

SASKATCHEWAN

Heading to Saskatchewan

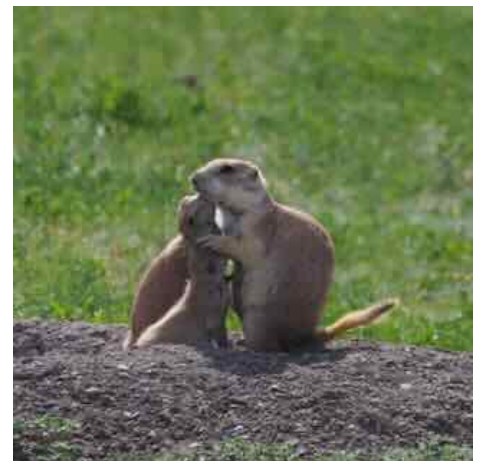
The Saskatchewan Road Trip
begins (and ends). From
Alberta!!

Grasslands National Park

We were searching for Bison.
We found so much more!

Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area

An unexpected find! An
historic sanctuary for migrating
birds.





'What do you want to go Saskatchewan for?' That's what most people asked in credulity when we told them where else we were going to be visiting in Canada. It is 'flat and boring,' they said. You won't like it! I say most people - we did meet a few people from Saskatchewan - and they were proud of their Province, and delighted we were making the effort to visit; one lass claiming the Province had more lakes than the rest of Canada's Provinces combined (I am yet to confirm this). Admittedly our conversations were with people from British Columbia and the Yukon, where massive mountains dominate; the landscape change was going to be like the proverbial (excuse the cliché) 'chalk and cheese!'

Compared with western Canada, we come from a relatively 'flat' country, our mountains are 'but little hills' compared with the ranges across Northern America, so 'flat' as such wasn't going to put us off. We had planned our Saskatchewan sojourn primarily to check out the Bison at Grasslands National Park. In the end we found other places to find bison. But flat lands, and especially grasslands, are good for birds as well, and here we were not disappointed. In fact, we saw more birds, and more animals, in 'boring' and 'empty' Saskatchewan than we saw in the other 'state's' combined.

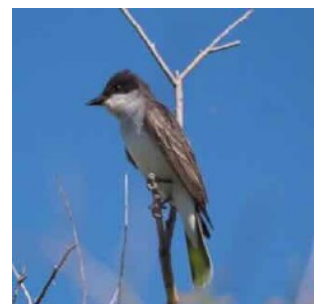
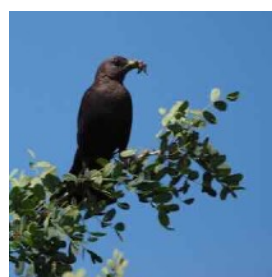
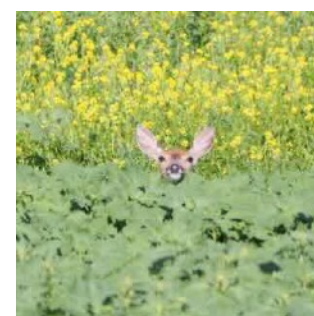
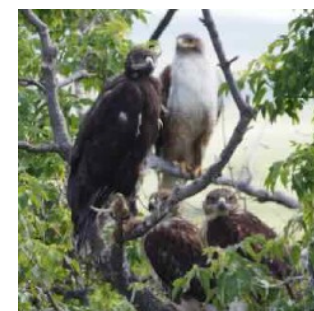
Our trip didn't go quite as smoothly as I had hoped, and was interrupted because we came down with a

'bug.' We don't know what it was (we were not showing Covid symptoms) but it did knock us out completely for a day, and partially for several more, meaning our trip to Prince Albert National Park was very brief and not what I had planned at all. There is contention as to where we picked up the 'dreaded lurgy.' The Calgary Stampede is the obvious answer (we did have a coughing attendee behind and above us on our first day there) but we could also have picked up a bug in the plane from Whitehorse (we have picked up bugs in planes before) or from someone on a Calgary city bus.

In the end we travelled several thousand kilometres, circling east and south east from Calgary (in Alberta), then heading north, and then heading west, circling back near Edmonton. I had initially hoped to get to some of the lower lakes where the 'lakes district' of the province starts. But we didn't have time.

Because our Saskatchewan road trip started (on the 18th July) and ended (on 30th July) in Calgary, Alberta the blurb for the 19th July and the 27th July diary notes are approximately the same in both this the Saskatchewan document, and the Alberta document - the photographs in each document for those dates however are different.

Oh, and we were still chasing moose!



Heading to Saskatchewan

And mooses at Medicent Hat - apparently

19th July 2022. Because of blackout curtains we didn't see the morning get light and we didn't get up until 0830. It was 0930 before we left the hotel at Medicine Hat, Alberta and headed east. The sun was out. There were no clouds. There was a little wind. What storm?



It was close to 1100 when we got to Elkwater, the township in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park. Having turned onto the Buffalo Trail and headed south into the rolling hills Andrew made the comment he would be pretty disappointed if he didn't see any raptors here; and from then on we saw many. I won't say there was one every fence post but for a while it seemed like that. We admired them mainly at speed - we didn't stop to identify them all...or take any photos.

The Visitors Centre at Elkwater wasn't open unfortunately - it isn't open on Mondays and Tuesdays - and we couldn't even yet indulge in a cuppa in the cafe - it opens at 1200, so we went exploring instead. We started our exploration of Cypress Hills Provincial Park by heading up to Horseshoe Lookout on the top of



the Cypress Hills butte plateau; here chatting to one person of Canadian origin and three people of Chinese origin, learning a bit more about the area. Two of them live in Medicine Hat - apparently there is a town moose. Clearly we stayed at the wrong hotel to see him!

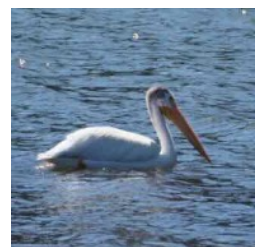
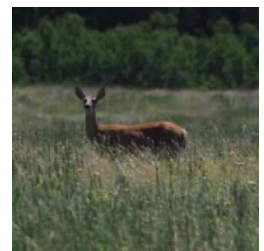


We had been told that from one of the local lookout's on a clear day we could see Montana (U.S) - but not from this lookout - we were looking north! Taking the dirt road from here we ventured further west to the Head of the Mountain Lookout; this is the lookout where on a fine day we can see Montana. The day was fine, and the distant fuzz thin enough to see the mountains on the interps board - so I guess we got the US view.

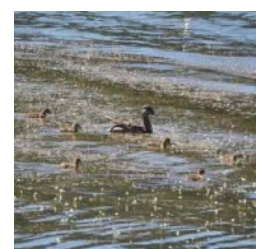


Looking toward Montana

From here we headed east along the Murray Hill Road and then crossed the Buffalo Trail into Reesor Lake Road. All roads were listed as 'Open' but when we got to the Battle Creek Road that lead to Fort Walsh (after we'd had lunch at the exposed day area at Reesor Lake) we decided, where the warning sign had said the road was 'impassable when wet' (and we had had a hell of a lot of rain yesterday) to turn back and then north up Graburn Road (which turned into Range Road 12) and take the long way to the Fort Walsh historic site instead.



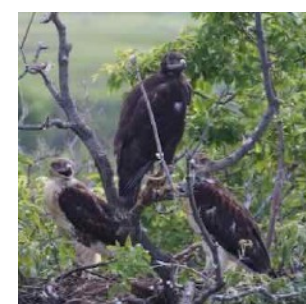
In Cypress Hills we were officially in cougar country again - at least for a little while, but we didn't see cougars. We were told to look out for Mule Deer as well (and someone had seen a coyote in the morning). Fort Walsh is in the east of the western section of Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park - but it is in the



Province of Saskatchewan; on our long detour around, somewhere we had crossed the border...

We did see mule deer today, as well as pronghorns, donkeys, cows, bulls, and horses. We also saw double-crested cormorants, pelicans and a family of ferruginous hawks. They were so close to the road that I didn't need to get out of the car. In my excitement of seeing the family however I forgot to change the dial from shutter speed priority to aperture priority and therefore didn't get the entire family in focus at once.

I had hoped we would stay at Eastend tonight. I had found an AirBnB yesterday that sounded perfect. The booking was accepted but a note came back saying that the room advertised was already taken - but there was an alternative with a shared bathroom. Andrew wanted our own facilities, so we booked elsewhere - unfortunately this meant that we had to drive around thirty kilometres further on to Shaunovon. The hotel looked fancy - so did the room, but the first room that hotel gave us had a toilet that didn't work. Everything seemed to work in the second room they



gave us. Dinner at a local restaurant will be remembered more for the length of fingernails of the waitperson than what we ordered!



Moose are haunting me!

20th July 2022. We left Shaunovan later than I had hoped and returned back west down the last part of yesterday's drive to Eastend. This meant that we got to the T-Rex Museum later than I had hoped, and given the fact we spent more time than expected at this location, meant we got to the Grasslands Visitor Centre at Val Marie later than hoped as well.

The T-Rex Museum is part of the Saskatchewan Museum and showcases a cast of the bones of a T-Rex (at the time of writing, the largest so far excavated) that was discovered 35 kilometres from the building. We happened to arrive just as the film was about to start (repeats every 30 minutes) - a review of the discovery of the specimen - and then we read just about every interps panel in the place. It is a small museum but engaging, focussing on biology of the specimens found in the area; the highlight of which is Scotty; 65 percent of bones recovered from the animal, 95 % of bones recovered from the skull. We didn't walk around the grounds or the grounds interps boards - our priority was to head east to the Grasslands National Park.

Given my propensity for picking up interps editing mistakes, I only found two items of note - the first where the file note mentioned marsupials in the information on the left hand side of the panel - where the info text on the right hand side should have been written first, and a pedestal of information placed in front of a



board on the wall where the wall board wasn't accessible, and the font too small to be read easily. We also didn't spend time or talk to any of the research staff in the lab, although I imagine this would have been fascinating.

Because of our late start, and roadworks, we didn't get to the Visitor Centre of Grasslands National Park at Val Marie until around 1400. We were given some options for visiting the Park, along with the interps guide's suggested favourite spots. But the first question we were asked was how long we were staying. That of course would depend on accommodation. There isn't much listed in Val Marie and what is listed doesn't exactly look five star (or four or three for that matter). I had sent an email to one accommodation provider but hadn't yet had a response. A brand new accommodation option was suggested and we called and left a message on the answering machine. We had our (late) lunch on the picnic tables outside the Visitor Centre whilst waiting for an accommodation response. So the plan after lunch was to drive to the second suggested accommodation, see if anyone was around, and if not, book a room in Swift Creek - a one and a half hour drive away. There was no one on-site but just as we were about to check the internet again the phone rang. It turned out the room we were looking at (half a converted church) was available for the next two nights. We booked it - met the host - and then headed off for a walk amongst the Butte's



- 70 Mile Butte and Eagle Butte, just to the south of town.

This area of the Grasslands National Park is exposed (as I imagined all of the Park was going to be); it is fairly arid after all - but apparently not dry enough to be called a 'desert.' Late afternoon is hottest here so I struggled a bit, seeing as we started our walk around 1630. I hadn't taken a lot of notice of hoof prints of ungulates along the path - but when I saw what was probably cat (bobcat) I got a bit more excited. Bird species weren't prolific here but there were a few - and as we had seen along the drive to Val Marie, there had been quite a few raptors soaring/hovering in the flat paddocks before the buttes. We saw no animals; we did see animal holes, and the aforementioned tracks. Along one section of the walk, and at one interps board, local plant species are labelled or displayed. One of these plants is prickly pear - to think they are proud of this plant here; which grows as part of a balanced mosaic of the arid flora. In Australia it is a major invasive weed!

70 Mile Butte was named by the local constabulary because it was 70 miles in two directions from existing forts. The views from the top of the buttes give great vistas. Apparently the 'local thing to do' is be on top of them at sunset!

On the way back to base we saw what we originally thought

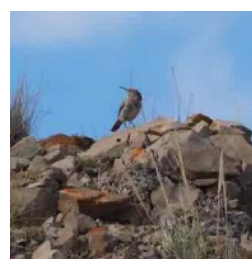
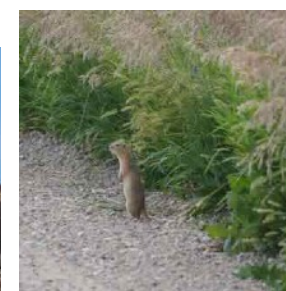
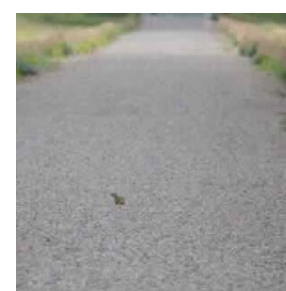
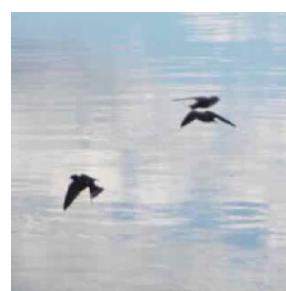
might be a whimbrel, but turns out to be a long beaked curlew. We also saw what was probably a musk rat, and several birds with forked tails (they were too quick to be formally identified).

When we got back to the Moose Room in the old church, we sat outside enjoying a red, and meeting and chatting to the hosts. This accommodation has only really been open three weeks. We are the third guests. Somehow they have managed to book up the busy coming holiday season. I wish them all the best. The room is self contained, just as I like it. Our doona is covered in Mooses - apparently they are in the area. So the aim now is not only to see plains buffalo (bison) and prairie dogs, but mooses as well.

Dinner was an omelette with beef, shallots and aged cheddar (the weird orange stuff the Canadians have),

Bird list -long billed curlew, red shouldered black bird, American robin, western meadowlark, American pipit, morning dove, raptors (of various species), magpie, singing sparrow?, great blue heron, brewers blackbird, rock wren, swainsons hawk, gadwell

Animals: Musk rat, prints (bobcat prints?), pronghorns, Bambi (spotted fawn of unknown species), gophers, jack rabbit (squashed), horses, cows, and a donkey (heard)





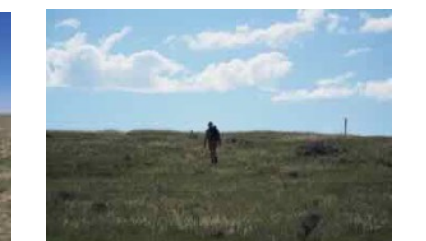
When the Bison don't come to you, you must go to the Bison!

Timber Gulch Trail

21st July 2022. Yesterday when we had chatted to Park's staff we were informed that the majority of the bison herd was probably still up in the back corner of the Park because the recent rain meant there was still plenty of grass up there. The occasional individual male had been seen near the road but seeing the rest of the group may be problematic. According to the schematic we had been given of the park there was a 15km loop walk that headed up into the direction of the bison herd. Perhaps if we wanted the best chance of seeing them, we had to go where they were.

I wanted to leave at around 0700. We left sometime after this. We were on the trail however by 0750 although technically speaking we could already tick bison off... there had been two large males adjacent the road as we drove in. Did we need to go for a walk after all? But we wanted to see more, if we could (and we needed a walk). The third bison seen was on his own a couple of kilometres from the trail head, but it was sometime

after that before we saw any more. The first 'herd' we saw were actually cows on an adjacent property so that was a bit disappointing. But then we looked a bit harder. A group of three bison were grazing in the far distance, including one young



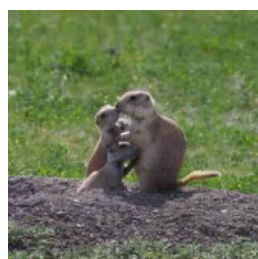
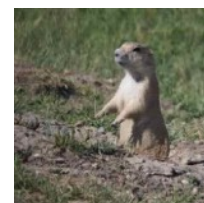
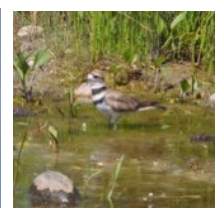
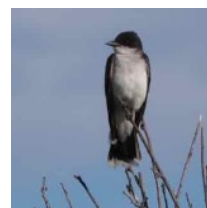
beast. And then another bison was seen. And then two more. And then two more after that. In the end we saw 18 individual animals during the day, scattered along our 15 kilometre loop, where we alternated walking on top of the flat jump-up areas, and into, and across, the flat glaciated valleys. Other animals spotted on the track and throughout the day included black tailed prairie dogs (apparently this is the only place you can see them easily), gophers (Richardson's Ground Squirrel), a coyote, a pronghorn, a mule deer buck (it looked like a big animal with the proportionate size of its antlers - I was hoping it had been a moose),

After getting back to the car we headed for the day use area (the long drop toilet here is quite fancy and has a baby change table and a mirror!) and managed to enjoy one of the only tables we had seen in the shade. Further walking after lunch was off the list. There is an eco-drive in the park where you stop at each of 7 stations and the interps boards fill you in on the significance of each site. We had had enough walking - even for little distances, so took the remote drive instead. We had been told the only real place of significance on this drive was a lookout about two thirds of the distance around. When we got to its car park we discovered there was a short walk to get to the lookout. Apparently it is pretty and you can see the US from here (the Park is on the border after all). But we



deemed our feet too tired and continued the drive. A quick trip down to boat launch site got me a pretty section of the river but still no mooses, so we headed back to base.

Birds: killdeer, red shouldered blackbird, partridge, magpie, northern shrike, northern flicker, morning dove, pelican

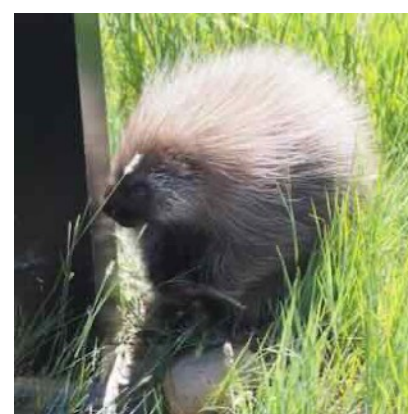
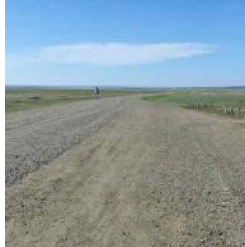


Val Marie to Assiniboia

22nd July 2022. Two coyotes, one porcupine, bison, black tailed prairie dogs and lots of suicidal roadside gophers (Richardson's Ground Squirrel) were the animal spots of the day. Birds included burrowing owls, northern shrikes, spragues pipit, falcons and a few new species that hadn't been looked up by the time we got to our hotel room. (Common nighthawk?)

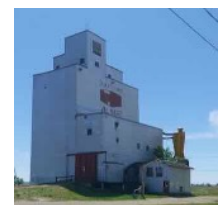
The day had not quite gone to plan. Not that the plan was critical, but some activities took longer than expected, and one option wasn't available.

We had left our accommodation early and got to Station 2 on the Eco Tour Drive in the Grasslands National Park just before 0800. There were other vehicles already there but it turned out not for the reason we were. Three were backed in to the car park area, and it turned out these belonged to a group who had some very fancy camera gear (there were two people with a tripod and a very big camera some way out into the prairie dog colony with the lens focussed on a burrowing owl), one couple in a vehicle with a roof top tent who were taking selfies and flying a drone (which I don't think is allowed in National Parks without a permit) and just before we got to the car park, a large car and caravan heading in the opposite direction, which had stopped opposite the car park. We wondered what they were doing but didn't really take much notice when they moved on. It was only when I walked around the front of the parked vehicles to say hello to the



chap there that I realised there was a bison immediately next to the far vehicle. One lass had a massive camera focussed on the animal and she was less than three meters away! Brave - and potentially stupid - woman. Once I had seen the animal we kept a safe distance away (the recommended distance is 100meters but we had to get there first) - but I did get some good photos. We were actually here for the guided walking tour. All these vehicles moved on by the time the guide arrived, but a few more people had turned up.

The guided walking tour by Parks Interpretive Staff is advertised as an hour in duration. We were immediately informed it was likely to go for longer based on what is seen and discussed on the walk, unless someone had somewhere to be at a specific time. An extended walk might muck up my day's timetable but none of it was critical. Our walk went for two hours - apparently the record is three. Once the walk had finished we took a drive toward the end of the Eco Tour. Stop 7 was another prairie dog colony so we ignored that and started at Stop 6 - the Larsen Homestead. The short walk (of 1.4 km) was full of birds - we had at least three to look up at the end of the walk. At the end of this stroll it was 1200. We were getting hungry so we skipped the rest of the tour and headed back into town. A quick shop for stuff to put on our sandwiches was had before



getting to the Parks Visitor Centre so we could pay for our access to the park yesterday, and the cost of today's tour (both nominal).

We found it ironic having lunch at the table next to the Visitors Center - it was such serenity until Parks staff drove up, unloaded their machinery and started mowing the lawn!

We had been told there might be mooses at Newton Lake which isn't that far out of Val Marie. But upon enquiry we found access to this waterbody was via private land and only accessible for locals, as the land is deemed similar to the concept of 'Town Common.' So we gave up on that idea - the afternoon was getting on..

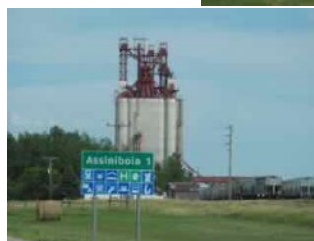
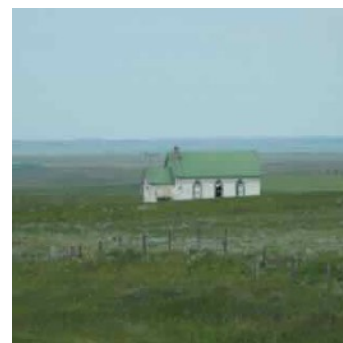
On the way out of town we tried to get fuel for the car. The fuel station is a big tank and a small shed, with a bucket with window cleaning stuff and a machine for the credit card. Andrew couldn't get the machine for the credit card to work so as we had, according to the car, enough fuel for a few hundred kilometres, we decided to move on. Mankota to the east looked as if it might have the same system (according to Google), so we headed for Cadillac on the northern route instead, where a Husky Service Station meant we were dealing with a human being and not a machine!

The roads are mainly straight but undulating, and they are full of patches and pot holes - much like Aussie back roads.

There was a lot of country like Australia to compare on our trip - flat farms, grain silos, small towns with fuel stations and only general stores (if you are lucky).

We got into Assiniboia around 1630. The room wasn't ready but it was a room so we went for a short walk until we had access. I had booked a cheaper room than the Canalta at Shaunavon. Andrew wasn't happy - we ended up on a harder bed! But the room still had a fridge, and a microwave so we could heat up food- I mean, really what more do you want?

I will remember Assiniboia as the town with the 'drug store next to the drug store!'; Across the road from the supermarket there was a pharmacy (known in North America as a 'Drug Store,') and right next to it was the local sanctioned Cannabis store! The things you see whilst you are on holiday.

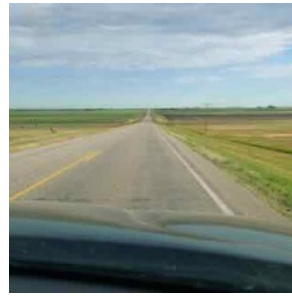


Assiniboia to Moose Jaw

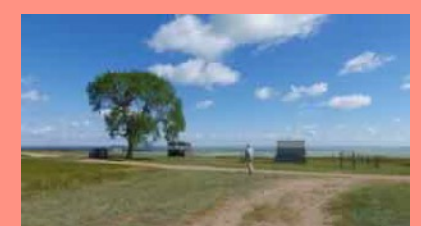
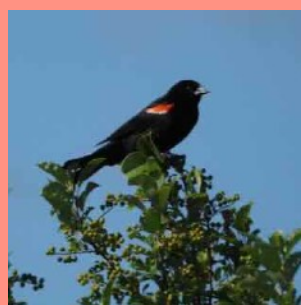
23rd July 2022. Up to 65,000 birds each day is an enormous amount of wildlife. But that is what is touted at Old Wives Lake. I suspect there wasn't 65,000 birds today, although there were quite a few hundred that we could see - and admittedly we couldn't see much of the lake; the interps boards suggests that this lake is the fourth largest salt water lake in North America. That is potentially a very big lake! Amongst species we spotted on and around the lake, and along the short interps trail today, were uplands sandpiper, killdeer, Canada goose, franklins gull?, black tern, and the marbled godwit.

Old Wives Lake is north of Assiniboia and south of Moose Jaw and was our first 'activity' for the day. As usual I had found it by 'accident' - just by looking at a map. For amateur birdos like ourselves it was a nice little detour - a bit of history with some birdwatching thrown in. The animal spot of the day however was on the way back from here toward the main highway again...

The Animal highlight was an American Badger. Because we were not expecting him, and I was unprepared, I only got two quick photos in - fortunately the animal (him/her) was looking at us. The badger had run across the road in front of the car as we were heading back into Mossvale and we initially had no idea what it was. It was quick and looked like a puffed up bit of carpet. It is our first American Badger.



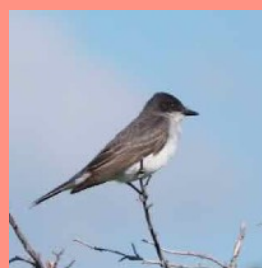
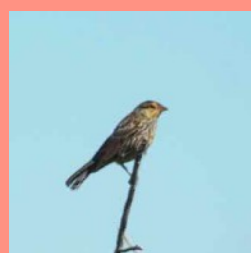
Old Wives Lake



The other activity of our day was at tour at The Tunnels. The Tunnels of MooseJaw 'Chicago Connection' Tour is a bit of fun, exploring the tunnels underneath the street at Moose Jaw, purported to have been used by bootleggers during Prohibition. The tour is taken by two guides dressed up in character within the context of rum runners for Al Capone (there is some debate as to whether he used the tunnels but apparently Moose Jaw was known as the Chicago of Canada). We had heard about this tour whilst in Pemberton, British Columbia of all places (the lass that cut Andrew's hair told us about them). The Tunnels runs two other tours, one on the struggles of the Chinese immigrants here (which we heard about only a couple of days ago) and one on the Cold War (which I saw on the website yesterday). We were warned that the Chinese tale may not be the most joyous and I suspect the other one isn't as light hearted and entertaining as the one we undertook - but I am sure they are all informative none the less.

Our Tunnels tour was the last of the afternoon so we had an hour or so to fill in before we wanted dinner. This started with a walk along the river - which wasn't as pretty as I expected. When we finally got to dinner - that wasn't quite as I expected it either.

In fact dinner started out as a disaster. Andrew had originally



suggested going to the Thai restaurant but I had convinced Andrew to go into Browns Social House because we had had a good meal at Tsawwasan in one of these, and I wanted 'clean food.' So we turned up when there were few patrons in the place and ordered a drink. After a while Andrew had finished his beer and the lass came around and asked if he wanted another one. I was getting annoyed by this stage as they were clearly stretching the time out so we could consume more alcohol. Andrew had just informed me also of the sign behind our car (which we could see from our table). It was a 'no parking for longer than 20 minutes' sign. Apparently the meters aren't checked on the weekend but that didn't help. I was starting to get grumpy with Andrew (we had been waiting over 50 minutes) when the meals finally came out. My chicken was fridge cold and Andrew's steak tepid. Long story short - we walked out paying only for the beers. We ended up in the Thai anyway - ordering one meal each and paying half the price we would have been paying had we stayed at Brown's. The Thai food was also good. Perhaps trusting one's first thought is a good thing.



Welcome to Moose Jaw

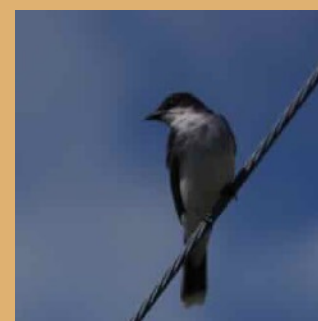


Moose Jaw to Prince Albert

The first Migratory Bird Sanctuary in North America

24th July 2022. It was a reasonably long drive today - Moose Jaw to Prince Albert is 342 kilometres by the most direct route, and whilst we were going to end up at Prince Albert at some point, it didn't necessarily mean it had to be this afternoon. There had been two other options for today's drive - stop a night at Saskatoon (where there is rumoured to be moose in town) or stop a night at Regina. We were originally looking at Regina where there had been a long scheduled 'national football league' match on that we were interested in attending. When I had checked the schedule a couple of days ago the match had been postponed due to Covid, so we made other plans (checking later they did play the match so we missed out on attending another one of Canada's national sports). But in the end Andrew decided we could drive straight to Prince Albert. It would be a long day. It was made longer by a couple of detours.

Our first little detour was just off the northern route to an area labelled Stalwart National Wildlife Area. This is an area on the map contained in three large road blocks encompassing a fenced wetland area. It seemed a bit odd however that anywhere there might have been an area to park to look at the birds around and inside this fenced in and supposedly protected wetland,



Stalwart National Wildlife Area

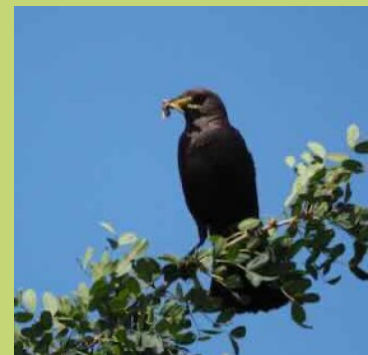


there were now signs stipulating 'no parking'. So we didn't. We headed a bit further east from here to check out the fishing holiday village of Etters Beach before heading north toward the top of Last Mountain Lake. I was originally thinking we would head to the 'Provincial Park' on the other side of the top of the lake for lunch, but we came across something better - completely by accident. Near a track listed on AllTrails as the Grassland Track we found ourselves accidentally at the Visitor Centre for the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area - declared in 1887 - apparently the first bird sanctuary in North America. The map we had had the area listed as a sanctuary but there were no facilities listed. It is all dirt roads around here, and though most are in good nick, some listed on maps and street directories seemed to be through paddocks and cereal crops.

After pulling up in the carpark and getting out in the heat, we were 'accosted' (in the nicest possible way), by the occupant of a ute who turned up several seconds after we did. It turns out she was the ranger in charge for today and was delighted to see us. In fact, she admitted that not many people find the place, so she was happy just to talk to anyone. We were a bit overwhelmed, accepted the local info brochures from her, and decided as she was speaking which walks and which areas we would look at for certain before we left. But all would be after lunch. There were picnic tables under shelter at the new centre (but also under a fair bit of bird guano) and



Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area



after cleaning a bit of the white stuff off, we sat down to eat.

Before we left the area we wandered over near the campsite (didn't see the owls the lass was talking about but did see a new woodpecker species), wandered the short walk from the Visitors Centre to the bird hide and had a final chat. We then drove the circuit, getting out and walking the Grasslands Trail. This paddock had cattle in it (used to help manage the grassland species) so they had taken the numbers away for the interpretive walk. This is a bit frustrating when they supply brochures/handouts at the start of the walk with numbers. At this point it was getting really hot. Both Andrew and I were dehydrated. And it was getting late. I would have loved to do the short wetland walk as well but we were still a few hours away from our destination, and we were both coming down with a cold, Andrew was the sicker of the two of us, and he was driving!

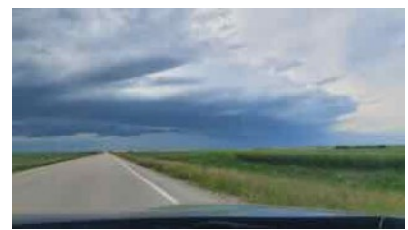
So reluctantly we left the oldest Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Canada and headed back to the bitumen and turned north. As we got closer to Prince Albert a storm came in and for the last hour or so we were driving in the rain.

It was pouring when we pulled up to the hotel. It was around 1900. It was wet. It was cold. We both had no energy. We did however have enough food with us to throw together a salad. Ideally we would throw a tin of tuna in. We had the tin. We didn't have a can opener. Tired and exhausted I asked the fellow behind the



front desk if I could borrow a can opener.

Oh I am sorry, we don't have one of those, he said. You can go and get one at Dollarama. If anyone had looked properly at us they would have realised we didn't have the energy for such a trip. I am not going out in that, I said - or rather, I croaked. That is normal, he said, meaning the rain. Very disappointed we had the salad without the tuna. And went to bed immediately afterward.



The dreaded lurgy!

25th July 2022. When we had booked the hotel yesterday morning we had booked one night. When we had checked in yesterday evening we had booked a second. We needed it. We were both exhausted. We were not well. Andrew doesn't like staying in bed so he sat on the couch all day today and read. Me on the other hand, I am no good up if I am ill so I slept as much as I could. We had no energy to do anything else.

The only excursion out of the room was me sending Andrew out to get stuff for dinner and some throat lozenges - lots of throat lozenges!



Prince Albert National Park

26th July 2022 .The whole idea behind two full days in this area was to spend two full days exploring Prince Albert National Park. We hadn't been able to get accommodation at the very popular Waskesiu so accommodation was taken at Prince Albert ninety minutes away. In hindsight it was probably just as well, as we had access to supermarkets and 'drug stores' for food and medicine. We had lost yesterday in bed but today we ventured out, still fairly weak and knowing we would be returning to Prince Albert again - this time however we were going to chose a different hotel!

We didn't have a lot of energy and our first walk in the National Park turned out to be our last. It was all of two kilometres and it was almost too much. We were still too weak to really enjoy the area.

We did have a very slow stroll around Waskesiu township, popped into the Visitors Centre (where a lovely lass displaying antlers told us where we could almost guarantee to see moose - unfortunately it involved a paddle; the day was too cold and windy for a paddle and we were too sick anyway). So the rest of the day was a driving tour -to the end of one of the roads out of Waskesiu and then back to Prince Albert via the 'scenic route.' The only large 'wildlife' we saw for the day was a black bear crossing the road on the way back. The photos are fuzzy because they are taken from

the car through the windows and we didn't really stop - we had no wish to disturb the animal.

We had booked a different hotel on the way back to town and turned up on the 'prison side of town.' I had to sign a waiver that I hadn't been diagnosed with Covid in the past couple of weeks and I am sure no one believed that about thirty minutes later, for after grabbing two porcelain cups from the cafe/kitchen area in the foyer, I was caught up in a phlegmy coughing fit that lasted the entire length of the corridor. Fortunately no one came to chuck us out.



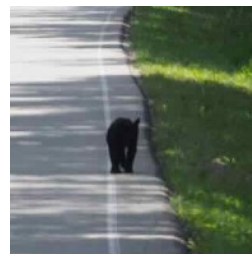
Boundary Bog Trail

Prince Albert
National Park

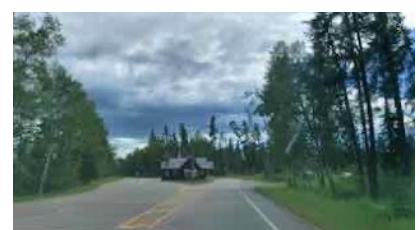
Lunch stop



Just a casual
stroll across
the road.....



Park Gate



Back to Alberta

Prince Albert to Lloydminster

27th July 2022. At 2.37pm we crossed the border back into Alberta. The unusual thing about this border is that it runs through the middle of town!

We had got up around 0730 and made our way to breakfast in the hotel foyer where I meekly took a seat. Fortunately I was over my embarrassing phlegm coughing state of yesterday. Like all previous hotels, finding breakfast was a hit and miss affair for me, although this omelette had the cheese rather than the capsicum in it.

After breakfast we loaded the car and headed to the shopping precinct. Our first stop was in Save on Foods where I picked up some more throat lozenges and some muesli bars. The second stop was a post office - although not one I was hoping for. I had a post card to send and followed Google Maps to where they had a post outlet listed. But there was none to be seen. Instead I was confronted with a large 'drug store' shop front. I walked in the shop and then out again. I walked along the front of the shopping complex and then back again. Still no sign of a Canada Post outlet, although there was a big sign on the outside wall. In the end I thought I would enter the 'drug store' and ask, but just as I opened my mouth I saw a little booth tucked away up back of the shop. So I managed to get the appropriate stamp to Australia and leave the post card there, but I couldn't pick up any

postal stamp goodies that I was hoping for as a present to someone else in Aus.

Once that little task was out of the way we headed west. Today was predominantly a driving day, our only stop for lunch in Spiritwood - another one of these overly religious towns where women don't have a choice. We got to Lloydminster mid afternoon and booked into a 'Hamilton by Hilton', which we relaxed in after an afternoon walk at the Bud Miller All Seasons Park in town - the 2.6 kilometre track an option on the AllTrails App. Dinner was heated up microwave food and we spent the evening watching television.

