

WILDNorth WILD Adventures Photography

Great Gray Owls and Northern Hawk Owls

Objective/general info

The trip is aimed to find and photograph Northern Hawk Owls (NHO) and Great Gray Owls (GGO) in a safe, minimally intrusive way. Safety for participants and wildlife will always be the highest priority.

Participants are also welcome to come along for the ride without a camera, just to see the wildlife, but binoculars are highly recommended.

IMPORTANT NOTE: as we are looking for wildlife (not animals accustomed to close contact with humans) we cannot guarantee wildlife sightings. We invest a lot of time and effort in scouting the best areas possible for the species we aim for, but even we have 'slow' days.

Schedule / Transportation / Food

We meet at the WILDNorth Wildlife Hospital at 125158 128 Street NW at roughly 8:30am, and the tour ends roughly at 6pm at the same location. Parking for participants is available at the Hospital.

Due to scheduling and safety reasons, we go in one vehicle, no exceptions (no pick-up/drop-off in different locations, no following in your own vehicle). The vehicle is a large, 12 seater van. There will be 2 guides and a maximum of 10 participants.

Please be advised that based on wildlife findings, weather, and road conditions, the length of the tour may vary a bit in length (i.e. if we find lots, we might be a bit later, if the weather and/or light conditions are bad we might return a bit sooner). The general area we are in will be approx. 1.5 - 2 hrs north of Edmonton (may change slightly depending upon success in scouting trips taken by JaW Nature Photography with support of wildlife photography friends).

Your tour guides will maximize the time available for wildlife spotting and photography.

The tour guides have sole discretion over routes selected, decisions where to stop and embark for wildlife (to ensure everyone's safety), and the detailed daily tour schedule (i.e. adapt the route to maximize sightings).

What does the day look like?

After a quick introduction we will have a short tour through the WILDNorth animal hospital and may get a short photo-opportunity with a WILDNorth educational animal ambassador (good time to check basic camera settings).

After that we get into the vehicle and go to the area chosen by the tour guides to look for wildlife. Due to the natural habitat of NHO and GGO we drive roughly two hours to get to the prospect area. There will be an opportunity for a washroom break on the way.

Upon wildlife sightings (and if it's safe to do so) we will stop, and your tour guides will give you some tips on how to approach the animal and how to get the best pictures out of this opportunity. Technical and wildlife questions will be answered throughout the day and especially during the photo-ops.

Lunch and a fruit snack will be included in the tour-fees, more details to be announced.

Upon signing up please send an e-mail to WILDNorth if you have any medical or dietary restrictions and give us details, this information will be confidential, but it is important for us to be aware of any conditions that might affect you so that we can make sure to meet your needs.

Focus of this tour:

This tour will be focused on NHO and GGO but we will also be taking advantage of any other promising wildlife sighting (e.g. other birds of prey, moose, deer and other animals frequently seen in that area) to take pictures and improve your photography skills.

As mentioned earlier, we cannot guarantee wildlife sightings. This winter seems to be a bit slow for NHO and GGO sightings in northern Alberta, but we work with some very experienced ornithologists and Alberta wildlife experts to get our chances as high as possible.

After you sign up:

After you sign up you get a pdf document emailed that contains a good overview of general photo-equipment, basic settings for wildlife photography and brief notes about the owl-species we are looking for.

You can contact your tour guides with general, additional questions beforehand. Detailed photographic questions will be answered throughout the tour.

When you sign up for this course you can also request access to our closed Facebook 'WILD Photography Experience Community group' where participants can share their pictures, experiences as well as get more questions answered by WILDNorth and JaW Nature Photography Ltd. (your tour guides).

Equipment / Expectations / Rentals

Best results are usually achieved with DSLR cameras or mirrorless system cameras with telephoto lenses. Point and shoot cameras are an option but many cameras in that category lack the telephoto and autofocus abilities to keep up with moving wildlife.

Basic camera knowledge is encouraged (autofocus modes, exposure modes). We strive to help as much as possible, but we do not have the time to start everybody from scratch.

If you have a new camera and are unfamiliar with it, or if you are an absolute beginner, please contact your guides (Julie and Wolfgang) at jawnaturephotos@gmail.com to discuss how we can help you make the best of this tour.

We (your guides) personally use Nikon DSLR cameras (D500/7200/5300) and lenses (70-300 and 200-500mm), but on past trips we were able to help participants out with questions to other brands (mainly Canons and Pentax, Sony) they owned, but the goal is to be able to focus on wildlife photography and the ins and outs of that.

There is also a special 25% rental discount through Vistek-Edmonton for cameras and lenses for participants for this weekend. This is a great way to try out different equipment and try out other lenses. Vistek has a great variety of rental equipment and weekend rentals are very affordable.

Any rental contract for equipment is solely between the participant and Vistek Edmonton, and neither WILDNorth nor JaW Nature Photography Ltd. have any involvement in that.

Miscellaneous / future tours (in planning phase)

Clothing/shoes: please dress in layers. Depending on sightings, we are out of the vehicle for short walks (usually within sight of the vehicle) for up to 30 minutes.

Other tours in planning (all details and dates are preliminary and may change):

* Baby animals: focusing on young wildlife (water fowl, mammals , Edmonton-area, daytrip, if you are interested please email to info@wildnorth.ca to be notified,

* Bears in Jasper NP, approx. beginning-mid June, 3 days/2 nights, very limited # of participants, more details to be announced soon, if you are interested please email info@wildnorth.ca to be notified, previous tour spotted 13 black bears (including 5 cubs).

* Moose in Jasper NP: approx. mid October, 3 days/2 nights, very limited# of participants, more details to be announced, if you are interested please email to info@wildnorth.ca to be notified, previous tour spotted 11 moose (incl gorgeous male with rack)

If you have any further inquiries or questions, please contact your guides at jawnaturephotos@gmail.com