another morning produced a single Clarke's Nutcracker at the top of one of the conifers, as did a walk to the top of Tunnel Mountain.



The walk along the Bow River to Bow Falls from town picked up a few morsels. In amongst the Ruby-crowned Kinglets was at least one Golden-crowned Kinglet. Listening to the Chickadees picked up a different call to the common Black-capped, and those seen proved to be Mountain. The falls and the river are a clear turquoise wash from the glaciers, and this proved a lure to the single Goosander below the falls. The handful of Gulls patrolling the waters seemed to be all Ring-billed.

Vermilion Lakes were scanned on the return from Lake Louise. Good numbers of wildfowl were on the lake covered, but most were Mallard. However, 5 male Hooded Mergansers were amongst them, along with 2 Goosanders. A visit to the lakes later on in the week, by way of the adjoining track, only added a pair of Song Sparrows.

## The Marsh Loop

An hour and a half was spent circumnavigating this loop on the last full day in Banff. It is a very aesthetically pleasing walk, taking in not only the pool at the centre of the loop, but also giving magnificent views of the icy Bow River with mountainous backdrop.



Downside is that the loop track is also a bridleway, so you have to watch for the nags and horse poo.



The pool, which is of a reasonable size, was devoid of bird life, and it wasn't until almost half way round that I came across a couple of Ruby-crowned Kinglets. More avian desert was to follow, with a couple of Dark-eyed Juncos and single White-throated Sparrow sparking of a bit of a bird rush. Just before the 75m long board walk above the marsh were a pair of scruffy looking Varied Thrushes. An American Robin landed on the top of the boardwalk, and a Grey-cheeked Thrush on the descent.

The boardwalk is probably very productive in season, since it not only looks over the marsh from above, but also protrudes a little way into the marsh itself. On leaving the boardwalk, a Dark-eyed Junco preceded an active flock of Golden-crowned Kinglets and slightly lesser numbers of Black-capped Chickadees.

### Lake Louise / Moraine Lake

Before heading to the twin lake tourist hotspots, a circuit was made of the road to Lake Minnewanka. The dammed lake is mainly reserved for watersports and tours, but the short road loop is supposed to be quite good for critters. We didn't see any evidence of this, although one of the clearings had a few busy Grey Jays.

We took the Bow Valley Parkway to Lake Louise, which runs parallel to the much busier #1 highway, but this was again devoid of mammalian life to us. The shorefront at Lake Louise is infamous for it's mass of tourists, but we probably hit a decent time of year, since their numbers seemed well past the peak. However, the Clark's Nutcrackers seemed to be much more fond of the multi-cultural comings and goings, since they acted as the local breadcrumb scavengers.

The camera toting hordes can be quickly left behind by taking the trails along or up from the lake. We chose the climb to Lake Agnes, and the well known attending tea shop. This hike passes through the mainly coniferous trails, with occasional openings for required views of the turquoise vista below. Prize on the ascent was an American Three-toed Woodpecker, picking its way along the trunks of the conifers. Red Squirrels were also occasional, with one gathering what looked like a store of mushrooms. The stop at Mirror Lake found a very obliging Grey Jay, probably looking for titbits.



The tea house at Lake Agnes was another treat for Clarke's Nutcracker fans, since many of the tourists blatantly ignore the signs not to feed the animals, actively encouraging the

Nutcrackers to beg by the tables. The few Grey Jays and Dark-eyed Juncos here are a little less forthcoming.



Moraine Lake is a much smaller yet possibly even more stunning affair than Lake Louise. Birds were very much less obvious here (apart from a few Dark-eyed Juncos, Ravens, and a single Grey Jay), but mammals were quite good. The short walk up to the lake viewpoint found singles of both Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel and Least Chipmunk, more or less oblivious of the passing hiking shoes and high heels mix. Prized asset was a North American Porcupine, slowly making its way from the side of the road to tree cover on our descent.

### Icefields Parkway

THE reason for driving the parkway is the magnificent views of the glaciers and turquoise lakes which dot its length. To do the whole length justice would take the whole day, so we did under half the length (just short of the Icefield Centre) and took our time at the breathtaking sights.

Birds and mammals were few and far between, even though a couple of walks were taken. Most common were ubiquitous Ravens, which were usually single or in pairs by the roadside, and quite often hopefully looking on at stopping points. A Red-tailed Hawk over the Saskatchewan River area was the first dark morph I had seen from many Red-tails over the years.



The short trek up to the Peyto Lake lookout point was taken for what is reputed to be one of the best lake views in the area. There is no doubt that the lake is a stunning colour and in a remarkable setting, but the small lookout platform and area in front tends to be noisy and a little crowded. The onlooking Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels didn't mind, though. The undergrowth on the return turned up trumps, with a trio of Spruce Grouse foraging next to the path, unperturbed by our presence.

Perhaps best move of the day was to walk up the 2 miles or so of the Parker Ridge trail. This ascends through the treeline, with the promise of goodies such as Grey-crowned Rosy Finch, but a greater prize is the view of what I felt was the most stunning of glaciers running from Mount Saskatchewan. A group of birds working the scree were not the hoped for finches, but Shorelarks. Only bird on the descent was a Red-breasted Nuthatch, and a brace of White-tailed Deer crossed the road back at the Saskatchewan River.

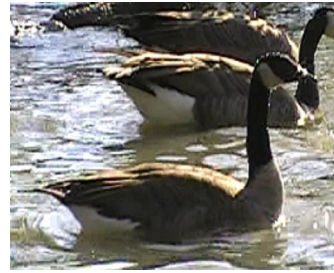


## SPECIES SEEN

### **Spruce Grouse**

*Falcapennis canadensis*

A group of 3 were found by the trail descending from Peyto Lake, within only metres of the car park. First impression was of the size of a small Red/Willow Grouse. They were unperturbed by the presence of passing tourists, and even managed to muster up a small "grouse-jam"



### **Canada Goose**

*Branta canadensis*

These were particularly common in Vancouver, with many small groups along the shoreline and within Stanley Park. There was some distinct size variation within the birds seen, although all were likely to have been of the *B. c. fulva* subspecies which is usually found here

### **Mallard**

*Anas platyrhynchos*

Common throughout the trip in all three major localities. There were many small to medium groups around Vancouver's shoreline, ~20 on the channel when on the whale watching trip, and ~70 on the Vermilion Lakes at Banff

### **Harlequin Duck**

*Histrionicus histrionicus*

The 3 birds seen were a treat, since I wasn't sure of their status at this time of year. All were females. The first was swimming alongside the rocky shore of Stanley Park. The second 2 were together on the Orford River, directly in front of the 5th platform on the grizzly tour



### **Surf Scoter**

*Melanitta perspicillata*

This was the most common duck seen from the boats on both the grizzly and whale watching trips. Numbers were in the hundreds, with some in very large flocks both on the water and in the air

### **White-winged Scoter**

*Melanitta deglandi*

A group of ~30 flew past the boat on the whale watching tour

### **Hooded Merganser**

*Lophodytes cucullatus*

At least 13 birds were on one of the Vermilion Lakes at Banff. The males were in superb breeding plumage

### **Goosander**

*Mergus merganser*

2 on the Orford River in front of the platforms during the grizzly tour; 4 on the sea during the whale watching trip; a group of 10 near to shore while walking the Rotary Trail at Campbell River; 1 just below Bow River Falls, Banff; 2 on Lake Louise; 2 on the Vermilion Lakes, Banff

### **Red-throated Diver**

*Gavia stellata*

~30 seen from the boat on the whale watching trip, usually in small groups flying past

### **Great Northern Diver**

*Gavia immer*

Many of the divers flying by couldn't be identified from the moving boat, but 2 were seen on the grizzly tour, and 1 was on the water and seen from the Rotary Walk at Campbell River

**Red-necked Grebe***Podiceps grisegena*

A single bird was feeding in the marina between Stanley Park and Vancouver downtown

**Western Grebe***Aechmophorus occidentalis*

~10 amongst the many wildfowl on the grizzly trip

**Great Blue Heron***Ardea herodias*

Only seen on the shoreline around Vancouver, where 1 was feeding next to the shore on the first afternoon, with at least 8 on the walk around Stanley Park

**Pelagic Cormorant***Leucocarbo pelagicus*

Quite common around the shores of Vancouver and Stanley Park. They appeared to be the only cormorant seen from the boat on the grizzly and whale watching tours

**Double-crested Cormorant***Phalacrocorax auritus*

Common around the shores of Vancouver and Stanley Park. There was a large roosting collection of these and smaller numbers of Pelagic Cormorants under the bridge alongside Granville Island

**Turkey Vulture***Cathartes aura*

Most were seen on Vancouver Island, with 5 on the journey from Nanaimo to Campbell River and 2 around Campbell River itself. 2 were over the ferry from Nanaimo back to Horseshoe Bay, and a group of 4 on the journey from Banff to Vancouver were the only ones seen over the mainland

**Western Osprey***Pandion haliaetus*

1 perched beside one of the lakes between the sea to sky highway and Whistler

**Bald Eagle***Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

At this time of the year, it's possible that many of these have moved up to the salmon spawning grounds to feed on dead fish. This could explain why only a handful was seen. 2 were from the boat near to Campbell River while sailing to the grizzly site on the Orford River, with a third bird waiting for us on the shore at the river itself. 2 further birds were seen in Campbell River from the Rotary Walk

**Sharp-shinned Hawk***Accipiter striatus*

1 within Vancouver

**Cooper's Hawk***Accipiter cooperii*

1 over the shoreline near to our hotel in Vancouver

**Red-tailed Hawk***Buteo jamaicensis*

1 on the journey from Whistler to Kamloops. A second bird was the first dark phase I had seen, hunting over the Saskatchewan River in the Icefields Parkway

**Golden Eagle***Aquila chrysaetos*

1 over the car on the journey from Whistler to Kamloops

**American Kestrel***Falco sparverius*

2 over the trees during the walk along the Rotary Trail at Campbell River

**Wandering Tattler***Tringa incana*

3 with a group of Black Turnstones on shingle next to the ferry at Nanaimo, seen from the deck as the boat departed

**Black Turnstone***Arenaria melanocephala*

8 in the group of waders above

**Sanderling***Calidris alba*

A group of 5 flew past the boat on the grizzly trip

**Bonaparte's Gull***Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

~40 from the boat during the whale watching trip

**Common Gull***Larus canus*

Common around Campbell River and during the boat trips



**Ring-billed Gull***Larus delawarensis*

The most widespread gull seen, in reasonable numbers from Vancouver Island to the Rockies

**Glaucous-winged Gull***Larus glaucescens*

Very common on the shores of Vancouver and Vancouver Island

**Glaucous Gull***Larus hyperboreus*

Quite common on both boat trips

**American Herring Gull***Larus smithsonianus*

Very common throughout Vancouver and Vancouver Island

**Guillemot***Uria aalge*

2 definite birds identified on both the grizzly and the whale watching trips

**Marbled Murrelet***Brachyramphus marmoratus*

Auks were seen now and again from the boat on both trips, but were generally frustratingly distant or with too much movement to identify. 2 were not far out from shore on the grizzly trip

**Rhinoceros Auklet***Cerorhinca monocerata*

4 on the whale watching trip

**Mourning Dove***Zenaida macroura*

1 only at Bute Inlet

**Barred Owl***Strix varia*

This bird was an unexpected treat. After completing the shore walk around Stanley Park, we took one of the interior trails, where a couple of local birders were photographing what may have been a regular bird perched just above head height and right next to the path

**Belted Kingfisher***Megasceryle alcyon*

1 flew from the shore to the interior of Stanley Park; 2 on the grizzly trip (1 perched on a log in the Orford River); 1 unexpectedly flying around the timbers of the quay from the ferry at Nanaimo

**Downy Woodpecker***Picoides pubescens*

1 downtown Banff

**American Three-toed Woodpecker***Picoides dorsalis*

1 from the trail up to Lake St Agnes at Lake Louise. It spent some time tree hopping between trees not far from the path

**Northern Flicker***Colaptes auratus*

1 from the car on the journey from Kamloops to Banff

**Western Wood Pewee***Contopus sordidulus*

1 heard only at the Marsh Loop, Banff

**Grey Jay**

*Perisoreus canadensis*

Not a difficult bird to see when in The Rockies, and they can be quite confiding. The first was next to the cabins of Douglas Fir Resort, Banff. Best numbers were ~15 at Lake Louise, being seen from the lakefront up to the Lake St Agnes. 2 very confiding birds were seen at a stop off car park during the journey from Banff to Vancouver



**Steller's Jay**

*Cyanocitta stelleri*

Only seen on the journey from Banff to Vancouver, with ~10 birds. They were often on the emergency shoulder of the main highway, or hopping up for scraps at the stop off

**Black-billed Magpie**

*Pica hudsonia*

Not seen until Banff, where they were a regular feature, either singly or in groups of up to 7. They were also seen in small numbers on the journey from Banff to Vancouver, and during trips around the Rockies



**Clark's Nutcracker**

*Nucifraga columbiana*

Best numbers were at Lake Louise (~20), where they were around tourists' feet from the lakeshore to the tea house at Lake St Agnes, feeding from both discarded scraps and proffered titbits. 2 further birds were subsequently seen in Banff, 1 next to the Douglas Fir Resort, the second at the peak of Tunnel Mountain

**American Crow**

*Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Very common in the Rockies



**Northwestern Crow**

*Corvus caurinus*

This is a very confusing species, since it looks almost identical to American Crow, but apparently has a different call. It is also the crow found on Vancouver Island and Vancouver (as part of its north-western coastal distribution) where it is very common in both town and country

**Northern Raven**

*Corvus corax*

Very common, seen at all altitudes, from Vancouver Island to The Rockies, and from dense forests to town centres





**Black-capped Chickadee** *Poecile atricapillus*

Common in Vancouver (both Stanley Park and downtown), and in the Banff area

**Mountain Chickadee** *Poecile gambeli*

At least 3 birds identified in Banff, next to the Bow River / downtown

**Shorelark** *Eremophila alpestris*

~16 on the summit of the Parker Ridge trail in the Icefields Parkway

**Golden-crowned Kinglet** *Regulus satrapa*

1 was with a small group of Ruby-crowned Kinglets next to the Bow River/downtown Banff. Many more were with chickadees (~16) towards the end of the Marsh Loop at Banff

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet** *Regulus calendula*

Two's and three's seen occasionally around Banff

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** *Sitta canadensis*

1 on the descent from the Parker Ridge Trail, Icefields Parkway. A second flew across the car park above the hoodoos, Banff

**Brown Creeper** *Certhia americana*

1 in Stanley Park

**Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common in or around habitation near to the coast

**Varied Thrush** *Ixoreus naevius*

2 together at the Marsh Loop, Banff

**Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus*

1 flew over the boardwalk within the trees at the Marsh Loop, Banff

**American Robin** *Turdus migratorius*

2 on the Marsh Loop, Banff; 4 at the stop off on the journey from Banff to Vancouver

**American Dipper** *Cinclus mexicanus*

2 on the Orford River in front of the viewing platforms

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

Quite common in Vancouver and at some towns elsewhere during the trip

**Pine Siskin** *Carduelis pinus*

2 in a conifer at Douglas Fir Resort

**American Yellow Warbler** *Dendroica aestiva*

2 together on the Rotary Trail, Campbell River

**Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata*

1 Douglas Fir Resort

**MacGillivray's Warbler** *Oporornis tolmiei*

1 female in a lone bush next to the marina at Campbell River

**Wilson's Warbler** *Wilsonia pusilla*

3 separate birds were seen in Banff

**Common Grackle** *Quiscalus quiscula*

Strangely, the only birds seen were ~30 around the overnight hotel in Kamloops

**Song Sparrow***Melospiza melodia*

The birds in this area of North America are generally quite dark red/brown on the back and parts of the head, contrasting with slate grey head pattern. The ones seen were also near water in all cases, and very retiring: 2 Stanley Park; 1 the marina, Campbell River; 3 Rotary Walk, Campbell River; 2 Vermilion Lakes, Banff

**White-crowned Sparrow***Zonotrichia leucophrys*

4 Douglas Fir Resort, Banff (1 adult, 3 juveniles)

**White-throated Sparrow***Zonotrichia albicollis*

1 Douglas Fir Resort, Banff; 1 Marsh Loop, Banff

**Dark-eyed Junco***Junco hyemalis*

The race in this area is the smart Oregon type. 2 were at Campbell River, but most other birds were seen in The Rockies, with up to 10 in any one day

**Savannah Sparrow***Passerculus sandwichensis*

1 at the marina, Campbell River; another during the Rotary Walk, Campbell River

**Total Species = 73**

## Mammals Seen

**Striped Skunk***Mephitis mephitis*

This fellow was a surprise, found ambling through a small park in the late evening darkness near to our hotel in Vancouver

**Raccoon***Procyon lotor*

The most likely place to see these was Stanley Park in Vancouver, and at least 5 different individuals were very tame in one section next to Lost Lake

**Grizzly Bear***Ursus arctos*

Apparently, there are higher numbers of these in Banff National Park than Black Bears, but they tend to stay further away from habitation. So, the best way to see them in action is to take a trip from Vancouver Island to one of the inlets holding salmon runs on the mainland. We saw at least 5 different bears at the Orford River, which flows into Bute Inlet. The first was on the shore as we arrived, with the second an inquisitive youngster from the bus. The other 3 were seen at the viewing platforms, with one catching a huge salmon as we gawped





**Black Bear***Ursus americanus*

The only one seen was in the distance, crossing the meadows below the cable car at Jasper (looked at from downtown)

**Humpback Whale***Megaptera novaeangliae*

One seen on both the outward and return journey looking for Orca on the whale watching trip

**Pacific White-sided Dolphin***Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*

This is a hugely entertaining dolphin, since it likes to play around in the wake of passing boats. We saw about 5 different groups during our two boat trips, with one containing at least 50 individuals

**Killer Whale***Orcinus orca*

Despite being a regular around Vancouver Island, these still have to be found, and it took some time and a long ride up the Johnson Straight to locate this family of 11. However, once found, they stayed along the same small stretch of coast while we ate our lunch

**Dall's Porpoise***Phocoenoides dalli*

This porpoise is marked in similar patterns to killer whales, but is obviously much smaller. A group of 5 were around the boat during the grizzly trip

**Black-tailed Deer***Odocoileus hemionus*

The most common deer seen by far, and usually very confiding. The first 2, and subsequently group of 6, were wandering amongst the buildings next to the road on the Rotary Walk, Campbell River. A group of 5 wandered through the Mountain Lodge Resort, Banff, and a mother with calf after our descent from Tunnel Mountain were totally unconcerned by us on the other side of the road

**White-tailed deer***Odocoileus virginianus*

2 together Icefields Parkway

**Bighorn Sheep***Ovis canadensis*

~9 next to the road on the journey from Kamloops to Banff

**Eastern Grey Squirrel***Sciurus carolinensis*

~10, including a few melanistic forms, in Stanley Park

**Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel***Spermophilus lateralis*

Three very obliging individuals seen, both at tourist hotspots - Moraine Lake viewpoint and (2) at the Peyto Lake lookout

**Least Chipmunk***Tamias minimus*

1 along the Lake St Agnes Trail, Lake Louise; 1 the Marsh Loop, Banff; 1 on the summit of Tunnel Mountain, Banff

**Douglas's Squirrel**

*Tamiasciurus douglasii*

One was playing with fire by collecting nuts and crossing the trail with them near to the Barred Owl in Stanley Park

**Red Squirrel**

*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*

Seen regularly in the woods of The Rockies



**North American Porcupine**

*Erethizon dorsatum*

1 beside the road on the descent from Moraine Lake towards Lake Louise village

**American Pika**

*Ochotona princeps*

1 crossed the St Agnes Trail at Lake Louise

**TOTAL MAMMAL SPECIES = 18**