

AUTUMN GRAND MANAN

SEPTEMBER 1-7, 2008

LEADERS:

BARRY ZIMMER AND BRENNAN MULROONEY

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Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.

Autumn Grand Manan

September 1-7, 2008

Leaders: Barry Zimmer & Brennan Mulrooney

The Bay of Fundy off Grand Manan Island offers what is hands-down some of the best pelagic birding anywhere in the country. With both superb quality of species and sheer quantity of birds, every boat trip is a nonstop thrill ride. This was proven once again on our recent Autumn Grand Manan tour. On our full-day boat trip, we tallied a staggering 8,000 Wilson's Storm-Petrels, 2,000 Red Phalarope, 1,500 Red-necked Phalarope, 400 Greater Shearwaters, 200 Atlantic Puffins, 150 Sooty Shearwaters, 75 Razorbills, 50 Black Guillemots, 50 Northern Gannets, 50 Black-legged Kittiwakes, 10 Pomarine Jaegers, 2 Manx Shearwaters, 1 Leach's Storm-Petrel, 1 Parasitic Jaeger, and 1 Lesser Black-backed Gull. Also in the mix were about 10 northern right whales (the rarest whale in the world) and a handful of finback and Minke whales. At times it was hard to know where to look first, as birds swirled around the boat in dizzying fashion. Many of the birds were brought in with chum to within feet of the back of the boat, allowing not only superb studies, but excellent photographic opportunities as well. Other goodies seen from the boat included Red-necked Grebe, Surf and White-winged scoters, Common Eiders, and Great Cormorants. As an added bonus, the seas were as smooth as glass and the weather ideal. It was, simply put, an awesome day. Our half-day boat trip was run under similar conditions and was equally rewarding.

Of course, a September visit to Grand Manan is about more than just seabirds and whales. This is also a great place to observe the spectacle of fall migration in general. Shorebirds put in a good showing this year with 16 species including the likes of Baird's, White-rumped, and Stilt sandpipers. My favorite part, however, was the forest birding on the island which produced flock after flock of landbird migrants. Each group, generally led by chickadees and nuthatches, had a different make-up. Some flocks had but a warbler or two, while one massive flock had 15 species in a matter of minutes. Overall we tallied 21 species of warblers (a tour record) with such gems as Chestnut-sided, Cape May, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, Prairie (rare here), Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, and Ovenbird. One day we saw 25 Black-throated Greens in a morning. Red-eyed Vireos were abundant this year with 35 in a day, and Philadelphias were well-represented with at least 7 seen.

Other avian highlights included Hooded Merganser, several Bald Eagles, three Merlins, a Black Tern, stunning views of a juvenile Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Bobolink, and prolonged scope studies of White-winged Crossbills, which were in full invasion mode this year.

In all we tallied 131 species—our second best ever for this tour, marveled at incredible seabird and whale spectacles, and enjoyed the fall migration of many other species. Enjoying lobster and blueberries in some form or the other on a near-nightly basis didn't hurt either!

Itinerary:

September 1- arrival in Bangor

September 2 - Orono Bog Boardwalk, drive to Grand Manan via Hwy 9 and Hwy 1 with ferry ride from Black's Harbor to Grand Manan; the Whistle Road (51 species)

September 3 - Marathon Inn grounds, The Whistle, Castalia Marsh, Grand Harbor, The Anchorage, Dark Harbor Road (77 species; 96 total)

September 4 - morning boat trip to Old Proprietor's Shoal; The Anchorage, Dark Harbor Road (64 species; 110 total)

September 5 - briefly on Dock Road in early am; all day boat trip to Murre Ledges, Gannet Rock, The Prong, Old Proprietor's Shoal, and Bulkhead Rip (54 species; 116 total)

September 6 - Whale Cove Road, The Whistle, ferry ride to Black's Harbor, return to Bangor via Hwy 9 with brief stops at Moosehorn NWR (71 species; 131 total)

September 7 - departures for home (131 total species)

Key:

M = all areas in Maine

G = all areas on Grand Manan including boat trip, plus other parts of New Brunswick

bold-faced species indicate birds of rare, casual, or accidental occurrence

underlined species indicate birds of very uncommon occurrence or species that occur regularly but in such low numbers as to be easily missed

Birds:

Canada Goose M,G

Wood Duck M

American Wigeon G

American Black Duck G

Mallard G

Blue-winged Teal G

Green-winged Teal G

Ring-necked Duck G,M

Common Eider G---including one very cool creche from our boat trip

Surf Scoter G---group of four from our all day boat trip

White-winged Scoter G---two pairs seen from our all day boat trip

Hooded Merganser G---female at The Anchorage on two different days; rare on the island

Red-breasted Merganser G

Ring-necked Pheasant G---more numerous than usual this year

Common Loon G

Pied-billed Grebe M

Red-necked Grebe G---exceptional views from near Seal Cove; congrats Leonie!

Greater Shearwater G---an estimated 400 on each of our boat trips, some within ten feet of the boat; tied for favorite bird of the trip!

Sooty Shearwater G---150 in one day

Manx Shearwater G---four total with particularly good views of one in with phalaropes

Wilson's Storm-Petrel G---an estimated 8000 on our all day boat trip!!!!

Leach's Storm-Petrel G---quick views of two by some; missed entirely by others

Northern Gannet G---a total of 133 seen, the best year ever for this species; tied for favorite bird of the tour

Double-crested Cormorant G
 Great Cormorant G---good views of 8 from the boat and another in the scope at Whale Cove
 Great Blue Heron M,G
 Turkey Vulture M,G
 Osprey M,G
 Bald Eagle M,G
 Sharp-shinned Hawk G---only one seen by some
 Broad-winged Hawk M---one along Hwy 9 our first day
 American Kestrel M,G---singles in each place
 Merlin G---three total
Black-bellied Plover G---some still in breeding plumage; uncommon
 Semipalmated Plover G---over 300 in one day!
 Spotted Sandpiper G---very distant bird seen only by Brennan & Leonie
 Greater Yellowlegs G
 Lesser Yellowlegs G
Whimbrel G---at the limit of imagination
 Ruddy Turnstone G
 Sanderling G
 Semipalmated Sandpiper G---the most numerous peep
 Least Sandpiper G---nice views of fresh juveniles
White-rumped Sandpiper G---two at The Anchorage studied at length
Baird's Sandpiper G---a juvenile at the Anchorage was a surprise
 Short-billed Dowitcher G
Stilt Sandpiper G---another rarity, this one at Castalia
Red-necked Phalarope G---an amazing 800 one day and 1500 the next; record numbers for this trip
Red Phalarope G---30 the first boat trip and over 2000 the next!
 Bonaparte's Gull G
 Ring-billed Gull M,G
 Herring Gull M,G
Lesser Black-backed Gull G---four seen on Grand Manan including two adults, a third year bird,
 and a fresh juvenile; increasing here but still considered rare
 Great Black-backed Gull M,G---by the hundreds
 Black-legged Kittiwake G---up to fifty in a day
 Common Tern G---a few from the boat
Black Tern G---one spotted by Brennan on the all day boat trip was a surprise
 Pomarine Jaeger G---an impressive 18 seen, many quite well
 Parasitic Jaeger G---one seen on our all day boat trip
 jaeger species G---a distant juvenile bird on our all day boat trip was thought to likely be a **Long**
-tailed, but views were distant and somewhat brief for such a rarity
Common Murre G---briefly from the ferry and another by some at The Anchorage; uncommon
 Razorbill G---up to 75 in one day; great views
 Black Guillemot G---daily with a high count of 58 in one day
 Atlantic Puffin G---voted the second favorite bird of the tour; an estimated 250 over the two boat
 trips
 Rock Pigeon M,G
 Mourning Dove M,G
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird G
 Belted Kingfisher G
 Downy Woodpecker M,G

Hairy Woodpecker M,G
Pileated Woodpecker M---one along Hwy 9 was unexpected
 Northern Flicker M,G---heard only
 Eastern Wood-Pewee G---seen only by a few
 Least Flycatcher G
Eastern Phoebe G---uncommon here
 Eastern Kingbird G---one at Blacks Harbor
Philadelphia Vireo G---great studies; six or seven total; uncommon
 Red-eyed Vireo G---very common with an estimated 55 seen
 Blue Jay M,G
 American Crow M,G
 Common Raven M,G
 Black-capped Chickadee M,G---our most common landbird
 Red-breasted Nuthatch M,G---about 31 seen
White-breasted Nuthatch M---a couple at Orono Bog; uncommon
 Brown Creeper M,G---mostly heard
 Golden-crowned Kinglet M,G---furtive
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet G---by some
 Hermit Thrush M,G
 American Robin G
 Gray Catbird G---one shy bird along The Whistle
Northern Mockingbird G---one seen by Dottie our last day on the island; very uncommon here
 European Starling M,G
 Cedar Waxwing M,G---common
 Tennessee Warbler G---three seen
 Nashville Warbler G--- 13 seen
 Northern Parula M,G---total of ten
 Yellow Warbler M,G--- five the last morning
 Chestnut-sided Warbler G---a total of two seen
 Magnolia Warbler G--- 14 total
Cape May Warbler M---two at Orono were our only ones; very uncommon this early
Black-throated Blue Warbler M,G---single males at Orono and along The Whistle; very uncommon
 Yellow-rumped Warbler M,G---Myrtle; about 11 total
 Black-throated Green Warbler M,G---by far the most common warbler this year with an estimated
 total of **44**; repeated superb views from just feet away
 Blackburnian Warbler G---one along The Whistle and one on Whale Cove Road; uncommon
 Palm Warbler M---two seen briefly at Orono Bog; uncommon
Prairie Warbler G---a nice rarity along The Whistle
 Bay-breasted Warbler G---three total
 Blackpoll Warbler G---just two
 Black-and-white Warbler M,G--- nine total
 American Redstart G---final count of seven including one striking adult male
Ovenbird G---one seen by some on the Dark Harbor Road
 Common Yellowthroat M,G---our second most common warbler with 27 seen
Mourning Warbler G---by Robert only; getting late for this skulker
 Wilson's Warbler G---one our last morning
 Chipping Sparrow G
 Savannah Sparrow G

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow G--- superb views of a brightly colored juvenile with almost no effort; the dull race *subvirgatus*; voted the third favorite bird of the tour

Song Sparrow G

Lincoln's Sparrow G---by a few only

Swamp Sparrow G---ditto

White-throated Sparrow G---numerous

Dark-eyed Junco M,G---Slate-colored

Common Grackle G---flock south of North Head for some

Rose-breasted Grosbeak G---young male at the Marathon

Bobolink G---great views of bright fall bird at Whale Cove

Brown-headed Cowbird G---uncommon

Baltimore Oriole G---two our last morning

Purple Finch M,G

White-winged Crossbill G---a good year for this invasionary species; we had a flock along the Whistle, another flock (including several bright males) along the Dark Harbor Road that were seen especially well in the scope, and a single female at Dark Harbor; easily missed

Pine Siskin G---heard only

American Goldfinch M,G

House Sparrow M---always tough on this trip, but some were spotted near Howard Johnson's our first morning

total species - **131** (the second highest total ever for this trip)

Mammals: total species - 10

Harbor Seal

Gray Seal

Harbor Porpoise

Northern Right Whale---at least ten seen, including several very close to the boat

Finback Whale---nice views

Minke Whale---one or two

Red Squirrel

Eastern Chipmunk---leader only

River Otter---distant pair at Moosehorn Refuge were a tour first
bat species

Reptiles & Amphibians: total species - 1

Wood Frog

Butterflies: total species - 5

Cabbage White

Great Spangled Fritillary

Clouded Sulphur

Mourning Cloak

Common Ringlet---leader only

Significant others:

lobster in various forms

blueberries in various forms

miniature golf at Durlan's---(Durlan = 44/ 44, Peter=45, Barry = 50/ 50, Brennan 53/ 47,

Robert = 59)---Brennan the winner of the first Grand Manan Shave-off challenge in sudden death

dulse tasting---yuk!

Stephen King's house

pitcher plants

ten foot shark on surface of water near Seal Cove, possibly a porbeagle shark