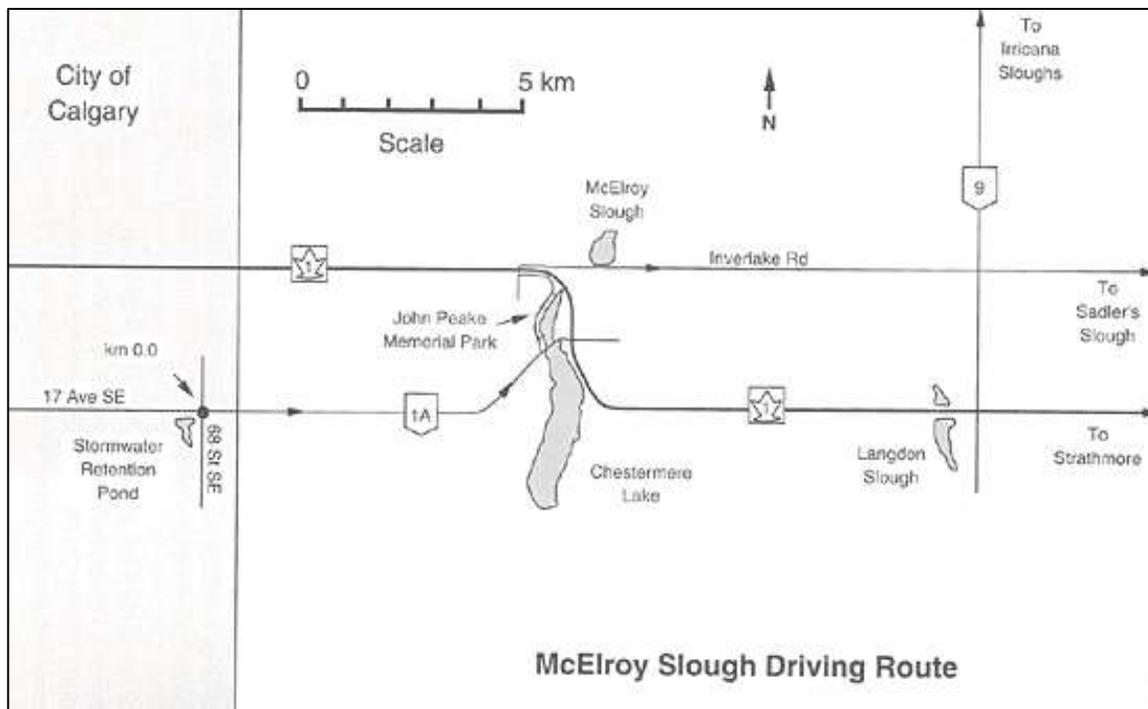


McElroy Slough Driving Route by Dave Elphinstone – revised
Sep/2012

This short route is suitable for those birders who have only a few hours to spare and would like to see some waterfowl or shorebirds.

The best birding months are mid-April to June in the spring and August to November in the fall.

The Forest Lawn stormwater retention pond is now Elliston Park (or East Calgary Regional Park). Note also that Chestermere is now much expanded and the John Peake Memorial park location is much changed.



The route begins at the intersection of 17 Ave. SE (Hwy 1A) and 68 St SE in Calgary (km 0.0). On the southwest corner of this intersection is Elliston Park (the Forest Lawn stormwater retention pond.) In recent years, the large numbers of over-wintering Mallards have attracted Gyrfalcon and other raptors, especially in November and December.

As you drive east along Hwy 1A, watch for hawks on fenceposts and Great Horned Owl along the hedgerows. If moisture conditions are right, there will be a series of small sloughs along the road. After

driving for 8.5 km turn left onto West Park Drive (gravel-surfaced), just before the Chestermere Lake Bridge. One km after the turn, the entrance to John Peake Memorial Park is reached on your right. An entry fee is charged in summer; at other times there may be a barrier to prevent vehicular access. Either drive slowly along the road, or park and walk the trail.

The lake is often good in early spring for waterfowl. Loons and most species of grebes are easily seen here. In May, watch for shorebirds. Sparrows should be seen along the fence on the other side of the road.

Continue driving until the Trans-Canada Highway is reached (11 km). Carefully cross this busy divided highway and follow Inverlake Road (gravel-surfaced) east for 2 km to McElroy Slough, a small irrigation reservoir, on the north side of the road. It can be excellent for most species of waterfowl. During migration you may see early migrations of swans, along with hundreds of geese. It is good for diving ducks - great rafts are seen regularly. Watch for scoters and other difficult to see waterfowl around Calgary.

Continuing on, a small slough is reached on the left at 16.7 km. This begins as a narrow channel paralleling the road and then opens up into a shallow marsh. Phalaropes are often found in the deeper channel, with other types of shorebirds enjoying the shallow slough behind. This area can be excellent for plovers, curlews and, depending on water depth, most of the peeps.

At 20.5 km another intermittent slough is reached which can also be good for waterfowl and shorebirds. At 21.9 km the road intersects Hwy 9. At this point you can either turn right and drive a further 3.3 km to the Trans-Canada Highway for the journey back to Calgary, or continue on to other locations. A left turn will take you north towards Irricana; continuing east on the gravel road for 9.8 km will bring you to the Sadler's Slough road; or turn left at the Trans-Canada Highway for Namaka Lake.