

Trail 4: Manyberries Area

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Specialty species along this trail include: Sharp-tailed Grouse (do not approach the lek sites), Ferruginous Hawk (stay away from the nest sites), Short-eared Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Say's Phoebe, Golden Eagle, and a variety of grassland sparrows. If extremely lucky it is remotely possible to find Sage Grouse along this trail.

The Greater Sage Grouse is protected by an Emergency Protection Order (EPO). The main portion of this order applying to birders is: "Avoid driving vehicles within 3.2km of a Greater Sage Grouse lek between 1 ½ hours before sunset and 1 ½ after sunrise in all of April and May." The pertinent link for the complete EPO is: <http://www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=B3B27B60-1>.

Do not drive off signed gravel roads! The surrounding prairie is very sensitive to disturbance and often the fire hazard is extremely high. Adjacent lands require permission to access. Help ranchers prevent wildfires by staying on the graveled roads.

The area southwest of Manyberries has a mixed habitat including developed agricultural land, some of which is devoted to farming, some to ranching and some to hay production. The latter is surrounded by an extensive network of dykes, which in wet years, attracts thousands of waterfowl during their northward migration. The ranching areas contain large tracts of unbroken prairie interspersed with sand dunes covered with brush and silver sage. The east side of Pakowki Lake is situated at the west end of this trail but access to the lake is difficult and requires permission.

From Manyberries proceed west on Hwy 61. Signed Nature Conservancy of Canada property lies to the north of Hwy 61 **(A)**. These two sites can be hiked to look for a variety of grassland species such as Grasshopper, Brewer's and Baird's Sparrows, McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs and Long-billed Curlew.

Turn south onto Hwy 887 to TWP RD 52. Proceed 4.8 km west **(B)**: farmyards along here may contain kingbirds, Great Horned Owl, and other woodland species. Head south along RGE RD 73. At the T-intersection turn east on TWP RD 50 to Hwy 887 **(C)**. A number of different routes can be followed down to Hwy 501 with a return to Manyberries along Hwy 889.

The hamlets of Orion and Manyberries also could be birded as the brush and trees here can harbor additional species. Recently, Eurasian Collared-Doves have populated Manyberries. Rarities that have been observed in this area include Sage Thrasher and Bullock's Oriole. Animal species which inhabit the area include Pronghorn, White-tailed and Mule Deer, and surprisingly, even Moose.

A hotel in Manyberries has restricted hours in the café/bar where one might be able to get a meal and beverage. Accommodations and full meals are available at Foremost, Medicine Hat or if proceeding from this area to the Cypress Hills via the Wildcat Trail (TWP RD 62) in Elkwater. The UFA cardlock station in Foremost accepts credit cards and fuel is also available in Elkwater.

