Eagle-Eye Tours



Grand Newfoundland Trip Report (Jun 12 – 23, 2025)

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During perhaps the most glorious stretch of weather that the island of Newfoundland has ever seen, our group of 12 intrepid birders and 2 guides spent 11 days exploring the varied scenic landscapes that the island has to offer. We began our tour by making a beeline out to North River to successfully spot the long-staying Steller's Sea Eagle continuing in the area! We then spent a couple days in the St. John's area before working our way southwards along the Irish Loop and Cape Shore routes on the southern Avalon Peninsula. After that we marched northwards and spent a couple days exploring the boreal forest characteristic of Terra Nova National Park. We then journeyed west with a couple stops in Gander and Grand-Falls Windsor before arriving in the picturesque coastal town of Rocky Harbour which would be our home base for a couple days of exploring the world-renowned and unique landscapes of Gros Morne National Park.

Day 1: Arrive in St. John's

On the first night, the group met at our hotel for introductions before heading over to Bernard Stanley's Gastropub to acquaint ourselves with each other over food and drink.

Day 2: A date with the Steller's Sea Eagle, Witless Bay Ecological Reserve and a Eurasian rarity palooza at Burton's Pond

After eating breakfast, the group made the collective decision to stray away from our regularly scheduled programming and make a beeline to North River where the mega-rare Steller's Sea Eagle had been seen frequenting the area for the past several days. The decision was extremely worthwhile, as we found the Steller's Sea Eagle perched in a tree just on the other side of the river!! The Steller's was one of the very first birds we laid our eyes on during the tour and paved the way for an amazing first day of the tour.



Steller's Sea-Eagle © Tim Arthur

Following our date with the Steller’s Sea Eagle, we motored on towards the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve for a boat tour with O’Brien’s Puffin and Whale Watching Tours. The sheer amount of wildlife that can be observed at a seabird colony is a spectacle that everyone should see at least once in their life! Thousands upon thousands of Atlantic Puffins, Common Murre, Razorbills and Black-legged Kittiwakes were seen whizzing by our boat and along their cliff-side nesting sites on Gull Island, offering the group many great looks! At one point, cheers were in abound after the boat tour group witnessed a puffin escape certain death from the bill of a hungry Great Black-backed Gull! With some adept maneuvering by the boat captain near the jagged cliffs of the island, the group also had great looks at a Thick-billed Murre! Before steaming back to shore, the group also had a close encounter with a Humpback Whale.



Thick-billed Murre © Tim Arthur



Humpback Whale © Tim Arthur



Atlantic Puffin © Tim Arthur



Witless Bay birding © Kyle d'Entremont

After the boat tour, our group made our way to Burton’s Pond on the campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland in search of a resident Eurasian rarity, the Pink-footed Goose! Not only did we successfully see the goose, but we were also afforded stunning looks at two other Eurasian rarities mere feet away from each other; a Tufted Duck and a Eurasian Wigeon. Only in St. John’s, Newfoundland, can you expect to see so many Eurasian rarities in one locale in North America!



Pink-footed Goose © Tim Arthur



Tufted Duck © Tim Arthur

After what one of our clients described as the greatest birding day of their life, the group finished the day with a celebratory drink and dinner at the historic Yellowbelly Brewery in downtown St. John’s.

Day 3: Bidgood Park, Goulds, Cape Spear, and Virginia Lake

We began the day by heading out to Bidgood Park, a favorite birding location of many locals in St. John's! Here, the group had excellent views of Northern Waterthrush, Blackpoll Warbler, Wilson's Warbler and Magnolia Warbler all singing on territory. We also saw a couple Sharp-shinned Hawks cruise past in search of prey!



Northern Waterthrush © Tim Arthur



Bidgood birding © Kyle d'Entremont

Speaking of raptors, we then made our way over to Cochrane Pond Road, where we had excellent looks at a fledgling Great Horned Owl sitting on its nest in the treetops just off the side of the road! We then had an encounter with a singing Mourning Warbler; for a species well-known for their skulky hard-to-see tendencies, we had incredible looks at this species singing at the top of a short spruce tree for several minutes!



Mourning Warbler © Tim Arthur

After lunch, we headed to the easternmost point of North America: Cape Spear! Standing at the edge of the continent, we picked up Savannah Sparrows, American Pipit, and some of our first glimpses of Northern Gannets diving just offshore. We then headed to Virginia Lake where we had excellent looks at Northern Pintail, an immature male Northern Shoveler, and an Osprey in active pursuit of fish.



Northern Shoveller © Tim Arthur



Northern Pintail © Tim Arthur

After another successful day of birding, we made our way back into town for dinner at the Celtic Hearth.

Day 4: The Irish Loop from St. John's to Cape Race

We began the day by bidding farewell to the province's capital city of St. John's and making a pitstop in St. Michael's where we had good looks at nesting Northern Fulmars gliding around the cliffs of Ship Island and a close-up view of a Purple Finch and Pine Grosbeaks flitting through the blossoms of an apple tree. We also had brief looks of a passing Minke Whale near the coast! We then continued our journey south to La Manche Provincial Park where the group had great looks at Black-throated Green Warbler and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. We then had a traditional Newfoundland lunch of fish cakes, baked beans, cod au gratin and bread pudding, amongst other dishes, at the Tetley Tea Room in the picturesque town of Ferryland. After lunch, we had close looks at a Harbour Seal just outside the restaurant! Afterwards, we motored on to Renews where we had many excellent views of nesting Arctic Tern and Common Tern and picked up our first Greater Yellowlegs for the trip.



Harbour Seal © Tim Arthur

After a drive through the barren oceanic tundra landscapes characteristic of the Southern Avalon Peninsula, we then made a stop at The Drook on the Cape Race Road. Here, we admired the scenery and saw our first Northern Harrier of the trip, gliding over the hilltops. Afterwards, we made our way to our place of stay for the night, the Edge of the Avalon Inn, where we were also treated to a hearty meal after a long day of adventure. After dinner, with the taste for adventure still at hand, we took a foggy evening birding drive down to Cape Race Lighthouse. During this drive, we encountered a Short-eared Owl that flushed up from the roadside and had brief looks before it faded away into the mist!

Day 5: Trepassey, St. Shott's, St. Vincent's, Cootes Pond, and St. Bride's

We started the day by birding the Powles Head Road south of Trepassey, where we were treated to very close views of Wilson's Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler and heard our first Fox Sparrow of the trip, before admiring the view from the Powles Head Lighthouse. Afterwards, we headed down the St. Shott's Road where we were fortunate to spot several caribou out on the tundra! We then continued

down the road in search of Willow Ptarmigan and were pleasantly rewarded when a male in breeding plumage flushed up near the road and gave our group excellent views!



Wilson's Warbler © Tim Arthur



Powles Head © Kyle d'Entremont



St. Shott's Road tundra © Kyle d'Entremont

Afterwards we enjoyed our boxed lunch from the Edge of the Avalon on some picnic tables in foggy St. Vincent's. It is not the true Newfoundland experience without experiencing thick fog coming in off the Grand Banks, afterall! After lunch, we journeyed on to Cootes Pond (where fortunately the fog had cleared!) in search of a previously reported Hudsonian Godwit. Shortly after arrival, we had the godwit in view with our scopes. Not long thereafter, we were happy to see a Black-headed Gull resting on the same spit as the godwit! We also enjoyed very close looks of a Least Sandpiper foraging in the mudflats before leaving. We ended our day in St. Bride's, where we received incredible hospitality and a feed of fresh Atlantic Cod at Da Bird's Eye Restaurant that was caught by local fishermen that very morning!

Day 6: Cape St. Mary's and Castle Hill

After enjoying an excellent breakfast at Da Bird's Eye (including a local delicacy, bakeapple jam), we bid farewell to our gracious hosts and headed to an uncharacteristically sunny Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve. Cape St. Mary's is truly one of the most incredible places on earth! The reserve offers stunning views of seaside cliffs and is one of the world's most accessible seabird colonies. On the walk out to the gannet colony on Bird Rock, the group spotted several Great Cormorants on the rocks in the cove below. The group was also witness to a close encounter with a Bald Eagle with a gull or kittiwake chick in its talons! On the insect front, we also enjoyed close views of several Short-tailed Swallowtails on our hike. As we walked closer to the colony, the cacophony of breeding seabirds grew louder and louder, until we crested the final hill of the trail and a truly astonishing view revealed itself to us. Mere feet away from us, there were thousands of nesting Northern Gannets! We were afforded a window into their daily lives; with great looks of gannets delivering nesting material and couples reinforcing their pair bonds with the behaviour known as "billing". Along with the gannets, we saw thousands of nesting Common Murre, Black-legged Kittiwakes, and great looks at a pair of Razorbills. We were also fortunate to have great looks at kittiwake chicks at the nest through our scopes!



Northern Gannets © Tim Arthur



Common Murre © Tim Arthur



Cape St. Mary's © Kyle d'Entremont



Cape St. Mary's gannet colony © Kyle d'Entremont



Birding at Cape St. Mary's © Tim Arthur

Finding it difficult to pry ourselves away from the spectacle before us at Cape St. Mary's, we eventually forced ourselves to continue our journey. After a pit stop at Kelly's Restaurant in Newfoundland's former "French capital" of Placentia, we headed up to Castle Hill National Historic Site to explore a 17th century fort and receive a history lesson on the fishing industry that the province of Newfoundland was built on. We then ventured north and ended our day at the Clode Sound Motel and Restaurant.

Day 7: Terra Nova National Park

We began our first day at Terra Nova National Park with a quick pre-breakfast birding walk across the road from the Clode Sound Motel where we heard several Pine Siskins fly overhead. We then walked back across the road and enjoyed a delicious breakfast that included yet another local delicacy, homemade partridgeberry jam! After breakfast we headed out to Dunphy's Pond Trail where we had great looks at a male Hairy Woodpecker, an adult Canada Jay with two juveniles, a winnowing Wilson's Snipe flying overhead, and excellent close-up views of a singing Palm Warbler!



Palm Warbler © Tim Arthur

We then ventured over to Sandy Pond and enjoyed a boxed lunch from Clode Sound Motel by the pond. Afterwards, we hiked the trail around the pond and had excellent views of an obliging Olive-sided Flycatcher perched on a snag a few meters away from the trail! We also enjoyed some of the resident flora, with sightings of a gorgeous array of wildflowers including Blue Flag Iris, Dragon's Mouth Orchids, Pink Ladyslippers, Purple Pitcher Plants, and Marsh Violets. At the end of our hike, we saw a group of male Ring-necked Ducks near the boardwalk.



Olive-sided Flycatcher © Tim Arthur

After our hike at Sandy Pond, we enjoyed a midday siesta at the Clode Sound Motel. A mid-dinner power outage due to a downed tree nearby was no match for the master chefs at Clode Sound, as we enjoyed yet another tasty meal at our place of lodging! After dinner we took an evening stroll at Ochre Hill and enjoyed an incredible panoramic view of the park from a lookout tower.

Day 8: Terra Nova National Park and Gander

We began our second day at Terra Nova with another hearty breakfast at the Clode Sound Motel before heading out to the Terra Nova Wharf and coastal trail. Here we enjoyed wonderful looks at Red-breasted Mergansers, a Spotted Sandpiper and Common Loons. We also heard our first Blue-headed Vireo of the trip and enjoyed a small, yet tranquil waterfall! Afterwards, we made our way to the Terra Nova Visitor Centre where we saw some neat marine life in touch tanks, such as Atlantic Cod, Spider Crabs, Lumpfish, Green Sea Urchins, and Purple Sea Stars. We then took a short hike along the coast by the visitor centre and had excellent views of a White-throated Sparrow. We then said goodbye to Terra Nova and carried on to Gander International Airport where we enjoyed learning about the historical significance of the airport for the international transatlantic commercial airline industry. We also read the many exhibits on how the town took in thousands of stranded travellers that were grounded due to the 9/11 tragedy, effectively doubling the population of the town for a short time! We then birded the nearby Gander Heritage Trails where we picked up Red-eyed Vireo and had our first excellent views of American Redstart. Afterwards, we trekked onward to Mount Peyton Hotel in Grand-Falls Windsor and enjoyed our dinner at Clem’s Diner.

Day 9: Corduroy Brook and the Salmonid Interpretation Centre in Grand-Falls Windsor

After breakfast at the hotel, we ventured out to the Corduroy Brook Trail where we heard several Alder Flycatchers and had excellent views of our first Ovenbird on the trip! We also had our first great looks at a Fox Sparrow. We then went to a side road away from the main trail system where we heard an enthusiastically singing Veery and saw two American Redstarts exchanging food at the nest! We then had a tasty lunch at a Newfoundland staple, Wing ‘n it, before wandering over to the Salmonid Interpretation Centre. At the centre, we enjoyed beautiful views of the scenic Exploits River and had fun seeing some Atlantic Salmon swim past a viewing window in the centre, as well as watching them actively jumping up the fish ladder on-site!



Atlantic Salmon © Kyle d'Entremont

We then embarked on the long journey westward out to Rocky Harbour. Along the way we enjoyed our first taste of the incredible and varied landscapes that Gros Morne National Park has to offer, picking up our first Tennessee Warbler and Swainson’s Thrush for the trip at a scenic pulloff lookout in the park. That evening we enjoyed a terrific dinner at the Fisherman’s Landing Restaurant and a beautiful sunset in Rocky Harbour before resting up for a couple days of adventure in Gros Morne.



Rocky Harbour © Kyle d'Entremont

Day 10: Gros Morne National Park, Tablelands, Trout River

After breakfast at the hotel, we loaded up into the vans but then heard a singing Lincoln's Sparrow across the street. Naturally, we all proceeded to vacate the vans and ended up having excellent views of the Lincoln's! We then loaded back into the vans and successfully left without any distractions on our second attempt. After a couple of brief stops to admire the scenic fjords of Bonne Bay at Jenniex House and in Norris Point we headed to the Gros Morne Mountain Trailhead where we had awesome views of Red-eyed Vireo, Black-throated Green Warbler, and a female Hairy Woodpecker. We then went to the Lomond River trail and enjoyed hearing multiple singing Tennessee Warbler, and had great looks at a Golden-crowned Kinglet. We also increased our wildflower count by finding some beautiful Yellow Ladyslippers near the bathroom area! After enjoying our boxed lunch from Fisherman's Landing at the trailhead, we carried on to the Discovery Centre to warm up with a cup of coffee and learn about the incredible processes that formed the stunning mountains and geological formations that are representative of Gros Morne National Park.



Yellow Ladyslipper © Kyle d'Entremont

Following our geology lesson, we drove over to the Tablelands, a unique landscape created by the earth's mantle jutting out of the ground. A short hike in this truly special environment yielded very few species of birds, but we did observe interesting flora such as juniper shrubs, Sea Thrift, and more Purple Pitcher Plants! On our way back to the vans from our hike at the Tablelands, a driving sideways rain dampened our bodies, but not our spirits, and we continued to the town of Trout River! Our persistence proved to be fruitful, as we spotted a Lesser Black-backed Gull amongst a raft of American Herring Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls. After our gull-spotting session, we returned to the hotel to dry off before enjoying a delicious dinner at Earle's Restaurant.



Tablelands © Kyle d'Entremont

Day 11: Gros Morne National Park, Western Brook Pond, Broom Point

With the sun shining through our windows on the final day of our tour, we enjoyed our last breakfast together at the hotel and loaded up into the vans before heading out to Western Brook Pond for a boat tour of an incredible fjord that ancient glaciers carved through the Long Range Mountains! On the trail to the pond, we had incredible views of Boreal Chickadee, Tennessee Warbler, a pair of Pine Grosbeaks, Common Yellowthroat, Magnolia Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, and Wilson’s Warbler, amongst others! We then sat back and enjoyed a relaxing and beautiful boat tour of the incredible Western Brook Pond fjord. The mountains surrounded us on all sides and were dotted with remarkable cascading waterfalls. Along with the stunning landscape, we also picked up Caspian Terns flying over the pond. After the boat tour, we enjoyed our boxed lunch from the Fisherman’s Landing along the pond before making our way back to the vans.



Pine Grosbeak © Tim Arthur



Tennessee Warbler © Tim Arthur



Western Brook Pond © Tim Arthur

We then traveled further north to Broom Point where we picked another couple of new species for the trip: Common Eider and Harlequin Duck! It was a special treat to see multiple plumage types of both species, with adult male, immature male, and female eiders creching with chicks, and an adult male Harlequin Duck alongside an immature male and two females.



Harlequin Duck © Tim Arthur

Afterwards we made our way to a lookout point to admire the Gros Morne Mountain one last time. A pair of nearby Pine Siskin also interrupted our first attempt at a group photo here! Bidding farewell to the mountain and surrounding environs, we traveled onwards to Deer Lake. We then had our last dinner together before saying our goodbyes following an incredible and fulfilling 11 days spent in the wilds of Newfoundland with an amazing group of people!



Our group

[Grand Newfoundland Birding (Jun 12 - 23, 2025) ebird list]