



New Brunswick & Grand Manan Trip Report (August 3 - 12, 2026)

[Link: New Brunswick & Grand Manan Trip Report \(August 3 - 12, 2026\)](#)

Our wonderful group explored birding hotspots across New Brunswick (including the lovely island of Grand Manan) from August 3-12. This beautiful province has much to offer in late summer lush boreal forests, spectacular shorebird migration and tons of seabirds just to name a few and this tour was a perfect way to sample it all.

August 3-4: Moncton, Sackville & Johnson Mills Shorebird Reserve

Our group met in Moncton – the perfect homebase to explore our first cross-section of New Brunswick from Johnson Mills to Kouchibouguac National Park. We enjoyed dinner at a nearby restaurant, getting acquainted with the very fun group we would be sharing this adventure with. We began our first morning with several stops around the Acadian town of Memramcook. The Reid McManus Nature Reserve delivered with great views of an American Bittern skulking along the marsh edge, as well as a much more showy Great Blue Heron just metres away. The surrounding trees buzzed with songbirds such as Alder Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, American Redstart, Northern Parula and Blackburnian Warbler along with the first of many Cedar Waxwings encountered during the tour.



American Bittern © Mitch Doucet

Several short stops along Taylor's Road produced a family of locally uncommon Northern Mockingbirds, two Eastern Bluebirds, two Solitary Sandpipers, a pair of White-winged Crossbill and our first looks at Nelson's Sparrows among many other birds. A late morning drive through the agricultural fields of Goose Lake High Marsh Roads, near the Nova Scotia border, offered up several Northern Harriers, an American Kestrel hunting over the meadows and a surprise Wilson's Snipe stalking through a ditch.



Solitary Sandpiper © Mitch Doucet

After a delicious picnic lunch, we braved the hot afternoon sun and strolled a section of the nearby Sackville Waterfowl Park. As its name suggests, there was a variety of ducks and other water-loving birds to keep us busy American Wigeon, Gadwall and Mallards in the water, along with several families of Pied-billed Grebe including some lovely patterned fledglings.



Pied-billed Grebe © Mitch Doucet

Red-winged Blackbirds called from the surrounding reeds while Belted Kingfishers entertained us as they hovered, dove and rattled away. A lone Chimney Swift zipped over the pond, providing our only views of the week. A quick check of the Sackville retention ponds resulted in dozens of both Lesser & Greater Yellowlegs as well as our first Short-billed Dowitchers of the week.



We ended our day with a visit to Shepody Bay and the Johnson Mills Shorebird Reserve – just as the famous Bay of Fundy tides were reaching their peak. Unfortunately, the winds had also been increasing all day and were now gusting strongly over the bay causing the fabled flocks of Semipalmated Sandpipers to squirrel themselves away in a more sheltered area and far away from our view. We did manage to spot several small flocks of up to 300 shorebirds, but the big show would have to wait for another day. A Peregrine Falcon buzzed the visitors centre in search of the same shorebird flocks that were giving us the cold shoulder.

August 5: Kouchibouguac National Park & the Acadian Coast



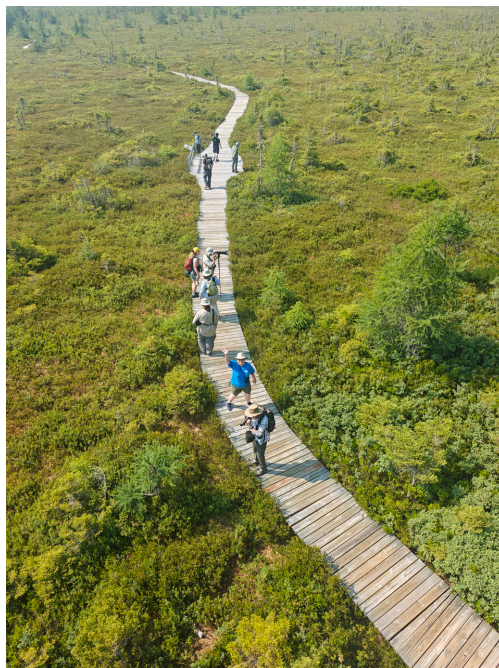
Group Photo in Kouchibouguac © Mitch Doucet

The following day was spent in the heartland of Acadian culture and history Bouctouche & Kouchibouguac National Park. Acadian pride, rich accents and quaint coastal villages were on full display as were plenty of great birds. Our first stop at Kouchibouguac National Park was beautiful Kelly's Beach, where we enjoyed a stroll along the boardwalk and sandy beach overlooking the warm waters of the Northumberland Strait. Great Blue Herons hunted in the estuary, Common Terns fished off the coast and several Grey Seals were caught poking their heads up to "people watch". Eight species of shorebirds paraded the beach and mudflats including Black-bellied Plovers, Semipalmated Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper and Semipalmated Sandpiper along with excellent studies of White-rumped Sandpipers mixed in the flocks. A very cooperative Common Yellowthroat lingered at the edge of the saltmarsh, and a quick visit from an Olive-sided Flycatcher proved to be our only of the trip.



Common Tern © Mitch Doucet

A late morning hike on the Bog Trail produced well-earned looks at our target eastern Palm Warbler, a Blue-headed Vireo, a soaring Broad-winged Hawk and a plethora of interesting plants and flowers that call this amazing habitat home.



Mudflats © Joel-Toland

The coast from Cap-Lumière to Bouctouche was lovely as always, with idyllic Acadian towns and beautiful vistas. We encountered our first White-winged Scoters and Bonaparte's Gulls of the week, along with nesting Bank Swallows.



Bouctouche Rotary Park © Joel-Toland

The lagoons at Bouctouche were packed with birds including Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal and Lesser Scaup. The brand new boardwalks at the local Rotary Park were impressive in themselves - as were the dozens of roosting Lesser & Greater Yellowlegs and Short-billed Dowitchers and our best views of Nelson's Sparrow singing at the tops of the grass.



Lesser & Greater Yellowlegs © Mitch Doucet



Nelson's Sparrow © Andrew Waud

August 6: Moncton, Salisbury and Saint John

We spent quite a bit of this morning birding the Bell Street Marsh in Moncton a large, rich wetland with a wonderful walking trail throughout. We tallied more than 50 species in just over two hours, including skulky species such as American Bittern, Sora and Wilson's Snipe! We heard a Virginia Rail, but it never did materialize between the dense reeds. Numerous Eastern Kingbirds hawked insects from snags, both House and Purple Finches twittered in the bushes, Marsh Wrens revealed themselves on a couple occasions, and ten species of waterfowl patrolled the waters.



Sora © Mitch Doucet

Several stops at Salisbury produced even more wetland birds especially the trails at Highland Park. A hands-down highlight was a regionally rare Great Egret strutting its stuff in the middle of the marsh, while a family of young Sora foraging at the edge of the reeds was also a crowd-pleaser. A female Blue-winged Teal was spotted hiding amid the larger ducks, and a Cooper's Hawk circled over the adjacent neighbourhood. A few songbirds were spotted despite the hot sun, including a beautiful Chestnut-sided Warbler and brief views of a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak. A quick stop at the Petitcodiac lagoons produced another regional rarity a Wilson's Phalarope spinning around in the water amongst the many Wood Ducks, Mallards and Green-winged Teal. Continuing on to Saint John, we stopped at Marsh Creek where we spotted two Common Goldeneye among other waterfowl and shorebirds.

August 7-10: Grand Manan & The Bay of Fundy

After a night in Saint John and dinner at one of our guides' favourite restaurants, we made our way to Black's Harbour and the gateway to the next leg of our adventure. We soon caught our ferry and sailed off for three days of exploring beautiful Grand Manan. This island, situated in the Bay of Fundy, is a wonderful mix of great scenery, maritime culture and exciting birding. Pelagic birding is always a highlight of our time in Grand Manan, and this year was no different. Our first Black Guillemots were spotted while waiting for the ferry in Black's Harbour a species we would become familiar with over the next few days. We had calm, sunny conditions for our ferry trip and were able to spot birds such as Parasitic Jaeger, Great Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Razorbill and Common Murre.



Great Shearwater © Chantal Pharand

Things got exciting when Mitch called out "SKUA!" we were thrilled to see a South Polar Skua zipping past the ferry, while other passengers were a bit confused as to what we were even looking at. Several groups of Harbour Porpoise and Atlantic White-sided Dolphins also made an appearance, exciting even the other "non-birding" passengers on deck. The arrival of "Fundy fog" delayed our much-anticipated pelagic boat trip by a day, and while it did linger all weekend the flat calm sea conditions were perfect for a day on the bay.



Seal Cove © Jared Clarke



Seal Cove © Kirsti Haaka

Several Great Cormorants were spied lounging on the “Black Rocks”, along with a gaggle of Grey Seals checking us out as we floated by. We sailed well south of Grand Manan, making our way through “the prong” and the edge of the northeastern bank. Dozens of Great Shearwaters, Wilson’s Storm-Petrels, and several Sooty Shearwaters sailed effortlessly over the waves enjoying the “chum” behind our boat. Numerous Common Murres and at least two Atlantic Puffins appeared out of the fog while occasional flocks of Red-necked Phalaropes skittered by.



Great Shearwaters © Andrew Waud

Once again, the shout of “SKUA” raised the excitement levels as a South Polar Skua flew right over our bow. Our very skilled captain was able to track the bird down minutes later and we ended up with incredibly close views as it sat on the water, sometimes just a few metres away! Two Humpback Whales and several groups of Atlantic White-sided Dolphins also put on a show for us.



South Polar Skua © Mitch Doucet

Our terrestrial wanderings took us to all corners of Grand Manan from the sheer, rugged cliffs of Southwest Head to the rolling rocks at Swallowtail Lighthouse and many points between.



Southwest Head © Jared Clarke



Swallowtail Lighthouse & Ferry © Kirsti Haaka



Dark Harbour © Jared Clarke

Highlights included a locally rare Laughing Gull, Black-legged Kittiwakes, juvenile Hooded Merganser, Brown Thrasher, Canada Warbler and Northern Cardinal among many other birds, amazing scenery and even a Humpback Whale feeding below the lighthouse.



Brown Thrasher © Kirsti Haaka

One morning we made a short skip over the water to neighbouring White Head Island, where we enjoyed studying a great mixed flock of shorebirds at close range Semipalmated Plover, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper and White-rumped Sandpiper as well as a

probable Baird's Sandpiper that disappeared before we could confirm it.



White Head © Kirsti Haaka

Most exciting was the unexpected sighting of two American Oystercatchers foraging along the beach - likely a pair known to nest on a nearby islet and one of just a handful of breeding pairs in all of Canada!



American Oystercatcher © Mitch Doucet

Our return ferry trip was just as "birdy" as the first, including our first and only Arctic Terns of the tour. Various stops along the "Fundy Shores" (e.g. Boyles Cove, Little Lepreau and Dipper Harbour)

produced many Common Loons and a variety of ducks including Common Eiders and all three species of scoter. We headed back to Saint John and a lovely dinner at the famous Reversing Falls perfect timed to watch the reversal of the tides and several boats “surfing” the rapids.



Arctic Terns © Mitch Doucet

August 11: Hampton, Fundy National Park & Mary's Point

We began our last full day of the tour with a stop at nearby Hampton. The town's sewage lagoons at the Rotary Nature Park were busy with lots of Wood Ducks, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teals, Common Goldeneyes and other ducks - but it was the surrounding trail and trees that were most hopping with birdlife. A mixed flock of early migrants hosted ten species of warblers including Black-and-White, Cape May, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, Warblers, Northern Parula and American Redstart among others.



Chestnut-sided Warbler © Andrew Waud

Red-eyed Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, Gray Catbird and Northern Cardinal also numbered among the group. Another highlight was a very cooperative Red-necked Phalarope foraging in the lagoon, offering unusually close views and photos as it spun around in the water just metres from the edge.



Gray Catbird © Mitch Doucet



Red-necked Phalarope © Mitch Doucet

The next few hours were spent exploring the landscapes of Fundy National Park - eautiful forests and fabulous views over the bay to boot. A trio of Common Loons were spotted at Wolfe Lake while a family group of Golden-crowned Kinglets, including some still downy fledglings, added some "cuteness" to our stroll around the water's edge. Several White-winged Crossbills were singing in the treetops at the Caribou Plains trailhead, providing excellent views of this very irruptive species. Lunch at Alma (arguably the "lobster capital" of New Brunswick) was a crowd-pleaser and by far the best lobster rolls of the week ;) We arrived at Mary's Point Bird Sanctuary, on the opposite side of Shepody Bay from where we started on August 4, as the tide was dropping and huge swaths of mudflats were freshly exposed. We spied an estimated 7500-10,000 Semipalmated Sandpipers and other small shorebirds scattered across the flats, probing and foraging madly as they bulked up for an incredible migration ahead.



Back in Moncton, we reminisced and shared our favourite memories over dinner before some of us set off on our various paths home. What a fantastic trip, with a wonderful group of people!

August 12: Johnson Mills revisited

This morning, a few members of our group (those with later departures) decided to revisit Johnson Mills Shorebird Reserve in hopes of catching the huge flocks of migrating shorebirds that had eluded us at the beginning of the trip and they were not disappointed. Arriving well before high tide, they were awed by the sight of many thousands of Semipalmated Sandpipers, along with smaller numbers of Short-billed Dowitcher, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper and Semipalmated Plovers, foraging on the vast mudflats as the tide rushed in.



Short-billed Dowitcher © Mitch Doucet

The number swelled along with the waters until an estimated 100,000 of these little birds were huddled together on a narrow strip of remaining beach!! The truly amazing moments came as they took flight, forming huge murmurations that swirled and floated and twisted above the bay with incredible art and precision.



Shorebirds © Eva Bjerreskov

These flights were sometimes triggered by the arrival of a hungry Peregrine Falcon looking for lunch, other times for reasons unclear to us. Perhaps they just enjoyed entertaining the dozens of birders gathered to watch!



Peregrine Falcon © Mitch Doucet