



Newfoundland Birding with Canadian Geographic Trip Report 2025

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Our group, along with the passionate Canadian Geographic Society ambassador, Myrna Pearman, set off on an adventurous road trip to explore the stunning southern coast of Newfoundland and all its wonders! As one would expect from a trip to the rock, we were rewarded with remarkable wildlife encounters, picturesque little towns filled with welcoming charismatic locals, delicious food, and truly breathtaking scenery the entire way. From St. John's to Cape St. Mary's and to Bonavista and back, we saw 83 species of birds, a few Moose and Foxes, Icebergs, and a number of remarkably rare and unique wildlife experiences.



Our group in front of Wanda (the van) © Mitch Doucet

Day 1: June 4th - Arrival in St. John's, Newfoundland

Everyone arrived safely in St. John's, Newfoundland and made it to the JAG hotel just in time to meet before dinner! After some quick introductions, we headed for dinner at the Exile restaurant and it was clear by the amount of chatting already that we were going to be a friendly enthusiastic group. With full stomachs and a plan for the next day, we went to sleep in anticipation of a fun trip full of birds, beautiful natural landscapes, and newfound friendships.

Day 2: June 5th - Bidgood Park, Witless Bay, and Cape Spear

After some breakfast at the Hotel we made the most of the warm sunny weather and headed out for our first walk at nearby Bidgood Park. The peaceful stroll through bog and boreal forest gave us great views of Wilson's Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Cedar Waxings, and Swamp Sparrows. The walk was followed by a quick detour to nearby Cochrane Pond road to check in on a local Great-Horned Owl nest and thankfully, a few of the owlets were showing! We also heard things like Wilson's Snipe and Golden-crowned Kinglet there, to name a few.



Wilson's Warbler © Mitch Doucet

On our way to Bay Bulls we had our first Moose sighting of the trip, but the true highlight of the day came after lunch during our boat tour of the Witless Bay Islands Park Reserve. Under sunny skies and gentle on and off fog, we were surrounded by thousands of Atlantic Puffins, Common Murres, Razorbills, Black-legged Kittiwakes, and a number of other local nesters.



Atlantic Puffin © Mitch Doucet

While a few Bald Eagles made an appearance, a single Thick-billed Murre stole the show in terms of sightings. Perhaps just as memorable though were the chants and songs brought to you by the

guides of the one and only O'Brien Tours to cement the afternoon as one of the best experiences on our Newfoundland trip.



Thick-billed Murre © Mitch Doucet

The wonderful day wasn't done yet as we headed for one last stop to Cape Spear before dinner. While Savannah Sparrows sang, we admired the remarkable coastal views and spotted our first very distant iceberg of the trip along with diving Northern Gannets and then made it back to St. John's in time for dinner. After a big day and a hearty meal at The Celtic Hearth, it was time for bed.

Day 3: June 6th - Chasing rare birds, La Manche Provincial Park, and the Edge of the Avalon.

The good weather continued on! After a nice breakfast at the JAG hotel, it was time to leave St. John's, but first we tried our luck for three nearby rarities; the Pink-footed Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, and Tufted Duck. Despite our efforts we were only able to find the beautiful Eurasian Wigeon, however we knew we'd get another chance at the end of our trip! Our search at Burton's Pond also granted us great views of a female Northern Pintail with ducklings.



Eurasian Wigeon © Mitch Doucet

We made it to La Manche Provincial Park for lunch where we had a picnic and short walk. While it was difficult to get good views of birds, there a lot signing including Black-and-white, Magnolia and Yellow-rumped Warblers, American Redstarts, Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, and even a Boreal Chickadee.



La Manche © Stephanie Parent

Our next stop along the way to Cape Race was a short walk at Ferryland where we admired the beautiful lighthouse from afar and some got to hear a Fox Sparrow and an American Pipit. By now

we were starting to get an idea of just how stunning the Newfoundland coast is. Shortly after, at Renew's bay, we had a very productive stop and found our first Arctic Terns of the trip, showing nicely beside Common Terns, as well as a couple Green-winged Teals, Spotted Sandpipers, a Northern Pintail, and a Belted Kingfisher.



Arctic Tern © Mitch Doucet

That evening, we safely made it to the very welcoming Edge of the Avalon Inn where a few of us bravely volunteered to get screeched during dinner and then went to bed in preparation for a big day tomorrow.

Day 4: June 7th - Mistaken Point and Cape Race

Filled up on waffles and a bit of a sleep in, we headed into the fog for our guided walking tour of the famous Mistaken Point UNESCO World Heritage Site while a few stayed back and did some birding from the van.



Mistaken Point © Stephanie Parent

During the long walk through the barrens we were educated about the local history and vegetation while getting distracted by American Pipits, Blackpoll Warblers, and Fox and Savannah Sparrows. Once at the point, we had the privilege of walking along a rocky cliff on top and amongst the oldest animal fossils known to man while the misty North Atlantic crashed against the shore. A truly unique experience! And our way back was capped off by beautiful views of a Willow Ptarmigan! Those birding from the van also got lucky with great encounters of a Willow Ptarmigan and Northern Harrier.



Willow Ptarmigan © Mitch Doucet

Following the walk, we had a quick lunch and stop at the Cape Spear Lighthouse and on our way out, some of us got beautiful views of a Short-eared Owl, more Northern Harriers, and a vibrant curious Fox. The rest of the afternoon was filled by a long but scenic drive to St. Bride's where some spotted a Moose along the way. The day then ended with a late dinner at the Loft Restaurant, a glimpse of local fisherman bringing back a load of Snow Crabs into port, and a lovely sleep at the quaint Capeway Inn and Suits.

Day 5: June 8th - Cape St. Mary's and Castle Hill National Historic Site

The morning weather in St. Bride's was the same as the evening before; some quintessential heavy Newfoundland fog. But where we were heading, it was a part of the experience. The morning was filled with the long awaited visit to Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve! And some watched a big Moose walk through the fog on their way in.



Moose © Mitch Doucet

We walked with anticipation to the point through coastal grassy cliffs surrounded by thick fog and light rain.



Cape St. Mary's © Lori Miyasato

At the end, we were rewarded with thousands of Northern Gannets nesting in a colony atop a dramatic sea stack. To experience such a place with high winds, low visibility, rain and mist, atop remarkably high cliffs, a harshness contrasted by so much life, allows one to feel for a moment what it takes to be a seabird on the North Atlantic. Cape St. Mary's truly is an unforgettable experience, as long as one doesn't fall off the very narrow viewing point, that is. We were also rewarded with close ups of Common Murres, Black Guillemots, Black-Legged Kittiwakes, and Razorbills, but before long the weather worsened and it was time to head back.



Northern Gannets at Cape St. Mary's © Aaron Brisebois

As the heavy rain increased, we dried off while wandering around the visitor's center and then drove to Castle Hill National Historic Site. Here we conveniently took shelter inside while getting a lovely guided tour of the place, learning more about Newfoundland culture and history, before continuing our drive through the rain towards Terra Nova, bound for the Clode Sound Motel in Charlottetown.



Castle Hill © Mitch Doucet

After a splendid dinner at the Motel, the day ended with a moving and awe inspiring talk from our Canadian Geographic Ambassador, Myrna Pearman, who we were so fortunate to have join us on our trip and be willing to share a sample of her life's work and story with us!

Day 6: June 9th - Terra Nova and Bonavista

This morning the warm sun found us again! A few early birds took advantage and went for a productive birding walk around the Motel. A lot of birds were singing, including Purple Finch, Lincoln's Sparrow, Alder and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Black-throated Green Warbler, Pine Siskin, and a number of other resident songbirds.



Lincoln's Sparrow © Mitch Doucet

Everyone fueled up on a big delicious breakfast before exploring Terra Nova National Park for the day. We started with a long loop around Sandy Pond through boreal forest and a few wetlands. The highlights were great views of Canada Jay, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Magnolia Warbler, and seeing a Greater Yellowlegs perched atop a conifer. We also heard Olive-sided Flycatcher, got brief views of a Rusty Blackbird, and attended a quick lesson on Moss ID from Myrna!



Myrna Pearman moss presentation © Mitch Doucet

After a great time exploring the boreal, we had lunch and took a tour of the neat interpretive center

full of aquariums.



Group at Terra Nova © Mitch Doucet

We then went to Blue Hill Lookout, the highest point in the park, and spotted a huge iceberg in the distance while admiring the impressive views. Little did we know, we were headed straight for that iceberg.



Our group at Blue Hill © Mitch Doucet

As we made our way into the fairytale town of Bonavista a couple of hours later, that same iceberg

spotted from Blue Hill was waiting for us right outside the windows of our hotel, the Harbour Quarters Inn.



Bonavista Iceberg © Mitch Doucet

We ate dinner at the hotel surrounded by live music and went for a sunset stroll to admire the beautiful floating ice before heading to sleep after another awesome day.



Bonavista Iceberg at sunset © Mitch Doucet

Day 7: June 10th - Trinity and Elliston

This morning we visited the colourful town of Trinity and tagged along with Skipper Steve on his Zodiac to explore the scenic coastline of Trinity Bay by boat.



Boat trip at Trinity Bay © Myrna Pearman

Calm seas and sunny skies made for a wonderful trip highlighted by shockingly close up views of dramatic cliffs, nesting Bald Eagles and yet another Puffin colony along with the other common Alcids, all while being educated on Capelin spawning beaches, the local history, and the famous Stella (Steller's Sea Eagle) who had spent the past few summers here, but had not arrived quite yet this year. Once everyone returned safely to shore, we took a quick stroll through town admiring the buildings and had lunch at the Dock Marina.



Trinity © Aaron Brisebois

We then said goodbye and drove to Elliston where we took a short walk to the edge of the Puffin viewing cliffs, famous for being one of the most accessible puffin colonies in North America.



Elliston © Mitch Doucet

Only a few were around to snap photos of, but we also got great looks at Black Guillemots, Great Black-backed Gulls, and added Common Eider to our trip list. We sat and soaked in the sun and breeze while enjoying the beautiful views and birds. Some took this restful time to reflect on the beauty of Newfoundland and the excitement of the last few days before heading back to Bonavista.



Black Guillemot © Mitch Doucet

There we had dinner at the Ragged Rocks Gastro Pub and said goodnight to the iceberg one last time.

Day 8: June 11th - Cape Bonavista, a Steller's Sea Eagle, and a Pink-footed Goose

The last full day of the trip started off amazingly. A few keen folk took off for an early start to Elliston once more to try their luck with seeing more puffins and were rewarded! A few hundred puffins posed for close up photos this time, and we admired them before all heading back to the hotel for breakfast. Afterwards, before beginning our long drive back to St. John's, we stretched our legs out at Cape Bonavista. We lucked out again on sunny warm weather and saw even more Puffins, as well as a close encounter with a neat looking Fox. We birded the area, seeing more of the typical cape birds like Kittiwakes and Pipits, and then began our ambitious drive back to where it all started.



Red Fox © Mitch Doucet

It was time to chase rarities again and the first one on the list was the famous Steller's Sea Eagle who had been recently re-sighted in the small town of North River. Thankfully, we arrived at the location and the large eagle took only a few seconds to find. We admired arguably the rarest bird in North America and one of the most majestic species on the planet for an hour before heavy rains came in and we continued our drive!



Steller's Sea-Eagle © Mitch Doucet

The next stop once we finally made it back to St. John's was to look for the Tufted Duck again at

Mundy Pond, but the rains remained strong and we had no luck. Shortly after however, back at Burton's Pond, the Pink-footed Goose awaited us right on the grass beside the sidewalk!



Pink-footed Goose © Mitch Doucet

Our efforts had paid off, and we also got very close to a gorgeous male Northern Pintail.



Northern Pintail © Mitch Doucet

Feeling lucky and proud after a successful day and trip, we gathered for our bittersweet last dinner together at Boston Pizza. We shared our favorites memories, said goodbye to the new friends we

made over the last week, thanked each other for being such great company, and headed to bed at the Hampton Inn and Suites filled with a sense of adventure and gratitude.



Guides and Ambassador

Day 9: June 12th - Goodbye St. John's, Newfoundland!

With various itineraries, some got say goodbye at breakfast while others were already on a plane. Regardless, the trip was a success! 83 species of birds, great comraderies, and a wonderful time experiencing the culture, wildlife, and landscapes of Newfoundland. Until next time!



Sunset with gull © Mitch Doucet

[Newfoundland Birding with Canadian Geographic 2025 eBird list](#)