Eagle-Eye Tours



Get to know guide Jared Clarke

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Jared Clarke has been guiding birding tours with Eagle-Eye Tours for over 10 years. He has guided Trinidad & Tobago, Belize & Tikal, New Brunswick & Grand Manan, Point Pelee, and his specialty, Grand Newfoundland. Jared is from Newfoundland and has a passion for sharing his knowledge with others. We are so happy to have Jared as part of our Eagle-Eye Tours team. We recently asked him a few questions about his background and thought it would be fun to share them with you, so you can learn a little bit more about him and his birding passion.



Despite the weather, Jared loves being a bird guide. Trust us, the weather isn't always this bad.

When did you become interested in birds?

Even as a kid, I was always interested in nature. I was out exploring in the woods, collecting nature items, so I think I've always had a passion for nature. It wasn't until I started working with a conservation group after high school, during the summers, that I really became interested in birds. During my training, as part of that leadership program, I met a Parks Canada interpreter who took us on a bird walk and he opened my eyes to the fact that there were so many *different kinds* of birds around me. I was immediately hooked, - it was like an epiphany and I soon became one of the most active birders in Newfoundland and Labrador. I was always out with my camera and my binoculars looking for birds. I soon discovered there was a small but very tight knit birding community here in the province. Quite a few birders, including people like Bruce Mactavish, a very well known North American birder, took me under their wings over the next few years and mentored me. I have a lot of people to thank for my excitement and passion for birds and birding.

Do you have a favourite bird family or bird?

It’s really tough when people ask about favourite birds and favourite bird families, because I love so many different kinds of birds. But I really have a special place in my heart for seabirds, especially the pelagic seabirds. I think there's something exciting about that mysterious life that's lived out over the oceans. Pelagic seabirds like shearwaters and storm-petrels, they definitely hold a special place in my heart.

What is your most memorable bird encounter?

There have been so many memorable bird encounters over the years, it all comes with context. Being able to see some critically endangered birds on the Eagle-Eye Tour in Hawaii, for example, birds that may not exist in the next few decades. Seeing some of the colourful birds of the tropics, that is so special. Birds that I saw in magazines as kids and I never thought I'd see in life. But seeing rare birds at home, there's something extra special about that. The Steller’s Sea Eagle that recently made lots of headlines around the world - I was able to see it here in my own home province and that has to be one of the highlights of my birding life. There have been so, so many incredible encounters. The fact that there are always amazing bird encounters is part of what keeps birding so fresh and so special.

Do you have a bird life-list or a bird bucket list?

Oh, I have both a life list and a bucket list, and sadly my bucket list is probably bigger than my life list. eBird has been so excellent for that - partly because I travelled a fair bit during my university years before I was really into birds and birding, so I've been able to go back and add a lot of my earlier sightings. eBird is great both for keeping my life list AND for helping inspire a big bucket list!

Do you have a favourite birding destination?

I love to travel and I love birding in different countries. One of my first experiences was during my graduate studies when I was fortunate to spend a year living in Finland, working on a research project. I spent a lot of my spare time birding and exploring throughout the country. Finland was a really special place - I loved birding there and I really can't wait to get an opportunity to go back. I've also enjoyed working in the tropics. I've spent some time in Honduras, Belize, and Tikal in Guatemala with Eagle-Eye Tours, and I’ve also led the Trinidad & Tobago tour for a number of years. These incredible countries are not only fun, but unique and diverse. Yet, I also have a real attachment to the North - including the Canadian Arctic. So yeah, there are so many amazing places that I've been birding and it's hard to pick a favourite.

Is there a place that is calling you?

If I could pick one place to go birding, I think it would be anywhere in Africa. Africa has always been big on my bucket list. I've never been to the African continent, so just a chance to go to Africa and see not just the birds, but of course all the amazing wildlife and the incredible culture would be nothing short of wonderful.

How has birding enriched your life?

Birding has really enriched my life in so many ways. I mean obviously there's my passion for birds and my enjoyment of seeing birds in all the different contexts - but there's so much more. Birding is also a whole new way of seeing the world and a whole new reason to get out and explore it. Many of my best experiences when I've been birding haven't even involved birds, it's been the other amazing things I found and discovered and the amazing places. I think birding is just a fantastic excuse to get out and enjoy nature and explore the world. What's life without that?

What are the craziest things you have done to see a bird?

Oh I am not sure if I have done many crazy things, but I do remember early in my birding career when I was still a young graduate student and there was a rare bird, a Rock Wren - the first one ever seen in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it was all the way on the other side of the province (for anyone not familiar with Newfoundland, it's a very big island). It was a 9 hour drive away and I remember hearing about it at 4:00 o'clock in the morning and at 4:30am I was ready to hitchhike across the island. So yeah that was one of the crazier things I have done.

What are your other hobbies/interests?

Besides birding, which obviously takes up a lot of my life and a lot of my passion, I have a really big interest in all of natural history. I enjoy getting out during butterfly season, during wildflower season, I love going hiking, covering some ground, and seeing some of the incredible landscapes in the various places where I'm lucky enough to live and to travel. I also have a real interest in local history and culture. My educational background is in science but I actually have a minor in Newfoundland studies - so I've studied lots of Newfoundland folklore and linguistics and history etc. I really loved to learn about my own province, but it also adds to my ability to be able to share that with other people when they come to visit. And of course my family. I have a wonderful wife and two kids whom I love to go exploring with.

What do you enjoy about guiding birding tours?

Guiding was a whole new experience for me. I got into it about 15 years ago and I immediately realized how much I loved it. Foremost, I think it is the ability to share my time with like minded people who are just as passionate about birds and nature as I am, but also the ability to share my own knowledge, and passion for birds. And, when I am leading a local tour, to share my passion for the place that I live, and the history and culture here. To be able to share that with people is such an incredible experience. Being a guide is a very enriching part of my life. It also keeps things fresh, since you get to experience things over and over again, with new people and new eyes. It keeps things that can maybe sometimes become a little bit routine, always exciting.

If you were a superhero what would your powers be?

Oh I always love these kinds of silly questions and the superhero one is always an interesting one. There are so many interesting answers people can give. I think if you were to speak to most people who are birders, the number one answer you'll get is the ability to "teleport", to travel around the

world in the blink of an eye - to where all the rare birds are being seen, or to new birding places. But personally, I think the ability to time travel as a birder would be amazing! Can you imagine being able to go back and see some of these birds that are now extinct like the Great Auk, which once lived on these coastlines where I now live. Or some of the amazing Hawaiian birds that have been extinct just for the few decades. The ability to time travel and see the world as it was, whether it's decades ago or even before humans had an impact - as a naturalist, as a birder, that would be just incredible!