



Nova Scotia Trip Report (Aug 22-31, 2026)

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Another year, and yet another fantastic birding trip around my beautiful home province of Nova Scotia! Our group of 11 incredible guests and two guides spent 8 days exploring the varied land and seascapes, seafood, bountiful local charm, and of course, many amazing birds that the province has to offer. We began our tour by heading out to the Annapolis Valley region where we enjoyed thousands of migrating shorebirds along the shoreline of the Bay of Fundy, home of the world's highest tides. We then ventured west down Digby Neck and spent a couple days on the remote and quaint, but ever-so-exciting Brier Island! On Brier, we got up close and personal with migratory passerines at the Brier Island Bird Banding Station, inspected interesting flocks of shorebirds, and enjoyed a seabird and whale spectacle out in the Bay of Fundy. Magical moments and memories were plentiful and commonplace during our stay on the island. We then migrated down to the South Shore where we picked up several groups of migrant songbirds and shorebirds along scenic coastal headlands and white sand beaches. On the final day of our trip, we made our way into the boreal forest for some boreal specialties before visiting the iconic Peggy's Cove Lighthouse and making our way back to Halifax.

Day 1: Arrive in Halifax

After everyone got settled at their hotel, we piled into the vans and enjoyed getting to know one another over a delicious meal and drinks at the Millstone Public House. After dinner, the gang rested up before the first day of what would be an incredible journey around the southern half of Nova Scotia!

Day 2: Grand Pré and Miner's Marsh

Despite the day starting with a steady rain, we hopped into the vans bright-eyed and ready to begin

our birding excursion in the province known as Canada's Ocean Playground! We drove straight out to Grand Pré in the Annapolis Valley and began searching the local beaches for flocks of shorebirds along the Bay of Fundy, the home of the world's highest tides! At Evangeline Beach we were greeted by THOUSANDS of Semipalmated Sandpipers murmuring through the air and resting along the tide below our feet. Amongst them were also numerous Semipalmated Plovers, White-rumped Sandpipers and Least Sandpipers. A Peregrine Falcon also gave us a show as it flew over our heads in hot pursuit of a shorebird lunch!



Semipalmated Sandpipers © Kathy Doddridge

We then hopped into the vans to get out of the rain and do some car birding along the historic dykes and farm fields of Grand Pré, where the Acadian people prospered centuries ago. As is typical at this location, the driving rain had driven dozens of Bald Eagles to rest on the fields. Additionally, several hundred Black-bellied Plovers kept our attention, along with a couple well-hidden American Golden-Plovers. Oddly, several Short-billed Dowitchers and even a Ruddy Turnstone were also foraging in the farmer's fields! To dry off, we explored the Grand Pré National Historic Site and learned about the Acadian people native to the area and the drama surrounding their expulsion from the region in the 1700s. After a warm and hearty lunch at a pub in Wolfville, we set off to Miner's Marsh where we had great looks at Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, and a Broad-winged Hawk amongst many others! After a full day of adventure and a spectacular first day of our tour despite the weather, we enjoyed a delicious meal at our place of stay for the next two nights; the Old Orchard Inn.

Day 3: Blomidon Provincial Park, Scot's Bay, and Black Rock Lighthouse

After a wonderful breakfast, we set out for Blomidon Provincial Park in search of migrant passerines. We quickly found several flocks of songbirds, including Tennessee Warblers, Chestnut-sided Warblers, American Redstarts, Northern Parulas, Blackburnian Warblers, Black-throated Green Warbler, numerous Cedar Waxwings, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, three species of woodpecker, and Eastern Wood-Pewees amongst others. At the top of the hill, we admired the incredible view of the Minas Basin and the Grand Pré area that we birded the day prior. We then found several

Chipping Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, Purple Finches, and even saw and heard some flyover Red Crossbills and White-winged Crossbills!



Bird's Eye View of the Annapolis Valley © Glen Parsneau

We then ventured over to Scots Bay Provincial Park where we observed many Semipalmated Plovers, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Least Sandpipers, along with a Hudsonian Whimbrel and a group of very obliging Solitary Sandpipers. After a brief rain shower delayed our picnic lunch, we then made our way to Black Rock Lighthouse where we picked up our first Common Eiders, Great Black-backed Gulls, Common Loons, Common Tern and Northern Gannets for the trip! To complete our day of adventure, we enjoyed a delicious meal and local brews at a brewery and restaurant set inside an old church!



Solitary Sandpiper © Kyle d'Entremont

Day 4: French Basin Trail, and our adventure on Brier Island begins!

This morning we made our way southwest towards Brier Island, but not before making a pit stop at the French Basin Trail near Annapolis Royal! Here we enjoyed a wonderfully diverse selection of birds within the marsh and pond, as well as in the trees and shrubbery along the trail system. In the pond, we spotted numerous Wood Ducks, Gadwall, Blue-winged Teal and a Northern Shoveler. In the trees and shrubs, an astonishing amount of Northern Parulas were moving through, along with numerous Northern Yellow Warblers, Chestnut-sided Warblers, and a couple Bay-breasted Warblers amongst others. A pleasant surprise was a nice and yellow Philadelphia Vireo that popped out of the bushes in a mixed flock! We also watched a back and forth interaction where a young Cooper's Hawk chased after a Belted Kingfisher, followed by the kingfisher chasing it back! On the non-bird front, we enjoyed watching three River Otters swim around in the pond! We then enjoyed a picnic lunch under the shade of some trees beside the marsh before hitting the road in time to make our two ferries over to Brier Island!



French Basin Birding © Kyle d'Entremont



Philadelphia Vireo © Kyle d'Entremont



River Otters © Arnaud Valade



Digby Neck Ferry © Kyle d'Entremont

Once on Brier, we headed straight to Pond Cove, where we were fortunate to observe an incredible SIX Baird's Sandpipers along the beach along with several other shorebird species! It's a great day if you see one of this species in Nova Scotia, let alone so many! On our way to check into the Brier Island Lodge, we made a quick pit stop to scope out Peter's Island, where we were lucky to spot an immature Great Cormorant, along with two adult Northern Gannets that have been making the

island their home the past few summers. At the lodge, we enjoyed a delicious dinner at the Grandview Restaurant before resting up for what would turn out to be a day to remember.



Baird's Sandpiper © Kyle d'Entremont

Day 5: Brier Island! Birds! Banding! Boat trip!

A day to remember at a place like no other

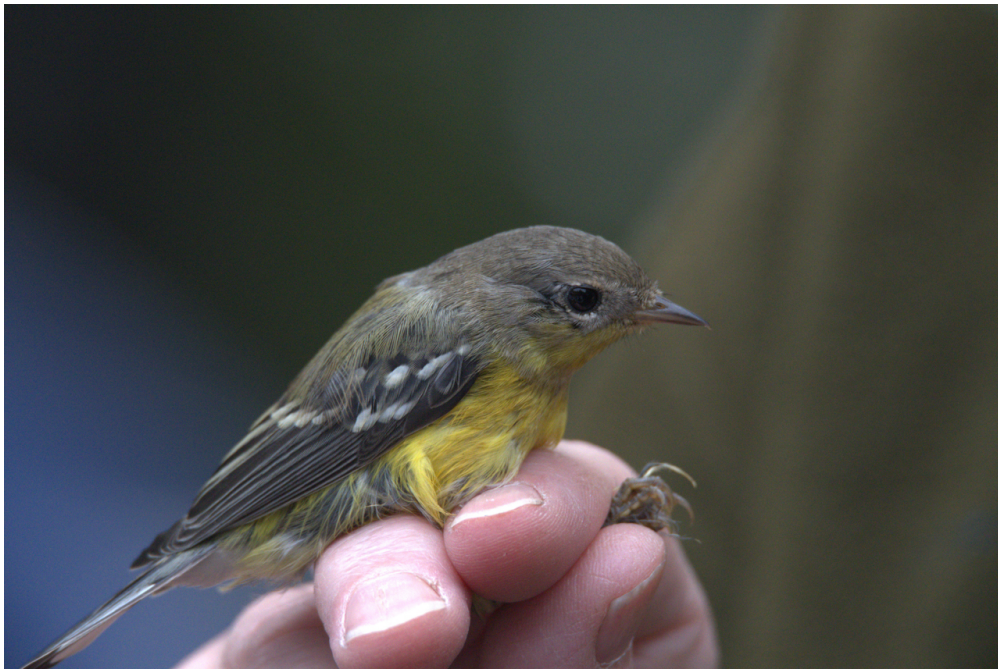
The beginning of a client-described 15 stars out of 10 day began shrouded in fog, as is often the case on Brier. After enjoying our breakfast, we set off for North Light and birded the scrubby habitat along the trail, where we had incredible views of Blackburnian Warblers, Cape May Warblers, American Redstart and Magnolia Warbler, as well as heard some skulky Northern Waterthrushes. A precursor to our pelagic trip later in the day; Great Shearwaters and Northern Gannets were spotted moving into and out of the fog at the lighthouse. Here, we also spotted a group of Harbour Porpoises moving through Grand Passage! We then made our way to the Brier Island banding station, which was open in 2026 for the first time in several years, where the group was awed by close-up views of several songbirds, such as Song Sparrow, American Redstart, Northern Yellow Warblers, and Magnolia Warblers. Several of our guests even handled and released some small feathered friends. An experience that was made apparent they were not about to forget anytime soon! We then ventured over to Lighthouse Rd. on the way out to Western Light where we had good looks at an Olive-sided Flycatcher, as well as several great looks at a Yellow-breasted Chat! A bit of seawatching at Western Light rounded out our morning, where we saw many Northern Gannets, Black Guillemots, and Common Eiders.



Song Sparrow in Hand © Kyle d'Entremont



Northern Yellow Warbler in Hand - Kyle d'Entremont



Magnolia Warbler in Hand © Kyle d'Entremont

After an excellent lunch and a bit of rest in the afternoon, the gang readied up for what would shape up to be an incredible pelagic trip! Before even setting foot on our boat, an immature Laughing Gull was spotted flying above amidst a cloud of American Herring Gulls and Great Black-backed gulls. After a mere 20 minutes at sea, a behemoth of a South Polar Skua was quickly spotted sitting on the sea and allowed us to get super close views! A few minutes more and hundreds of Red Phalaropes and Red-necked Phalaropes came into view! A short passage of time later and dozens of Wilson's Storm-Petrels were seen dancing atop the water. A Leach's Storm-Petrel was also briefly spotted amongst them.



Immature Laughing Gull Hawking Flies © Arnaud Valade



South Polar Skua © Kyle d'Entremont



Wilson's Storm-Petrel Silhouette © Kyle d'Entremont



Atlantic Puffins © Arnaud Valade

Hundreds of Atlantic Puffins were seen in large flocks that allowed us to make some close approaches. Northern Gannets and Great Shearwaters were in abundance! A second Laughing Gull and two Lesser Black-backed Gulls were spotted. An incredibly confiding Black-legged Kittiwake (that was masquerading as a less common species, those on the trip will understand!) was admired up close. And to top it all off in case this list of species doesn't have the reader salivating, numerous Humpback Whales were seen all around the boat, including a baby whale lunge feeding, all under the glow of a glorious sunset and a rising full moon on our return into the harbour. Do you have your tickets for next year booked yet???



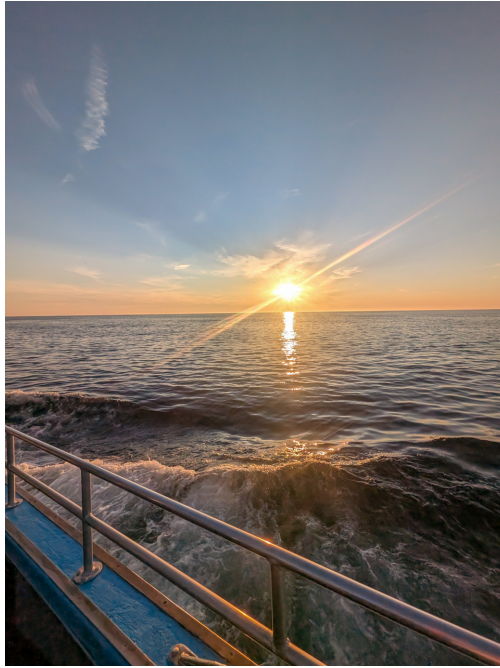
Great Shearwater © Kathy Doddridge



Black-legged Kittiwake © Kyle d'Entremont



Humpback Whale © Kyle d'Entremont



Pelagic Trip Sunset © Kyle d'Entremont



Full Moon Rising © Kyle d'Entremont

Day 6: Brier Island magic continues, and the journey to Yarmouth

Once again, our day began shrouded in mist on Brier. After yet another delicious breakfast, we

poked around in the bushes for migrant songbirds. We had great looks at American Redstart, Black-and-white Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, a Cape May Warbler, Magnolia Warbler and another flashy Blackburnian Warbler. An incredibly skulky Mourning Warbler heard chipping in the alders introduced a new warbler species to our trip list.



Black-and-white Warbler © Arnaud Valade

We then wandered into the banding station for what would be a truly special morning once again! The group had some incredible bird in hand views of Least Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Magnolia Warbler, amongst others. One of our guests mentioned that they would love to hold and release a bird this morning, but was too nervous to do it the day before. Shortly thereafter, the lead bander at the station pulled out a Northern Waterthrush from a bird bag, a species which was a lifer for said guest! They then were walked through the process, and had the rare opportunity of holding a lifer. The waterthrush then proceeded to sit in our guests hand and allowed it to be pet several times before it flew off while releasing a happy chirp. Immaculate vibes! Pure magic!



Northern Waterthrush in Hand © Kyle d'Entremont



Least Flycatcher in Hand © Kyle d'Entremont

After a fulfilling few days on the island, we set sail on the two ferries back to the mainland that afternoon. After a very tasty lunch at the Petite Passage Cafe overlooking the ocean, we hit the road towards Yarmouth. Along the way, we stopped at Mavilette Beach where we had several shorebird groups whiz by us on the beach, and picked up a Great Egret for the trip out in the marsh. We then enjoyed a delicious seafood feast and enjoyed the sun setting over Yarmouth Harbour.

Day 7: Cape Forchu, Chebogue Point, and a trip to the southern edge of Nova Scotia

With a rainbow spanning across Yarmouth Harbour, we set out to Cape Forchu hoping to find some fresh migrants and add to our species list for the trip. We were not disappointed, as a nice female Baltimore Oriole was heard chattering in the bushes before she popped up on a low spruce tree. We then made our way out to Chebogue Point Road where we were treated to an impressive group of Hudsonian Whimbrel out in the farm fields, along with a couple hundred Black-bellied Plovers and a couple American Golden-Plovers in the mix. We also had good looks at a couple Pectoral Sandpipers flying overhead!



Baltimore Oriole © Kyle d'Entremont

We then pointed the vans to Cape Sable Island in search of American Oystercatchers which breed there annually. Unfortunately, we were skunked in our search for the oystercatchers, but did get great looks at many shorebirds on the flats, including some Eastern Willets, a new bird for the trip.



Chebogue © Arnaud Valade

Day 8: Bidding Yarmouth farewell, birding some South Shore beaches, and visiting historic Lunenburg

A quick pit stop at the local Tim Horton's provided a cultural experience for our American friends in the group and fuelled us for an early morning in search of some fresh migrants. Another morning trip out to Cape Forchu was somewhat quiet in terms of migration, but we were still entertained by several inquisitive Red-breasted Nuthatches, and picked up a couple of new species for the trip that were heard but could not be coerced out in the open; Winter Wren and a Northern House Wren. While here, we also admired the bright glow of the sun lighting up the ever-picturesque Cape Forchu Lighthouse perched on the rocks across the cove from us!



Red-breasted Nuthatch © Kyle d'Entremont

We then made our way over to Sandhills Beach Provincial Park to make a second attempt at finding the American Oystercatchers. Shortly after arrival, we had great looks at several Palm Warblers amidst other passerines. We then began searching the beach, and found a nice group of Sanderlings and several Common Terns that we were able to scope out. After searching for a while and feeling defeated, Arnaud managed to spot the American Oystercatchers in the distance being chased by a Peregrine Falcon! Not the most glamorous views of them, but hey! It still counts! We then enjoyed a picnic lunch before heading north to check out a report of an American Avocet at Sand Dollar Beach near Lunenburg. Luck was on our side, as it was the first bird we saw in the saltmarsh, and everyone got great views of this rare vagrant in our scopes! We then drove into Lunenburg and admired the picturesque waterfront of this historical town before enjoying a delicious dinner at the Salt Shaker Deli.



American Avocet in the Scope © Kyle d'Entremont



Town of Lunenburg © Kyle d'Entremont

Day 9: Boreal birding, Peggy's Cove, and Halifax

We began our final day of the trip much like we did the day before, with a quick stop at the local

Timmies, before making our way into the boreal forest on an old logging road to attempt to spot some boreal forest specialties! Timbits in hand, we scoured the roadsides on the Ingramport Road in search of avian goodies. After a short time, we spotted several White-winged Crossbills chattering on top of some spruce trees! And not long after that, two beautiful adult Canada Jays made their presence known and we admired them for several minutes! We then made our way to the scenic Peggy's Cove Lighthouse and enjoyed the rugged and barren, yet beautiful landscapes, as well as yet another delicious seafood feast overlooking the ocean. We made one last birding pit stop at Sandy Cove Road in Ketch Harbour in search of Boreal Chickadees and perhaps one last vagrant, but windy conditions made for a quiet afternoon.



Peggy's Cove © Kyle d'Entremont

Afterwards, we drove into the capital city of Nova Scotia, Halifax, and enjoyed the view at the Halifax Citadel National Historic Site, as well as the sights and sounds of the Halifax Waterfront. We then reminisced over food and drink at a historic building that was built in 1835 and later renovated into a brewpub! The group then shared their favorite moments and bird sightings from an incredible and fulfilling 8 day trip exploring Southern Nova Scotia before we journeyed back to the airport hotel and we parted ways. It was an honour to lead this wonderful group of guests through my home province along with the incredibly talented Arnaud Valade, and I hope to see another group of keen adventurers next year! Cheers, Kyle



Group Photo at The Lookoff © Kyle d'Entremont at The Lookoff - Kyle d'Entremont