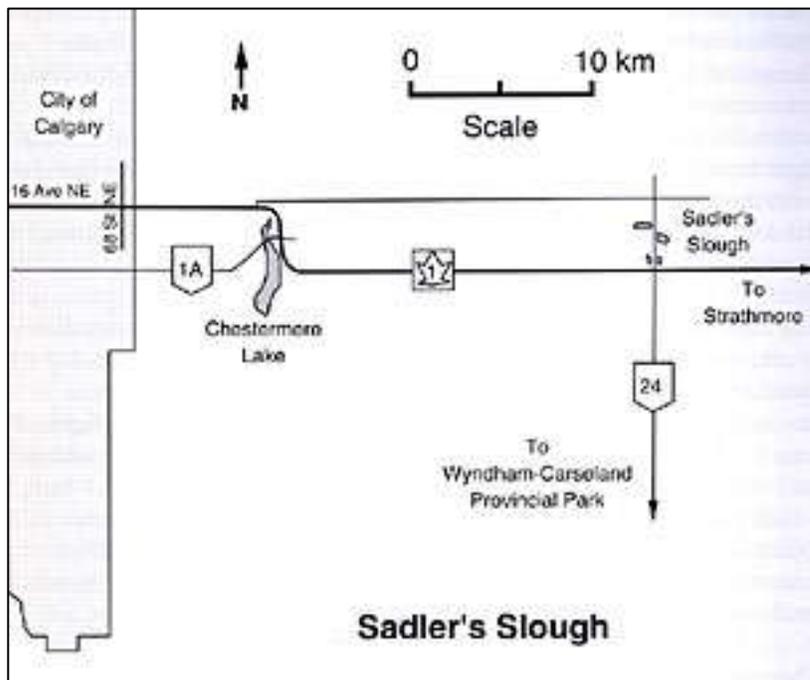


Sadler's Slough by Andrew Slater – revised Sep/2012

Sadler's Slough is a series of small, interconnected sloughs and creeks (part of a Ducks Unlimited wetland habitat conservation project) stretching for about two kilometres along a gravel road, 10 km west of Strathmore. It is an excellent location for observing the spring shorebird migration. To reach Sadler's Slough, drive east on the Trans-Canada Highway for 30 km from the traffic light at 16 Ave and 68 St NE in Calgary and watch for the sign on the right indicating Hwy 24 to Vulcan and Lethbridge. TURN LEFT at this intersection onto RR 262 heading north.

From late April to early June, the whole two kilometres from the Trans-Canada north to the first farm should be driven slowly, observing carefully on both sides. Because the habitat is so close to the road, much of it no more than 50 metres away, this location offers an outstanding opportunity for viewing many kinds of shorebirds and surface-feeding ducks at very close range. This is extremely useful for comparing the different kinds of peeps and other small shorebirds together. A telescope on a window-mount is a great help for viewing the birds closely without disturbing them.



The three common peeps of the Calgary Region (Semipalmated, Least and Baird's Sandpipers) are usually present during this period, often in good numbers. Western and White-rumped Sandpipers turn up in very small numbers from time to time. Other migrant shorebirds, which may be expected,

are: Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers; Greater and Lesser Yellow legs; Solitary Sandpiper; Sanderling; Pectoral and Stilt Sandpipers; and both dowitchers. More unusual species such as Hudsonian Godwit and Dunlin might occur. In the second half of May,

Lesser Golden-Plover should be watched for in the plowed fields immediately beyond the wetlands.

Together with these shorebirds will be several species of surface feeding ducks, including Cinnamon Teal, and possibly five species of Grebe: Pied-billed, Horned, Red-necked, Eared and Western. The most northerly slough on the right hand side is larger than the others and may contain Double-crested Cormorant, some diving ducks and, in the second half of May, Red-necked Phalarope. At this time too, there may be the occasional Greater White-fronted Goose among the numerous Canada geese.

By the time the fall shorebird migration gets underway in earnest, around the middle of July, only the larger sloughs usually contain water and most of the muddy edges will have dried up. At this time the productive habitat is restricted to the two small sloughs by the Trans-Canada Highway and the two larger ones at the northern end of the complex. The location is still worth visiting however, as any of the migrants may turn up again, though in smaller numbers. Late July is a good time to look for the occasional Short-billed Dowitcher, as this species usually passes through before most of the more numerous Long-billeds arrive.

Sadler's Slough is only 15 to 20 minutes driving time from the city limits and may require from half an hour to two hours to bird thoroughly. The visibility is good for most of the day, though very early morning and late evening should be avoided if possible. By driving north to the first intersection and turning left (3.2 km from the Trans-Canada), an alternative route back to Calgary on a gravel road may be taken. This goes through farmland and past several interesting small sloughs and McElroy Slough before rejoining the Trans-Canada Highway. Sadler's Slough can also be visited in combination with other locations in the vicinity such as Eagle Lake and Namaka Lake.

Gas, food and washrooms can be found in Strathmore, 10 km further east from Sadler's Slough along the Trans-Canada Highway.