

## New Brunswick & Grand Manan with Canadian Geographic Trip Report 2023

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The New Brunswick and Grand Manan with Canadian Geographic tour from Aug 14-23rd, 2023, consisted of 2 guides, a Canadian Geographic ambassador (Marlis Butcher), and 9 participants travelling in two vans. Temperatures were pleasant, rain never caused any significant challenges, and each day provided new avian and mammalian highlights. Our tour had an ambitious schedule for the first full day, but the group was up for it as there was just so much to see and experience. We started out exploring Fundy National Park and revelled in the beautiful forest and scenery, picking up the first warbler flocks of the trip and some flyover crossbills. After lunch a wetland full of birds in Waterside demanded we pullover and sort through a flock of shorebirds while we also got great views of the usually secretive Nelson's Sparrow.



*Fundy National Park © Adam Timpf*

Pulling ourselves away, we made it to Shepody National Wildlife Area where we were treated to some late nesting Cliff Swallows, soaring Peregrines, and our first large concentration of SESA that we watched swirl and dance over the distant mudflats. A mere appetizer for what we would experience in the coming days. We moved east down the coast and made it to Hopewell Rocks while the tide was receding which allowed us to walk on the seafloor. We marvelled at the “flowerpot” rock formations while we contemplated the geological processes that laid down the sediment that



was now eroding away and sculpting the shoreline. A Peregrine Falcon perched overhead reminded us that we are also here for the birds!



*Hopewell Rocks © Adam Timpf*

After waking up in Moncton we headed for the Sackville Waterfowl Park where we studied the ducks and watched a mother Pied-billed Grebe shelter her babies from some light showers.



*Pied-billed Grebe © Paul Prior*

Various warbler species and other passerines kept us busy on the trails before we made our way to



Johnson's Mills - THE place to be to see the spectacle that is Semipalmated Sandpiper migration. We were not disappointed as we watched tens of thousands of shorebirds feed on the mudflats before taking flight and joining together in a huge murmuration of birds flying together in a cloud that danced back and forth in front of us. Always a magical moment, they eventually settled down and rested in front of us, allowing close study and testing everyone's spotting skills as we picked out Least and White-rumped Sandpipers from the crowd.



*Semipalmated Sandpipers © Paul Prior*



*Johnson Mills © Adam Timpf*



The next 48 hours or so were spent around Bouctouche and Kouchibouguac National Park on the Atlantic side of New Brunswick across from P.E.I. Highlights were many! Several trips to the Beach Boardwalk allowed us to first enjoy a large flock of warblers, and then to sort through the large diversity of shorebirds that were found feeding in the tidal flats. From peeps to plovers, and turnstones to Whimbrel, there was something new to see here every time we tried to take one more “quick” peek.



*Kouchibouguac Bog © Adam Timpf*



*Kouchibouguac Beach © Adam Timpf*



On the Spruce Bog Trail families of Canada Jay, Palm Warbler, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker entertained before we took a moment to search for the carnivorous plants that call the bog home.



*Canada Jay © Paul Prior*

Sites around Bouctouche provided more waterfowl, warblers, and shorebirds when we weren't dining in one of the fine restaurants here (or having ice cream). A wetland stop on the way back to St John was very productive and we added new species to the trip list including secretive marsh birds like Sora and Virginia Rail. Grand Manan is one of the crown jewels of this tour and it did not disappoint. A rare Little Blue Heron was cooperative at Castalia Marsh, while Lesser Black-backed Gulls and both Harbour and Gray Seal were together at Long Eddy.





The whale watching tour provided us with exceptionally close views of two Humpback Whales while Great Shearwater seemed to float next to the boat at arm's length. Harbour Porpoises, Puffins, Phalaropes, Razorbills, a couple of Sooty Shearwater, and two unexpected juvenile Laughing Gulls kept us on our toes as there was never a dull moment on the Bay of Fundy!



*Razorbill © Paul Prior*





*Wilson's Storm Petrel © Paul Prior*



*Laughing Gull © Paul Prior*



*Great Shearwater © Paul Prior*



Southwest Head, Swallowtail Lighthouse, Black's Harbour, Whale Cove, Deep Cove - the birding and cultural stops provided us with beautiful views, history lessons, and many new birds like Common Murre, Surf and White-winged Scoters, Northern Goshawk, and Philadelphia Vireo.



*Dark Harbour © Adam Timpf*

After an enjoyable few days on Manan, the ferry back to the mainland provided more mammalian highlights in the form of both Minke Whale and Fin Whale giving exceptional views.



*Fin Whale © Paul Prior*



Irving Nature Park near St John was the penultimate birding site of the trip and we found many Great Egrets here as well as an early Red-throated Loon.



*Irving Nature Park © Adam Timpf*

For our final stop, we headed for the Reversing Falls in St John which was now at high tide, and the water was rushing in the complete opposite direction from when we made an earlier stop during low tide.



*Reversing Falls © Paul Prior*



We had one final dinner together where we shared our favourite moments from the tour before wishing each other safe travels home. An exceptional tour with a fantastic group of people to share it with!



*NB 2023 Group Photo*