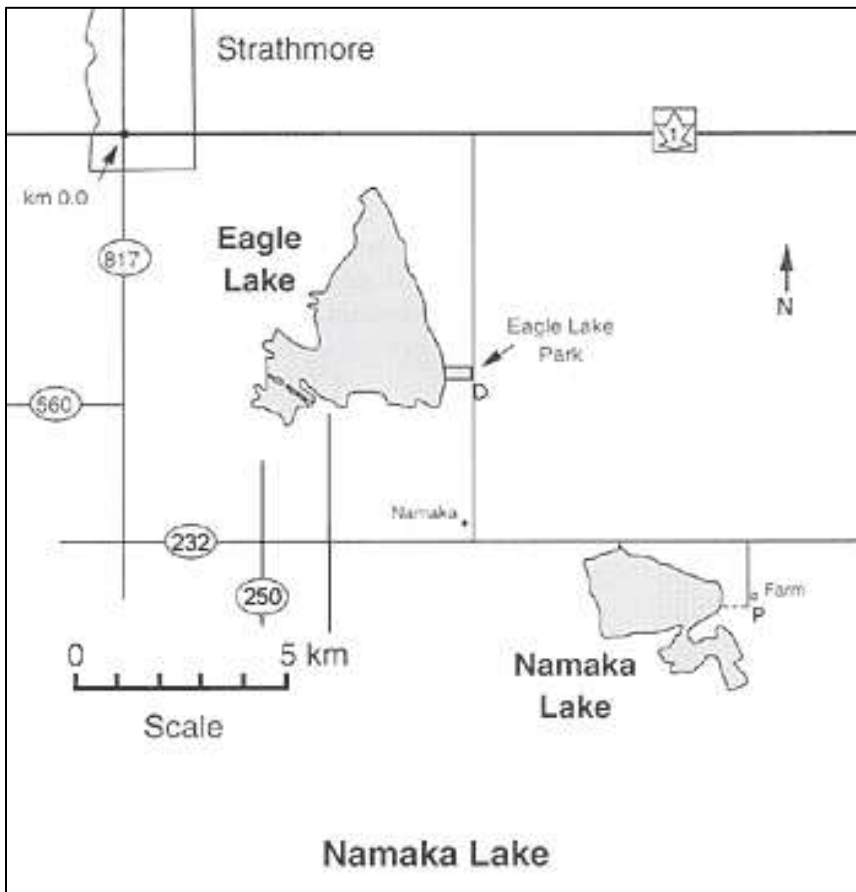


Eagle Lake by Andrew Slater – revised Sep/2012

Eagle Lake is situated about 40 km east of Calgary and a few kilometres southeast of the town of Strathmore. It is a large body of water, measuring about 4.5 km in each direction, surrounded by agricultural land. Impressive numbers of waterbirds and respectable numbers of shorebirds are attracted to the lake during spring (early April to early June) and fall (mid-July to early November) migration. There are also large breeding populations of several species. The habitat in Eagle Lake is great for dabbling and diving ducks, along the west shore and in the south bay. It is used to some extent by recreational boaters but many sections are shallow and weedy and are left to the birds. Eagle Lake makes a good half-day trip from Calgary, requiring from four to six hours return.



The access described in the *Birdfinding Guide* is now closed by a housing development, and neither the old railway embankment nor the southern shore of the lake are accessible from there. Eagle Lake Park on the eastern side of the lake is now an RV park, an entrance fee is charged, and it is no longer of much interest to birders. Instead,

the access now used is a turn to the north onto Range Road 250 only 2 miles (3.2 kms) east from SR 817 on Twp Rd 232, instead of the previous turn 3 miles (4.8 kms) east of SR 817. This turn is also marked by a "No Exit" sign. It leads to the south west corner of the

lake, which can be good for shorebirds, including Upland Sandpiper. A bit of the lake can also be studied and there is some room for walking. This north-south track has recently (2006-07) been graded and is presently a good gravel road all the way to the lake.

Directions are given from the intersection of the Trans-Canada Highway and S.R. 817 in Strathmore (km 0.0). Head south on S.R. 817. At 6.4 km, S.R. 560 (Glenmore Trail) enters from the west. (Those living in southern Calgary may find S.R. 560 east a more direct route.) 9.6 km south of the Trans-Canada Highway turn left onto an east-west gravel road (Township Road 232); this intersection is marked by a farm with a prominent machinery building. This road goes through an irrigated agricultural area, with several small sloughs which may contain good numbers of shorebirds and surface-feeding ducks during spring and fall migration. Small flocks of Sandhill Cranes and Greater White-fronted Geese are occasionally seen during September, either feeding in the stubble or passing overhead. Bald Eagles are sometimes seen in winter (November to March) perched in the tall poplars along irrigation canals, while a few Snowy Owls may be observed in the fields during the same period. The owls may be perched on the ground, on hay bales, fence posts or utility poles.

Turn left onto a gravel road marked with a yellow "No Exit" sign (12.8 km). Follow this north, observing the fields on either side carefully for geese, raptors or other birds in the stubble. If road conditions are good, continue to the end of the road and park in the open area at the bottom.

There is usually a large breeding colony of Eared Grebes in the south end of Eagle Lake and Forster's and Common Terns are often seen. Forster's Terns are most easily identified in August and September, when they assume the distinctive fall, head-pattern. Soras are occasionally seen feeding in the open along the edges of the reed beds on the south side. Long-tailed ducks sometimes occur in early November, just before freeze-up. Rarities recorded include: Red-throated Loon, Black Scoter, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Parasitic Jaeger, Sabine's Gull and Arctic Tern. In late September 1985, Alberta's first Little Gulls, an immature and an adult, first found at nearby Namaka Lake, were later observed here.

Gas, food and washrooms are available in Strathmore. During the fall hunting season, watch for hunters any day of the week.