



Grand Newfoundland Trip Report (June 14 - 25, 2026)

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In Newfoundland, one should always expect the unexpected, whether that be amazing views of cliff and coast around every corner, the ever-changing weather, or the fantastic birds scattered across the island's rugged landscapes! And our group certainly cherished every unforgettable surprise that the island of Newfoundland was so gracious to offer us on an 11-day adventure for the ages! We began our tour in Deer Lake and the stunning fjords and jagged coastlines of Gros Morne National Park. We then journeyed eastwards through Grand Falls-Windsor and Gander before exploring the boreal forest of Terra Nova National Park. An incredible afternoon was spent at the gannet colony at Cape St. Mary's Ecological reserve before a couple days exploring the bogs, barrens and tundra of the Southern Avalon Peninsula. An at-sea puffin extravaganza was a highlight on our way back to the capital city of St. John's, where we finished up our tour.

Day 1: Arrive in Deer Lake

On the first night of the tour, our group met at the Deer Lake Motel where we got to know one another over food and drink and chatted about our excitement for the grand adventure that would begin the next morning.

Day 2: Deer Lake, Gros Morne National Park, Tablelands

After fueling the first day of our adventure with a hearty breakfast at the Deer Lake Motel, we made our way back towards the Deer Lake airport to send our guests back on their way— just kidding! We promptly turned left a few hundred metres before the Departures gate and started our tour by birding the Humber River trail system by the airport. Not long after hopping out of our vans, we heard and saw an incredibly obliging Tennessee Warbler belting a tune from the top of a nearby snag!



Tennessee Warbler © Mitch Doucet

Shortly after, we approached a marsh where we heard multiple Sora calling, and marvelled at the acrobatics of a few Bank Swallows flying overhead. While at the marsh, we also had good views of American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, and Green-winged Teal. Two American Bitterns flying past and landing nearby also made for a pleasant surprise!



Green-winged Teal Family © Mitch Doucet

We then made our first foray into a section of boreal forest, where we had good looks at Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Bay-breasted Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler. We

were also excited to find a rare for Newfoundland Cape May Warbler singing in the treetops! After racking up an impressive 48 species at our first stop of the trip, we pointed our vans to the northwest and began exploring the world-renowned and UNESCO World Heritage Site designated Gros Morne National Park! Our first stop in the park was the Lomond River Trail where we heard our first Olive-sided Flycatcher, Wilson's Snipe, and Northern Flicker of the trip. The din ringing through the boreal forest on the trail was rounded out by the surround sound of numerous Tennessee Warblers singing on breeding habitat. We also heard our first Boreal Chickadee of the trip here, but getting our eyeballs onto it proved difficult much to the chagrin of two of our guests for which the bird would be a lifer. Fret not though! For persistence through many more heard only birds and fleeting glimpses made a later encounter with the species all the more sweeter! After leaving Lomond, we then enjoyed some great traditional Newfoundland meals such as fish cakes paired with homestyle baked beans and Cod au Gratin at The Old Loft Restaurant in Bonne Bay. After lunch, our vans made it about 100 feet before the brakes needed to be engaged for some great views of a late-season Iceland Gull!



Iceland Gull © Mitch Doucet

We then went to the Gros Morne Discovery Centre to learn about the geological history of the area before heading up to the Tablelands; an otherworldly landscape where the rusty Earth's mantle has been exposed at the surface. Afterwards we headed down to Trout River where we encountered two more uncommon gull species; two Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a Glaucous Gull!



Glaucous Gull © Mitch Doucet

After an excellent first day of exploring, we then made our way to the Fisherman's Landing Inn and Restaurant for dinner and enjoyed some fresh seafood before admiring the peaceful calm waters in Rocky Harbour.

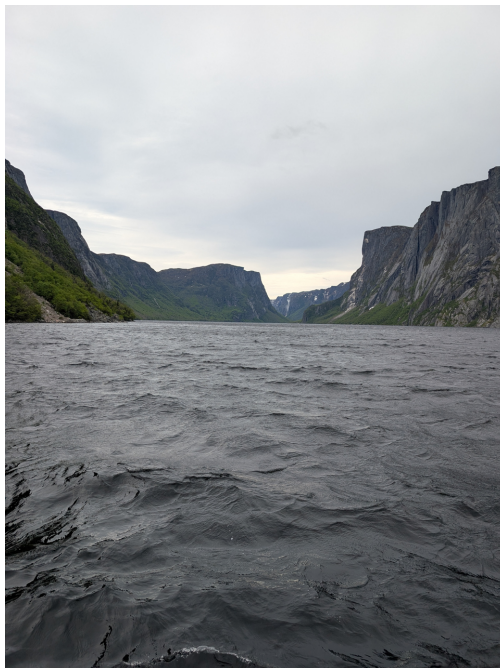
Day 3- Gros Morne National Park, Coastal Trail, Berry Head Pond, Western Brook Pond and Broom Point

To get a jumpstart on our second day of exploring Gros Morne National Park, we did a pre-breakfast birding excursion along the Coastal Trail, where had great looks at Caspian Terns, American Wigeon, and found a Eurasian Green-winged Teal! After heading back to the hotel for breakfast, we then walked along the Berry Head Pond Trail, which provides an excellent view of Gros Morne mountain across the pond while meandering through the boreal forest! While here, we had great views of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Magnolia Warbler, Fox Sparrow, American Redstart, Mourning Warbler, and a Common Loon drifting along the pond's surface!



Fox Sparrow @ Mitch Doucet

We then packed up and headed over to one of Newfoundland's most stunning landscapes, a landlocked fjord carved through the Long Range Mountains that is known as Western Brook Pond! With a boat tour through the fjord awaiting us, we birded the trail down to our dock and had good looks at Common Yellowthroat, Blackpoll Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Pine Grosbeak! With the constant welcomed distractions of cascading waterfalls, deep glacier carved valleys, and impressive walls of rock surrounding us on our boat tour, we were still able to pick up our first Common Goldeneye of the trip at the far inner reaches of the pond before making our way back to port!



Western Brook Pond © Kyle d'Entremont

When back on dry land, we made a final pit stop of the day at Broom Point, where we saw numerous Common Eiders resting on the rocky shore, a flock of Harlequin Ducks bobbing through the surf, and several Great Cormorants amongst many Double-crested Cormorants. We then capped off our day of adventure by enjoying homestyle rural Newfoundland meals (such as moose burgers!) at Earle's Restaurant in scenic Rocky Harbour.



Rocky Harbour © Mitch Doucet

Day 4- Gros Morne National Park, Mattie Mitchell Trail, Base of Gros Morne Mountain, Lobster Cove Head Lighthouse, Gorge Park

We started our third and final day in Gros Morne National Park by visiting the Mattie Mitchell trail along the East Arm of Bonne Bay and had good scope views of our first two Common Mergansers of the trip! Along a short wooded path with a tranquil stream here, we found our first Ovenbird of the trip, and had great looks at foraging Black-and-white Warblers and American Redstarts! Afterwards, we made our way to the trailhead of Gros Morne mountain and birded the parking lot and had singing Ruby-crowned Kinglet, more Tennessee Warblers, and Northern Waterthrush amongst others! After a short drive further down to a look-off point, we also scoped out a Greater Yellowlegs in the river estuary, had a flyby Merlin and watched and photographed some very cooperative Yellow Warblers. Despite our best (and recognizably foolish) efforts, we were unable to scope out distant Rock Ptarmigan on Gros Morne summit.



Yellow Warbler © Gabriela Surerus

To round off our excursion through Gros Morne National Park, we then went to Lobster Cove Head Lighthouse and enjoyed some amazing coastal views and had awesome point blank views of Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, White-throated Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow and a very fleeting glimpse of another pesky Boreal Chickadee!



Yellow-bellied Flycatcher © Gabriela Surerus



White-throated Sparrow © Caroline Lambert



Magnolia Warbler © Caroline Lambert

We then went to have lunch at an NL staple, Wing n' it, in Deer Lake before going to an absolute requirement of any well-to-do birding trip, a sewage lagoon! After unfortunately getting skunked out (both by birds of note, and within our nostrils) at the lagoon, we hit the blacktop and made our way to Grand Falls-Windsor. We made a quick stop at Gorge Park, where we saw numerous Cedar Waxwings aptly gorging themselves on apple blossoms. We then made our way to our place of stay

for the night, the Mount Peyton Resort, and promptly also gorged on our delicious three course dinner provided by the hotel!



Cedar Waxwing © Gabriela Surerus



Birding at Gorge Park © Mitch Doucet

Day 5- Corduroy Brook, a Sewage Lagoon Safari, and Gander

After fueling up at our hotel in the morning, we made our way over to the Corduroy Brook in Grand Falls-Windsor, which boasts a lovely trail system that winds through mixedwood forest and a sprawling marsh. Here we had great looks at some Mallard ducklings rather humorously speed-walking along the water's surface, a typically skulky but still visible Mourning Warbler, Black-and-White Warblers, Tree Swallows, Common Yellowthroats, American Redstarts, Ovenbirds and our first Palm Warbler of the trip!



Common Yellowthroat © Steve Matadobra



Mallard Duckling © Steve Matadobra



Tree Swallow © Mitch Doucet

With the previous day's sewage lagoon leaving a bitter taste in our mouth (and perhaps more importantly a bitter smell in our nostrils), we then made our way towards another considerably less odorous wastewater treatment plant. This time it was safari style, as the worker at the facility graciously let us through the gate and let us drive right around the lagoons! The safari was successful, as we had great looks at 6 Wood Ducks, a Common Goldeneye, many Green-winged Teal

and Ring-necked Ducks and a flock of Greater Scaup! Afterwards, we made our way to the Gander airport to learn about its historical importance for transatlantic flight, and of course, the town's notoriety for housing thousands of folks that were stranded during the 9/11 crisis. We then explored the old military townsite along the Gander Heritage trails and had many great looks at American Redstart, Yellow Warbler, and heard another loud Ovenbird. After that we hit the road towards Terra Nova National Park and watched as the habitat shifted away from the mature mixedwood forest of Central Newfoundland into the mainly coniferous boreal forest characteristic of the eastern portion of the province. We then checked into the Clode Sound Motel in Charlottetown and had an awesome dinner including many of our guests' first exposure to the Newfoundland delicacy that is partridgeberries- the crumble here is to die for!!

Day 6- Terra Nova National Park

We started the day with a bit of pre-breakfast birding around town where we had great looks at a Pine Grosbeak, saw a winnowing Wilson's Snipe above the motel, and heard a Red Crossbill fly overhead! We then enjoyed a fantastic breakfast from Clode Sound Motel, including a fan-favorite homemade partridgeberry jam. We then went for a lovely hike around Sandy Pond and had great looks at a singing Palm Warbler, multiple Yellow-rumped Warblers, and numerous Black-and-white Warblers. Many folks were also ecstatic to see their lifer Canada Jays perch on top of trees just off the trail from us! Also heard several at-risk Olive-sided Flycatchers which unfortunately proved to be shy.



Black-and-White Warbler © Gabriela Surerus



Palm Warbler © Mitch Doucet

We then travelled across the road to Ochre Hill Lookout and marveled at the wide expansive landscape of bogs, barrens and boreal forest. The group was also treated by an incredibly photogenic Blackpoll Warbler here!



Ochre Hill Look off © Kyle d'Entremont

We then went to the Terra Nova National Park visitor's centre where we had great looks at an American Crow nest with fledglings, picked up our first Common Tern of the trip, and had great views of several Pine Siskin and a female Purple Finch gorging themselves on seeds on the lawn. A

scattered few rain drops then developed into a steady downpour, which forced us to bird largely from the van, but we picked up great views of Caspian Tern and Greater Yellowlegs in Traytown before the rain forced us to retire to the motel for the day. We finished our day with another fantastic dinner at the Clode Sound Motel, followed of course by more of that world famous partridgeberry crumble for dessert! If only they delivered off the island...

Day 7- Gannets (and more!) Galore at Cape St. Mary's!

After a final exquisite meal prepared by our gracious hosts at the Clode Sound Motel, we continued our eastward trek away from Central Newfoundland and towards the Avalon Peninsula. Along the way we made a Newfoundland roadtrip essential stop in the town of Goobies where we gathered in front of the "Goobies Moose" (see below!), all wishing to get a close encounter with the furry and breathing variety of moose at some point further along our travels! At a roadside marsh here, we also had yet another Sora screaming from the reeds and very close views of Ring-necked Duck!



The Goobies Moose © Mitch Doucet

Before having our picnic lunch on the beach in Placentia, we made a stop at Castle Hill National Historic Site to explore a 17th century fort and learn about battles between the French and English over the incredibly lucrative fishing grounds that lie just off the coast of Newfoundland. A short drive further south from Placentia and down a long, narrow, foggy access road lies Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve. One cannot fully understand the feeling of awe associated with this place without setting foot there yourself. A constant swirl of gannets emerging and disappearing from the fog passes you by until a sea stack absolutely covered with thousands of them tending their nests and strengthening their pair bonds appears before you out of the mist! The loud and distinguished conversations you would only expect to hear from thousands of Common Murres and Black-legged Kittiwakes fills the air around you. It's hard not to wax poetic about a place so teeming with life!



Common Murre © Kyle d'Entremont



Northern Gannet © Gabriela Surerus



Gannets in the Fog © Mitch Doucet



Common Murre © Mitch Doucet

Like needles in an avian haystack, we were also able to get great views of Razorbills along the cliff edges. Cape St. Mary's, along with all of its aforementioned splendour, is also the world's southernmost colony of Thick-billed Murre, and the group was fortunate enough to see one hidden amongst its Common Murre cousins! After finally managing to pry ourselves away from the spectacle that is Cape St. Mary's, we made our way back to St. Bride's and enjoyed a Newfoundland

staple, pan-fried Atlantic Cod at Da Bird's Eye Restaurant, that was freshly caught the day before! We then settled into our place of lodging for the night, the Capeway Inn, and reflected on yet another incredible day spent birding the wilds of Newfoundland!

Day 8- Feeding frenzies, moose, whales, Short-eared Owls! Oh my! A day well spent on the southern edge of the Avalon

After a restful night's sleep in foggy St. Bride's, we made our way to the town of Branch where we found our first White-winged Scoter of the trip, amongst others! Capelin were also starting to "roll" along the beach and many gulls and kittiwakes were plucking them off the water. Capelin are a tiny forage fish that many of Newfoundland's marvelous megafauna survive off. Each year the capelin migrate inshore, and also come in to spawn across Newfoundland's rocky beaches which initiates feeding frenzies for gulls, gannets, alcids, whales, and also people, as it is a yearly tradition to gather capelin from the beach in buckets! On our way out of Branch we were very fortunate to have encountered a young moose in the middle of the road! Thankfully there's no such thing as traffic in rural Newfoundland, so we were able to stop and admire it before it scampered off into the woods! Not much further down the road on our way across the barrens, we spotted a Common Loon carrying two chicks on its back!



Moose © Mitch Doucet

We then carried on to St. Vincent's, a location that is well known for being able to watch Humpback Whales foraging right next to the beach. And that they were! We were able to spot multiple whales surfacing amongst several flocks of Black-legged Kittiwakes and gulls feeding on capelin. Amongst the gulls, we were also able to spot a Long-tailed Jaeger and a Parasitic Jaeger in hot pursuit of them for their food! After watching the feeding frenzy for a while, we decided to have a feeding frenzy of our own and enjoyed a picnic lunch near the beach! After lunch, we then carried on through the misty moody barrens along the Cape Pine Rd., where we saw a Short-eared Owl emerge from the fog not once, but twice! At the end of St. Shotts Road near Cape Pine we had a flock of Common Eider, some Barn Swallows, and spotted many Sooty Shearwaters and Great Shearwaters whizzing by near the horizon. We also had TWO (!!) other Short-eared Owls pass in

front of the van on the main highway from the St. Shotts Road on the way to our motel, the Edge of the Avalon Inn, in the town of Trepassey! After a full day of adventure, we enjoyed our meal at the inn before resting up for the night.



Short-eared Owl © Gabriela Surerus

Day 9- Powles Head Rd, Cape Race, Renews, Ferryland, St. Michaels, Bay Bulls, St. Johns

We started the day with some pre-breakfast birding at Powles Head Road where we admired the view from the lighthouse and had great looks at Northern Gannets, Black-legged Kittiwakes and Black Guillemots. After breakfast we took off down into the barrens again on the Cape Race Road and believe it or not we had ANOTHER Short-eared Owl cruise past in front of the vans and we watched it successfully catch some prey before carrying it off! We also spotted more Great Shearwaters and Sooty Shearwaters banking out along the waves from Cape Race Lighthouse, and also had amazing looks at an American Pipit! Along the way, we also had a nice breeding plumaged Black-headed Gull fly past us!



American Pipit © Mitch Doucet

We then went to the town of Renew's where we had a picnic lunch while watching a colony of Ring-billed Gulls and Common Terns, and a family of Northern Pintail! Afterwards, we went to Ferryland and truly had the Million Dollar View when a Humpback Whale surfaced and fluked in the cove right by the restaurant bearing the monetary name!



Northern Pintail Family © Mitch Doucet



Humpback Whale Fluke © Mitch Doucet

Afterwards, we went to St. Michael's and scoped out some Northern Fulmar breeding on the cliffs of Ship Island! We then rounded out our day in Bay Bulls where we saw two Great-horned Owl chicks at the nest with its parent! We ended our day in Newfoundland's capital city of St. John's and checked into the DoubleTree Hotel before enjoying a delicious meal at Gian's Kitchen.

Day 10- Signal Hill, Bidgood Park, an Unforgettable Afternoon at Witless Bay Ecological Reserve, and Burtons Pond

On a beautiful sunny morning in St. John's, we made our way up to Signal Hill and enjoyed the incredible view of the city and harbour before we made our way down to Bidgood Park. After being teased by Boreal Chickadees the whole trip, it was here at Bidgood that we were able to finally get a great look at them, and a well-earned lifer for some folks!



St. John's © Caroline Lambert



Boreal Chickadee © Steve Matadobra



Bidgood Birding © Mitch Doucet

After enjoying a fantastic lunch at Arbour Restaurant in Bay Bulls, we made our way down to O'Brien's Boat Tours and boarded the aptly named vessel, the "Atlantic Puffin"! Not far from shore, we witnessed hundreds of gulls and kittiwakes in a feeding frenzy and our boat was certainly not the only puffin on the water, with thousands upon thousands of them whizzing past us as we approached their breeding grounds on Gull Island in Witless Bay! We were also witness to an absolutely massive Common Murre colony, with a few Thick-billed Murres sprinkled into the mix! Also frequent along the cliffs were Razorbills and Black-legged Kittiwakes. We were also very fortunate to have a few Great Shearwaters zip past us. And to top it all off, we had multiple Humpback Whales surface right next to the boat! There's nothing quite like spending an afternoon on the water in beautiful Witless Bay!



Gull Island © Kyle d'Entremont



Razorbill © Mitch Doucet



Thick-Billed Murres © Kyle d'Entremont



Great Shearwater © Mitch Doucet



Great Shearwater © Mitch Doucet

After our boat tour we made a pit stop into Burton's Pond on Memorial University campus in St. John's, where a Eurasian Wigeon awaited us!



Eurasian Wigeon © Mitch Doucet

After yet another spectacular day of birding, we made our way back into town and enjoyed a delicious meal at the Vu Restaurant in downtown St. John's. And what a view it was! With a panoramic look out into St. John's Harbour.

Day 11- Cape Spear and Some St. John's Pond Hopping

What better way to begin our last day of birding in Newfoundland than setting foot at the easternmost point of the entire North American continent, Cape Spear! Here we were able to spot several Common Murres, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Northern Gannets, and distant Sooty Shearwaters streaming past before the fog rolled in!



Cape Spear © Mitch Doucet

We then started doing some pond hopping around town where we were fortunate to spot a pair of Gadwall, and a rare-for-Newfoundland Pied-billed Grebe, along with an actively foraging Osprey at Virginia Lake, and our first Lesser Scaup of the trip at Kenny's Pond!



Osprey

The rain then cut our birding adventure a few hours short, so we decided to visit "The Rooms" which is must-see museum and art gallery that has several interesting exhibits, including information on Newfoundland's involvement in World War One, a natural history museum that

includes a preserved Giant Squid and the skeleton of the now extinct Great Auk, as well as a Newfoundland cultural heritage exhibit!



Great Auk Skeleton © Kyle d'Entremont

Afterwards, we enjoyed a lovely final dinner of the trip at The Little Sparo restaurant, where we reminisced on our favorite birds, places and experiences that we shared together on our incredible adventure across the rugged, but oh so beautiful island of Newfoundland. We then said our goodbyes to an incredible group of people after an amazing 11-day trip exploring every nook, cranny, and bird that the island had to offer!



Group Photo © Mitch Doucet

