



## Bird Watching Opportunities!

Bring your binoculars and birding list to Prince Albert National Park. The boreal forest, bogs, and meadows are home to a variety of birds. According to the latest bird monitoring survey, biologists recorded 114 different species of birds in the park.

“Prince Albert National Park is a hotspot for birding,” said resource conservation officer Shannon Poppy. “You’re likely to see or hear many species of birds. We recommend listening for songbirds at sunrise.”

The Valleyview Trail network on the west side of the Park has the highest abundance of birds and the most diverse number of species among the stations surveyed, with 431 birds recorded and 75 different species. Hunter Lake Trail (currently closed) was the second most heavily populated area.

Bird monitoring takes place in Prince Albert National Park for a six week period between May and July. Bioacoustics recording equipment is used to capture the bird songs. All recordings are made before 9:00 a.m. since this is when the birds are the most active and there is the least amount of wind.

“We visit the same 170 points each year at 11 sampling areas in the park. Some points are on trails and some are deep in the forest,” said Poppy. Songbird population health is used to the ecological integrity in both grasslands and forest ecosystems because songbirds are both readily sampled and are sensitive to environmental changes.

The field team discovered some unusual species in the Western Meadow and on the Valleyview Trail system. “It’s an anomaly that the Western Meadow lark, Eastern Kingbird, and the Mountain Blue bird were observed in this habitat and haven’t been recorded in the park in the past,” said Poppy. “Grassland restoration using fire and grazing to cause disturbances is proving successful now that we are seeing the return of prairie specific birds. It’s an indication that restoration efforts are working.”

The fescue prairie in the open meadows in the southern part of the park is the most unique habitat surveyed. This habitat is noted for its high diversity of sparrows: White-throated, Clay-coloured, Lincolns, Le Conte’s, and the Song sparrow. It also has a high number of Connecticut warblers and several aerial insectivores such as the Alder Flycatcher and Western Wood-Peepees Tree swallow.

The deciduous dominated forest areas such as Elk Trail and South Bay had a high number of Redstarts, Oven birds, Red-eyed vireos, Rose-Breasted grosbeaks, and Canada warblers.

Several different types of woodpeckers were recorded in the bird survey. The most common are the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated woodpecker, Black-backed woodpecker, Three-toed woodpecker, Hairy woodpecker, Downy woodpecker, and the Northern flicker.

Prince Albert National Park has conducted songbird monitoring since 2005. Biologists analyse survey results in the database to determine population trends among the species.

The 2017 Forest Bird Monitoring Report shows a small number of predatory birds living in the park. They are the Broad-winged hawk, Osprey, Great-horned owl, and Great Grey owl. Other rare species recorded flying overhead were water birds such as the Black Tern, Bufflehead, and Red-breasted merganser. The most common species that are not songbirds found in Prince Albert National Park are the Canada goose, common raven, and common loon.

Visitors can pick-up a bird checklist at the Visitor Centre. The Nature Centre has bird watching kits with binoculars for kids and a list of 24 common birds found in the park. Staff at the Visitors Centre and the Nature Centre have bird identification books to help people identify birds.