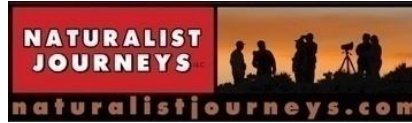


Into the Heart of Canada's Wild Rockies Species List | June 18 – 26, 2026 with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guide Stephen Grace with Gavin McKinnon. Our clients included Cherry, Jane, Peter, Sue, Danette, Les, Bonnie, John and Marge.

Western Canada offered an excellent cross-section of habitats, beginning on the mixed-grass prairie east of Calgary, continuing through foothill and boreal-influenced forest, and then moving into the Canadian Rockies, Banff and Kootenay National Parks, and the Columbia Valley wetlands.

Grassland and open-country birds were the focus early in the tour, with highlights including Upland Sandpiper, active Ferruginous Hawk and Prairie Falcon nests, Horned Lark, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Thick-billed Longspur, Vesper Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, and Lark Bunting. Prairie wetlands added Ruddy Duck, Eared Grebe, Wilson's Phalarope, California Gull, American White Pelican, and Yellow-headed Blackbird, many in striking breeding plumage, while Richardson's Ground Squirrel, Pronghorn, and American Badger helped round out the grassland ecology.

As we moved west, the habitat shifted into foothills and forest, with more conifers, aspen, and boreal influence. An open field produced Sandhill Crane, while Clark's Nutcracker and Evening Grosbeak marked the transition toward the Canadian Rockies.

In Banff, birding centered on montane forest, mountain wetlands, and lakes. Highlights included Red-necked Grebe with young, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Mountain Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, and Pacific Wren, along with a strong supporting cast of mountain wildlife, including Coyote, American Black Bear, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goat, Mule Deer, and White-tailed Deer.

The Columbia Valley and Rocky Mountain Trench provided another major habitat change, with wetlands, riparian corridors, cottonwoods, and drier open forest. Highlights included two active Bald Eagle nests, each with two eaglets, along with Lewis's Woodpecker, White-throated Swift, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, Western Bluebird, Mountain Bluebird, Western Tanager, Lazuli Bunting, and Bullock's Oriole.

Our final day retraced part of the route through the Columbia Valley, Kootenay, Banff, and Water Valley back toward Calgary. Wind limited our Great Gray Owl search, but a late wetland stop produced nesting Trumpeter Swans and excellent open views of Wilson's Snipe.

Overall, the trip was a rich survey of western Canadian habitats, from prairie grasslands and pothole wetlands to montane forest, alpine scenery, and the Columbia wetlands, with birds providing the thread connecting each landscape.

BIRDS: 148 species were recorded, of which 13 were heard only, none were endemic, and 3 were introduced. Details are

included below.

The eBird link below details the 149 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Naturalist Journeys: Western Canada | 18–26 Jun 2026 | eBird Trip Report](#)

MAMMALS — (16)

American Badger *Taxidea taxus* — Observed at Tide Lake Oil Road.

Coyote *Canis latrans* — Seen in Water Valley.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* — Spotted in Water Valley.

American Black Bear *Ursus americanus* — Seen along the roadside in Kootenay National Park.

American Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* — Seen often during the tour.

Least Chipmunk *Neotamias minimus* — Observed during the tour.

Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel *Callospermophilus lateralis* — Seen in Banff.

Columbian Ground Squirrel *Urocitellus columbianus* — Seen in Canmore.

Richardson's Ground Squirrel *Urocitellus richardsonii* — Common around Calgary; seen especially well from our hotel and on Stoney Nakoda lands.

Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus* — Seen at Ovan Slough in Water Valley.

Pronghorn *Antilocapra americana* — Several seen on the prairie east of Calgary.

Moose *Alces alces* — One bull observed in Water Valley.

Mule Deer *Odocoileus hemionus* — Seen often.

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus* — Seen often around Banff.

Bighorn Sheep *Ovis canadensis* — A bachelor group of rams was seen in Banff, and ewes with lambs were seen in Kootenay.

Mountain Goat *Oreamnos americanus* — Seen along the roadside in Kootenay.

REPTILES — (1)

Garter Snake sp. (*Thamnophis* sp.) — Species not confirmed.

INSECTS

Predaceous Diving Beetle sp. (family Dytiscidae) — Seen at Cave and Basin.

BUTTERFLIES

Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus*) — Observed several times during the tour.

Blue sp. (family Lycaenidae) — Small blue butterflies seen during the tour; species not confirmed.

White sp. (family Pieridae) — White butterflies observed during the tour; species not confirmed.