



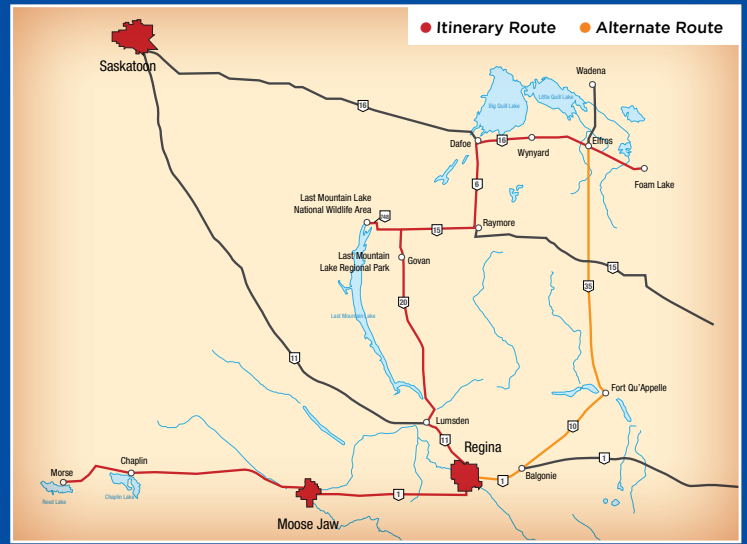
To access online maps of Saskatchewan or to request a **Saskatchewan Discovery Guide** and **Official Highway Map**, visit: [www.sasktourism.com/travel-information/travel-guides-and-maps](http://www.sasktourism.com/travel-information/travel-guides-and-maps)

**TRIP**  
**LENGTH**  
3 days +  
920 km

# WINGING IT IN SASKATCHEWAN



*Smack dab on the Central North American Flyway, Saskatchewan offers some of Canada's most outstanding bird watching.*



With over 350 species, the province is home to a quarter of North America's ducks, half of Canada's pelicans, the world's largest inland concentration of Bald Eagles and a quarter of the world's endangered Piping Plovers.

This driving tour visits three of Saskatchewan's most famous birding sites: Last Mountain Lake, the Quill Lakes International Bird Area and Chaplin Lake. All are designated Important Bird Areas and are part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network – the Americas' most critical wetlands for migrating shorebirds. The Quill Lakes and Last Mountain Lake are also Ramsar Sites – the world's Wetlands of International Importance. Serious birders may want to allow more than three days, and several trip extensions have been suggested.

Spring is ideal to see migrating shorebirds as they stop to feed on their epic journeys to Arctic nesting grounds, coming from as far away as South America. Many birds are also decked out in breeding plumage and preoccupied with colourful mating rituals. Summer is the time to watch the young test their wings, while late summer and early fall bring many shorebirds back from the north. In September and October, waterfowl stage in the hundreds of thousands, making for some of nature's most breathtaking spectacles.

## DAY ONE Last Mountain Lake, Wynyard

From Regina, travel 33 km northwest on Hwy 11 to Lumsden, then north on Hwy 20 for 81 km along the scenic Qu'Appelle Valley and east of Last Mountain Lake to Govan. Continue 11 km north of Govan on Hwy 20 to the sign for the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area (NWA) and Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Turn west on Grid 748 and continue through the PFRA pasture until the road ends, then take the speed curve north and follow the road for 3 km, and turn west at the first corner. Follow the road 6 km to a four-way intersection with sign denoting the NWA Headquarters, then turn south and travel 3 km to the site.



Whooping Crane. *Tourism Saskatchewan/Brian Wolitski*

It was here in 1887 that North America's first bird sanctuary was established. Today, the protected area covers the north end of the lake along with adjoining wetlands and uplands. More than 280 species have been recorded in the area and include everything from shorebirds to waterfowl, Peregrine Falcon and large concentrations of wading birds. Forster's Terns, Double-crested Cormorants, Stilt Sandpipers and Marbled Godwits are among those appearing in significant numbers. This is among the best places anywhere to get close to pelicans, which nest on a nearby island and often feed just downstream of water control structures. Fall migration brings as many as 50,000 Sandhill Cranes, and geese numbers sometimes top 400,000. Look carefully and you might even spot endangered Whooping Cranes.

Browse through the displays and pick up maps and information at the kiosk next to the NWA headquarters. Stop at the headquarters to borrow an auto-tour CD which details a 16 km driving tour taking you past the lake, wetlands, through native prairie uplands and across dykes. There are two short walking trails – one across grasslands and another through wetlands, complete with a viewing blind overlooking the water. The headquarters office is open Monday to Friday year-round, but the viewing season runs from May through October. The site is accessible during daylight hours. Access may be restricted in the off-season so please call ahead before visiting.

In spring or late-summer, be sure to visit Last Mountain Bird Observatory (LMBO) in Last Mountain Lake Regional Park, about 15 km southeast. From the NWA, head east on Grid 748 and follow the signs. The bird banding station welcomes visitors to watch and participate as staff band migrating songbirds and collect data that sheds light on their movements. Nature Saskatchewan operates the LMBO on mornings during the months of May, August and September.

Travel east on Grid 748, cross Hwy 20, and continue 33 km east on Hwy 15 to Raymore. Then head north on Hwy 6 for 39 km to Dafoe, and east on Yellowhead Hwy 16 for 25 km to Wynyard, site of the Quill Lakes International Bird Area Interpretive Centre. The three Quill Lakes, plus nearby Foam Lake, provide habitat for over a million nesting and migrating shorebirds, waterfowl and songbirds. Hudsonian Godwit, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, American Avocet and dowitchers often appear in large numbers. Big Quill Lake, Canada's largest saline lake, boasts the largest breeding population of endangered Piping Plovers in the world. Browse through the displays on the importance of this wildlife-rich area, and pick up brochures and maps on the many birding hotspots in the region.

The communities of Wynyard and Wadena offer fixed-roof accommodations, camping and dining options. See community contact listings in the Contacts and Resources section of this itinerary.

## DAY TWO Wadena, Foam Lake, Regina

From Wynyard, continue 24 km east on Hwy 16 to Elfros, then 24 km north on Hwy 35 to Wadena. The Wadena Wildlife Wetlands, just south of town, is the most famous birding spot in the area with a picnic site, viewing towers, and a network of marked walking trails bordering Milligan and Jesmer Marshes and the east shore of Little Quill Lake. You will find waterfowl and blackbirds galore, and have a good chance of spotting a variety of shorebirds, terns and herons, among others. To visit other nearby wildlife sites, pick up information at the Wadena Museum and Nature Centre on the south end of town.

Return south to Hwy 16 and travel east to Foam Lake for a total of 49.5 km, stopping at the visitor centre beside the highway. Just behind the visitor centre, take the short but pleasant Milligan Creek self-guided hiking trail, complete with interpretive signs on the flora and fauna.

While at the visitor centre, inquire about road access to Foam Lake Heritage Marsh, since conditions may vary with the weather. The easiest approach is to head west on Hwy 16 and follow the sign north to the feeding station on the marsh. From here you can hike to the Bertdale Site with viewing platforms, water control structures, dedication sites and walking trails. Another approach is to head north on Hwy 310 then follow the sign west to the Bertdale Site. Just north of here another sign off Hwy 310 guides you to the Johnson Site with picnic area, a short trail, interpretive panels with more details on the marsh and a viewing tower. The marsh is exceptional for waterfowl, with large numbers of ducks, geese, coots, grebes and terns.

For an alternate route to Regina, return west to Elfros on Hwy 16 and follow Hwy 35 south for 111 km to Fort Qu'Appelle in the scenic Qu'Appelle Valley, then take Hwy 10 for 49 km to Balgonie and travel 28 km west on Hwy 1 to Regina. After a busy day of exploring Saskatchewan's ornithological treasures, this evening you will rest and recharge in Regina.



Quill Lakes International Bird Area. Tourism Saskatchewan/Rob Weitzel Graphic Productions



Shorebird Shuttle Tour, Chaplin Lake. Robin Karpan Photo

## DAY THREE Chaplin

From Regina travel 156 km west on Trans Canada Hwy 1 to Chaplin. Just south of town lies Chaplin Lake, a shallow saline body of water with brilliant white banks rich in sodium sulphate. Stop at the Chaplin Nature Centre right beside the highway. You know you're approaching when you see the huge eight times life-size statues of the area's best known shorebirds - Piping Plover and American Avocet. Inside are displays on the lake, the surrounding special environment, why this place is so important to shorebirds, and a working model of the nearby Saskatchewan Minerals sodium sulphate production plant.

Chaplin is quite simply shorebird heaven, used by over 30 species. The numbers of migrants feeding here in the spring is truly outstanding. One-day surveys have put shorebird numbers as high as 110,000. Close to half the world's population of Sanderlings stops here, and single-day counts have been as high as 55,000. Other migrants with impressive numbers include Baird's, Semipalmated and Stilt Sandpipers, to mention a few. Some resident shorebirds include Red-necked and Wilson's Phalaropes, and the elegant-looking American Avocet. This is among the best places in Canada to find the endangered Piping Plover.

Nature Centre staff can suggest birding spots. A favourite spot with birdwatchers is a short distance straight south of town on Grid 58, where the lake and adjoining wetlands come close to the road. Another is Reed Lake, approximately 32 km west along Hwy 1 south of Morse. Information on bird watching around Reed Lake can be found by visiting the Morse Museum & Cultural Centre or the town office. The best option is to take the Shorebird Shuttle Tour run by the Chaplin Nature Centre. Following the system of dykes on Chaplin Lake, the tour takes you through special areas that are closed to the general public, allowing you to get close to a lot of birdlife. The Chaplin Nature Centre operates seasonally from May to September. You're encouraged to call ahead to inquire about tour availability and road conditions.

### Extend your trip!

Extend your trip to enjoy the trails of the Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail, which includes prairie and valley trails in Yorkton and surrounding area including the Cherrydale Birding Trail at Yorkton, Kaposvar Birding Trail at Esterhazy, Leflay Birding Trail and Sawkey Bird & Nature Trail near Saltcoats, and the Carlton Regional Park Trail near Spy Hill. For more information, visit: [www.2sk.ca/22378](http://www.2sk.ca/22378) or call 306-896-2660.

### What to bring!

Be sure to bring along binoculars, a spotting scope, sturdy footwear, a camera with a telephoto or zoom lens, and a field-guide book like the *Atlas of Saskatchewan Birds* or *Saskatchewan Birds*, both by Alan Smith. Before you head out, download the informative Saskatchewan Birding Trail Experience brochure, which provides a wealth of information about birding sites across the province. [www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=11114](http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=11114)

## CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

### Regina Regional Opportunities Commission

Information on accommodations, attractions, shopping and dining  
1925 Rose St, Regina

**Open:** year-round

**P:** 306-789-5099 **TF:** 1-800-661-5099

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/com/1000752](http://www.2sk.ca/com/1000752)

### Govan

Information on accommodations, attractions and services

**P:** 306-484-2011

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/com/1000342](http://www.2sk.ca/com/1000342)

### Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area and Bird Sanctuary

11 km N of Govan via Hwy 20, watch for directional signage

**Open:** year-round, call ahead for seasonal hours

**P:** 306-836-2022

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/12887](http://www.2sk.ca/12887)

### Last Mountain Bird Observatory

Last Mountain Regional Park, 15 km W of Govan

**Open:** May, August and September, 9am-1pm

**P:** 306-780-9481

**W:** [www.naturesask.ca](http://www.naturesask.ca)

### Last Mountain Lake Regional Park

NE side of Last Mountain Lake, 5km N, 14 km W of Govan

**Open:** mid-May to mid-Sep, call ahead for seasonal hours

**P:** 306-484-4483 / 306-484-2071

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/15765](http://www.2sk.ca/15765)

### Quill Lakes International Bird Area Website

**W:** [www.quill-lakes-bird-area.com](http://www.quill-lakes-bird-area.com)

### Wynyard

Information on accommodations, attractions and services

**P:** 306-554-2123

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/com/1001003](http://www.2sk.ca/com/1001003)

### Quill Lakes Interpretive Centre

Interpretive centre and visitor information  
Along Hwy 16, Wynyard

**Open:** May-Sep, call ahead for seasonal hours

**P:** 306-554-3661 / 306-554-2123

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/8690](http://www.2sk.ca/8690)

### Wadena

Information on accommodations, attractions and services

**P:** 306-338-2145 **TF:** 1-888-338-2145

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/com/1000941](http://www.2sk.ca/com/1000941)

### Wadena & District Museum & Nature Centre

S of Wadena along Hwy 35

**Open:** May-Sep, call ahead for seasonal hours

**P:** 306-338-3454 / 306-338-2145

### Wadena Wildlife Wetlands

Major access Hwy 35, 3 km S of Wadena, then 7 km to marsh

**Open:** April-Oct

**P:** 306-338-2145 (Town of Wadena)

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/12569](http://www.2sk.ca/12569)

### Foam Lake

Information on accommodations, attractions and services

**P:** 306-272-3359

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/com/1000302](http://www.2sk.ca/com/1000302)

### Foam Lake Heritage Marsh

Major access, Hwy 310, 11 km N of Foam Lake, 3 km W to wildlife viewing area

**Open:** year-round, tune into Foam Lake Nature FM Radio 99.3 for info

**P:** 306-272-3538

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/12316](http://www.2sk.ca/12316)

### Foam Lake Visitor Centre & Nature Centre

General visitor and birding information  
Hwy 16, Foam Lake

**Open:** May-Sep, call ahead for seasonal hours

**P:** 306-272-3712

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/9176](http://www.2sk.ca/9176)

### Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail

Trails in Yorkton, Esterhazy, Saltcoats and Spy Hill

**P:** 306-896-2660

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/22378](http://www.2sk.ca/22378)

### Moose Jaw Tourism Visitor Centre

Hwy 1 and Thatcher Dr E, Moose Jaw  
Information on accommodations, attractions, shopping and dining

**Open:** year-round

**P:** 306-693-8097 **TF:** 1-866-693-8097

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/com/1000621](http://www.2sk.ca/com/1000621)

### Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl

#### Interpretive Centre

Moose Jaw Exhibition Grounds on Thatcher Dr E, Moose Jaw

**Open:** mid-May-Sep, call ahead for seasonal hours

**P:** 306-692-8710

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/11956](http://www.2sk.ca/11956)

### Chaplin

Information on accommodations, attractions and services

**P:** 306-395-2221

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/com/1000150](http://www.2sk.ca/com/1000150)

### Chaplin Nature Centre

Hwy 1, Chaplin

Interpretive centre, visitor information and shorebird tours

**Open:** May-Sep, call ahead for seasonal hours

**P:** 306-395-2770 / 306-395-2223

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/14051](http://www.2sk.ca/14051)

### Morse

Information on accommodations, attractions and services

**P:** 306-629-3300

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/com/1000628](http://www.2sk.ca/com/1000628)

### Morse Museum & Cultural Centre

3 blocks W of Main St, Morse  
Museum and visitor and birding information

**Open:** year-round, call ahead for seasonal hours

**P:** 306-629-3230

**W:** [www.2sk.ca/14846](http://www.2sk.ca/14846)

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Chaplin:

**Chaplin Shorebird Festival**, June – [www.2sk.ca/14051](http://www.2sk.ca/14051)

### Various Locations:

**Christmas Bird Counts** – [www.naturesask.ca](http://www.naturesask.ca)