

Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



MINNESOTA: Canada Lynx Quest

Sunday 20th - Sunday 27th February 2022

6 Wise Birding Clients

Leaders: Chris Townend / Andy Stanbury & local guide

HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

Canada Lynx: The seventh successive year recording this highly sought after cat, but we certainly had to work for it! However, the sighting was simply breathtaking!

American Marten: Fantastic views as an animal visited a carcass for over 30 minutes in the very cold temperatures!

Moose: Two animals recorded on separate days.

Boreal Chickadee: Numerous sightings as at least 2 birds visited a carcass.

Spruce Grouse: Fabulous views of this very smart grouse on two separate occasions.



Female Canada Lynx & yearlings were the undoubted highlight.
Video of the family can be seen here: <https://vimeo.com/682889634>

MINNESOTA: Canada Lynx Quest

The various forest areas in and around the Superior National Forest in Minnesota has long been known as an area with a good population of Canada Lynx (sometimes referred to as Canadian Lynx). However, actually seeing the "Ghost of the Forest" is a big challenge and one that needs perseverance! This tour had a clear focus to maximise time in the field and at a different time of year to our previous tours.

This was the seventh year in a row that Wise Birding Holidays have been successful in seeing Canada Lynx in Minnesota. Once again, this tour was exceptional for the quality of our Lynx sighting, though we would rather have not left it until the last day! However, the adrenaline rush as a family of Lynx crossed the road in from to of us is undoubtedly one of the most exhilarating encounters in seven years!

In addition to Lynx, we recorded another 8 mammals including American Marten, Moose and Snowshoe Hare. As expected for the time of year, the bird list was small but we saw species including Boreal Chickadee and Spruce Grouse. This was a private tour and Sax Zim Bog was not on the itinerary as the focus was solely on Lynx.

The success of this tour certainly benefited from what has been learned from the previous four tours (Trip Reports [HERE](#)). More importantly, the invaluable assistance and expert knowledge from our local guide is always crucial to success.

Temperatures and snow conditions were some of the toughest we have experienced with temperatures reaching as low as -40 celsius! However, the average middle of the day temperature was around -16 celsius and things warmed up to a tropical zero degree celsius on our last day!

We recorded a total of 9 species of mammal and 26 birds on this tour.

| DAY | DATE | ITINERARY |
|-------|-------------------------|---|
| 1 | Sat 19th Feb | Delayed flight. Overnight Chicago |
| 2 | Sun 20th Feb | Travel along north shore of Lake Superior to Grand Marais. Explore the Gunflint Trail late afternoon. Overnight Grand Marais |
| 3 - 8 | Mon 21st - Sat 26th Feb | Full days exploring Superior National Forest, including numerous visits along the Gunflint Trail. An early morning drive along Lake Superior looking for Wolf on the morning of the 23rd. Overnight Grand Marais |
| 9 | Sun 27th Feb | Travel along north shore of Lake Superior. Return to Duluth airport late morning. |





**What an incredible sighting!
A female Canada Lynx with three youngsters on our last day.**



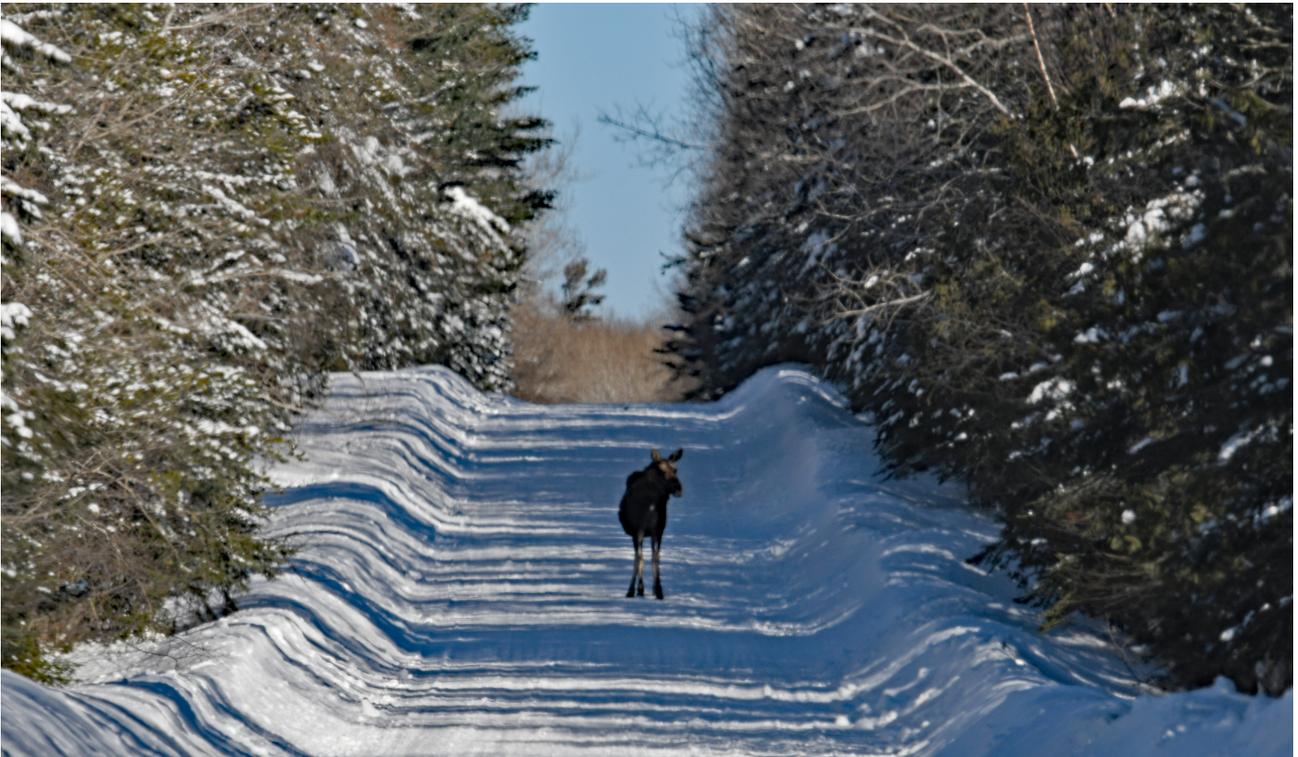


Common Redpoll (above) and Arctic Redpoll (below)





Female Pileated Woodpecker (above) and Moose (below)





Male Pine Grosbeak (above) and Snowshoe Hare (below)





**Boreal Chickadee (top) Canada Jay (bottom)
American Marten by tour participant Stuart Benn (middle)**





The memorable sighting of a female Canada Lynx with three youngsters!





**Canada Lynx Family.
Photo above by tour participant Keith Morton**





**Lake Superior sunrise (Keith Morton)
Male Spruce Grouse (Andy Stanbury)**





**Lynx family crossing road between our group!
Close up of female Lynx by tour participant Keith Morton**



The following **mammal checklist** mostly follows [the IUCN framework](#) (Red List) but also the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) www.gbif.org and Handbook of The Mammals of the World.

The **bird checklist** follows the nomenclature and classification from Gill F, D Donsker & P Rasmussen (Eds). 2022. **IOC World Bird List** (v12.1). <https://www.worldbirdnames.org/new/>
The IOC World Bird List complements three other primary world bird lists that differ slightly in their primary goals and taxonomic philosophy, i.e. [The Clements Checklist of the Birds of the World](#), [The Howard & Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World](#), 4th Edition, and [HBW Alive/Bird Life International](#).

Total number of mammals recorded: 9 species

Canada Lynx

Lynx canadensis

After 60+ hours of watching and waiting in very cold temperatures and monitoring our trail cameras, we finally decided to change strategy and it paid off! We had located numerous fresh Lynx prints at the top end of the Gunflint Trail and at 12.25pm on the 26th Feb, finally a Lynx showed itself by the side of the road on our final day! No sooner were we out of our vehicles and it became apparent that we were watching not just one Canada Lynx, but a whole family - a mother and three youngsters!! We spent the next 30 minutes watching as they weaved in and out of the trees and then crossed the road, just metres in front of us! A memory never to be forgotten and an incredible end to our tour.

Video of the encounter can be seen here: <https://vimeo.com/christownend>

Coyote

Canis latrans

A single animal briefly during the day whilst travelling to Grand Marais on the 20th and another seen well on the road at night on the 24th close to Grand Marais.

Red Fox

Vulpes vulpes

A single animal seen at night on the Gunflint Trail on the evening of the 24th.

American Marten

Martes americana

One of the tour highlights was watching a male visiting and feeding on a carcass for around 40 minutes during daylight, despite the very cold temperature!

Moose

Alces alces

A young animal seen on the 21st by some of the group and then a presumed adult seen by all as it sat in the road and slowly wandered off into the forest on the afternoon of the 24th.

White-tailed Deer

Odocoileus virginianus

The commonest mammal of the tour with sightings on five days. Max. count of 10 animals on the 23rd.

Snowshoe Hare

Lepus americanus

A single animal was seen very well on the 22nd, despite it trying to hide in the snow.

Eastern Grey Squirrel

Sciurus carolinensis

A single on the 24th at Grand Marais feeders.

American Red Squirrel

Tamiasciurus hudsonicus

Many sightings of this impressive looking squirrel recorded on five days.

Total number of birds recorded: 26 species

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

At least 10 birds recorded in Grand Marais Harbour on on the 22nd.

Common Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

A single bird in Grand Marais Harbour on the 22nd.

Ruffed Grouse

Bonasa umbellus

Recorded on three days with single birds on the 21st and 22nd and a count of 4 birds on the 24th.

Spruce Grouse

Canachites canadensis

A pair of birds seen very well on the 21st and a male posing in the snow on the afternoon of the 26th.

Rock Dove

Columba livia

Recorded on three days, mostly in and around Duluth.

American Herring Gull

Larus smithsonianus

Recorded on three days. Max. count of 20+ birds on the 24th in Grand Marais Harbour.

Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

This always impressive Eagle was recorded on six days. Counts were generally between 1- 4 birds and included an impressive immature attempting to fish in the harbour, as we enjoyed the spectacle from the warmth of our lunchtime restaurant!

Downy Woodpecker

Dryobates pubescens

Sightings on two days with a high count of 3 birds on the 21st.

Hairy Woodpecker

Leuconotopicus villosus

Sightings on two days with a high count of 4 birds on the 21st.

Pileated Woodpecker

Dryocopus pileatus

This impressive large woodpecker was recorded on three days. Most sightings related to a very tame female bird that was very busy excavating a tree along the Gunflint Trail .

Canada Jay

Perisoreus canadensis

Seen very well on numerous occasions with birds recorded on at least three days.

Blue Jay

Cyanocitta cristata

Seen very well on numerous occasions with birds recorded on four days.

American Crow

Corvus brachyrhynchos

Commonly heard and seen on at least five days.

Northern Raven

Corvus corax

Commonly heard and seen on six days with a high count of 20+ birds on the 20th.

Bohemian Waxwing

Bombycilla garrulus

A flock of 30+ Waxwing were seen in flight briefly on the 22nd in Grand Marais and were thought to be this species. Later on the 24th a group of 17 birds were seen perched and enjoying the sunshine in Grand Marais.

Boreal Chickadee***Poecile hudsonicus***

This sought after species was recorded on four days and seen feeding on a carcass during nearly all the sightings which involved a minimum of 2 birds.

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

A very common species often seen taking advantage of feeders and carcasses and recorded on seven days.

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

Counts of 1-3 birds recorded on four days.

Common Starling***Sturnus vulgaris***

Counts of just 1-5 birds recorded on two days around Duluth and near Grand Marais.

American Robin***Turdus migratorius***

A single bird recorded on the 22nd only.

House Sparrow***Passer domesticus***

Recorded in Chicago only.

Pine Grosbeak***Pinicola enucleator***

Recorded on five days with the most obliging birds at the Gunflint Lodge feeders with a count of 15 birds at one time. Most counts were of 6 - 10 birds with a high day count of 23 birds on the 21st.

Common Redpoll***Acanthis flammea***

Recorded on five days with small counts of up to 40 birds.

Arctic Redpoll***Acanthis hornemanni***

A single bird in with Common Redpolls at Grand Marais on the 22nd was a good find.

Two-barred Crossbill***Loxia leucoptera***

A single female on the 24th on the outskirts of Grand Marais was a nice surprise.

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

A single bird seen well at Grand Marais feeders on the 22nd.





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Conservation Donation – Following this tour to Minnesota £200 was transferred to the Wise Birding Holiday's central conservation fund.

Once a target amount has been reached this money will be used to support one single project in the hope of achieving more for species conservation. Currently this amounts to over £8,000. Some tours will continue to donate money to help some of the smaller projects that we feel will still benefit from smaller donations.

Please visit www.wisebirding.co.uk to find out more about the projects we support.

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