



## Nova Scotia Trip Report (Aug 24-Sep 2, 2025)

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Fall migration is arguably the best time of year for birding in Nova Scotia, and this trip was no exception! Our group of 7 eager birders and 2 local guides spent 8 days exploring the southern half of Nova Scotia and all of the wonderful birds, landscapes, seafood, and local charm 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, and found plenty of migrant songbirds along North Mountain. We then journeyed west down Digby Neck and spent a couple days on the remote and quaint Brier Island, where we embarked on two incredible pelagic trips out in the Bay of Fundy. While on Brier, we also spotted the mega rare for Canada, Wood Stork, who had taken up residence on the island for several weeks. 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 and collected a few boreal specialty species before visiting the iconic Peggy's Cove Lighthouse and making our way back to Halifax.

### **Day 1: Arrive in Halifax**

On the first night of our tour, the group met at our hotel, Inn on the Lake, and got to know one another over food and drink before beginning our journey the next morning!

### **Day 2: Windsor, Blomidon Provincial Park, and Grand Pré**

Well rested and eager for adventure, we began our tour by heading out to the Annapolis Valley region, with our first stop at a classic location for any well-meaning birding trip, a sewage lagoon! At the Windsor Sewage Lagoon, we picked up great looks at a male Wood Duck in eclipse plumage, several Lesser Yellowlegs, and a flyby of a Merlin. Afterwards, we headed out to Elderkin Creek where we had excellent views of Short-billed Dowitchers, Killdeer, and a locally rare Stilt Sandpiper.



*Stilt Sandpiper, Cape Sable Island © Jason Dain*

We then made our way towards Blomidon Provincial Park where we quickly encountered an excellent mixed flock of migrant songbirds! In this group, we picked up great views of Black-and-White Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green Warbler, and enjoyed a vibrant splash of yellow from an incredibly obliging Canada Warbler and a bright Philadelphia Vireo! Just as we were getting ready to head out, we also had good looks at a Sharp-shinned Hawk and a Broad-winged Hawk circling above the treeline.



*Canada Warbler, Blomidon © Jason Dain*

We then fuelled up for our afternoon birding escapades at Paddy's Pub in Wolfville, and motored on to The Guzzle in Grand Pré, an area well known for housing thousands of migrant shorebirds that rest along the shore at high tide. Here at the shore of the Bay of Fundy, the site of the world's highest tides, we enjoyed a close-up view of numerous Semipalmated Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers, Semipalmated Plovers, White-rumped Sandpiper and a Red Knot. While admiring the shorebirds, a Peregrine Falcon zipped past us and made an unexpected Least Sandpiper into lunch! With the province desperate for rain during a period of drought, a welcomed afternoon rain shower forced us to head back into the van and wander through the fields in the nearby dykelands, where we had incredibly close views at dozens of Bald Eagles, Black-bellied Plovers, and a handful of American Golden-Plovers and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. To stay out of the rain, we headed into the Grand Pré National Historic Site interpretive centre where we learned about the history of the Acadian people who once inhabited the region and created the dykelands and farm fields that we birded earlier that afternoon. We finished our excellent first day of the tour by enjoying a tasty dinner at our place of lodging for the night, the Old Orchard Inn.



*Peregrine Falcon vs Sandpiper © Jason Dain*



*Bald Eagle, Grand Pré © Jason Dain*

### **Day 3: Black Rock Lighthouse, North Mountain, Hall's Harbour, and more shorebirding near Grand Pré**

We started the day with a hearty breakfast at the Old Orchard Inn before heading to the coast for some seawatching at Black Rock Lighthouse where we picked up Common Eider, Black Guillemot and had excellent looks at a Red-throated Loon that still had retained breeding plumage! We then birded some back roads on North Mountain where we dug up a great mixed flock of passerines that included numerous Chipping Sparrows, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Magnolia Warblers, a Nashville Warbler, a Blackburnian Warbler, and awesome views of an Ovenbird. Afterwards we made our way to foggy Scots Bay to scan the beach for shorebirds and marvel at the excellent coastal landscape. We then made a pit stop at The Look-off for a panoramic view of the floor of the Annapolis Valley before making our way to Hall's Harbour Lobster Pound for a seafood lunch!



*Ovenbird, North Mountain © Jason Dain*



*The Look-Off © Kyle d'Entremont*

After lunch, we returned to the Grand Pré area to scope out some more shorebirds at The Guzzle. While at The Guzzle, two Peregrine Falcons gave us a show, with each making multiple attempts at capturing one of the roosting Semipalmated Sandpipers. At one point, one of the Peregrines cruised mere feet above our heads before doing a loop right in front of us and carrying onward! With shorebird numbers somewhat low at The Guzzle, we made our way over to Penny Beach where we

were mesmerized by thousands of peeps forming murmurations over the Minas Basin.



*Mixed Sandpiper Flock, Grand Pré © Jason Dai*

With nature as our cathedral by day, The Church Brewing Company was our cathedral by night; an interesting pub with a delicious food and drink menu inside an old church! We then finished our day in search of Common Nighthawks in Kentville, where we had a very E.T.-esque experience of watching one transit across the moon in the distance.

#### **Day 4: Belleisle Marsh and our arrival at Brier Island**

After yet another delicious breakfast at the Old Orchard Inn, we made our way to Belleisle Marsh where we picked up our first Blue-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebes, Hooded Merganser and Least Flycatchers for the trip, along with excellent numbers of Wood Ducks and a close flyby of a Cooper's Hawk. On our way out of the marsh we were treated to a thankfully non-smelly surprise of a Striped Skunk wandering through the fields!



*Skunk © Jason Dain*

After having lunch at a maritime road trip staple, the Irving Big Stop, we made our way along Digby Neck, across two ferries, and finally set foot on Brier Island. We then went to Big Meadow Bog in search of a long-staying mega-rare for Canada, Wood Stork, but we were unfortunately skunked for the second time that day (though our luck would turn the very next day!). Afterwards we made our way to Western Light and had great looks at Black Guillemots, several immature Northern Gannets, and a flyby Surf Scoter. We then checked into our home base for the next couple days, the Brier Island Lodge, and enjoyed our meal at the Grandview Restaurant with an excellent view of the Grand Passage between Brier Island and the adjacent Long Island.



*Northern Gannet, Brier Island © Jason Dain*



*Western Light on Brier Island © Kyle d'Entremont*

## **Day 5: Whale-watching, a wayward Wood Stork, and Pond Cove**

With the sun shining brightly, we enjoyed our breakfast at the Grandview before making our way down to the dock to board the Mariner Cruises Whale and Seabird Tour boat and headed out into the Bay of Fundy! After steaming out into the bay for a short while, we had an incredibly close encounter with four Humpback Whales! On the seabird front, we were afforded excellent looks at several Great Shearwaters, Northern Gannets, Wilson's and Leach's Storm-Petrels, Red-necked and Red Phalaropes, Atlantic Puffins, two South Polar Skuas, an Arctic Tern, and a Pomarine Jaeger with its characteristic spoon-shaped tail feathers in excellent condition! On the list of things that were completely unexpected several kilometres from shore; we had a flyby Ruby-throated Hummingbird and a Northern Harrier fly past our vessel! We also observed a spectacle of the mechanical kind, with a Coast Guard Cormorant helicopter actively conducting a training mission a few kilometres away from us!



*Atlantic Puffin, Brier Island © Jason Dain*



*Great Shearwater, Brier Island © Jason Dain*



*Pomarine Jaeger, Brier Island © Jason Dain*



*Humpback Whales off Brier Island © Kyle d'Entremont*



*Cormorant Helicopter, Brier Island © Jason Dain*

With word getting out that the Wood Stork was being seen at Big Meadow Bog back on Brier, we anxiously waited for our ship to return to port, and subsequently hurried our way over to the bog. After a short scan, we scoped out the Wood Stork through the heat haze perched in tree tops across the bog! With the stork being a Canada lifer for all of our guests and a world lifer for myself, a van full of happy folks then made its way to Pond Cove! At Pond Cove, the group had excellent looks at Semipalmated Sandpipers, Semipalmated Plovers, Short-billed Dowitchers, Lesser Yellowlegs, Sanderlings, Black-bellied Plovers, American Golden-Plovers, and picked up our first Ruddy Turnstones and Black Scoters for the trip!



*Wood Stork through the heat haze © Jason Dain*



*American Golden-Plover, Brier Island © Jason Dain*

After a long but incredibly fulfilling day, our group then made its way back to the lodge and enjoyed another great meal and some celebratory drinks at the Grandview Restaurant before retiring to our rooms for the night.

### **Day 6: Bay of Fundy pelagic trip from Brier, Yarmouth**

With an early rise and a final great meal at the Grandview, we made our way back down to the dock and boarded our private charter boat for another great day of pelagic birding! One of the first birds we found this morning was a stunning light morph South Polar Skua sitting on the ocean's surface that we circled for several minutes and had great looks of! We also had great views of several Cory's Shearwaters and enjoyed a spectacle of several hundred Wilson's Storm-Petrels pattering along the wave crests next to our boat. On our way back into shore, we also had great looks at a Parasitic Jaeger and an immature Lesser Black-backed Gull, and saw multiple Humpback Whales breach 30+ times in the distance!



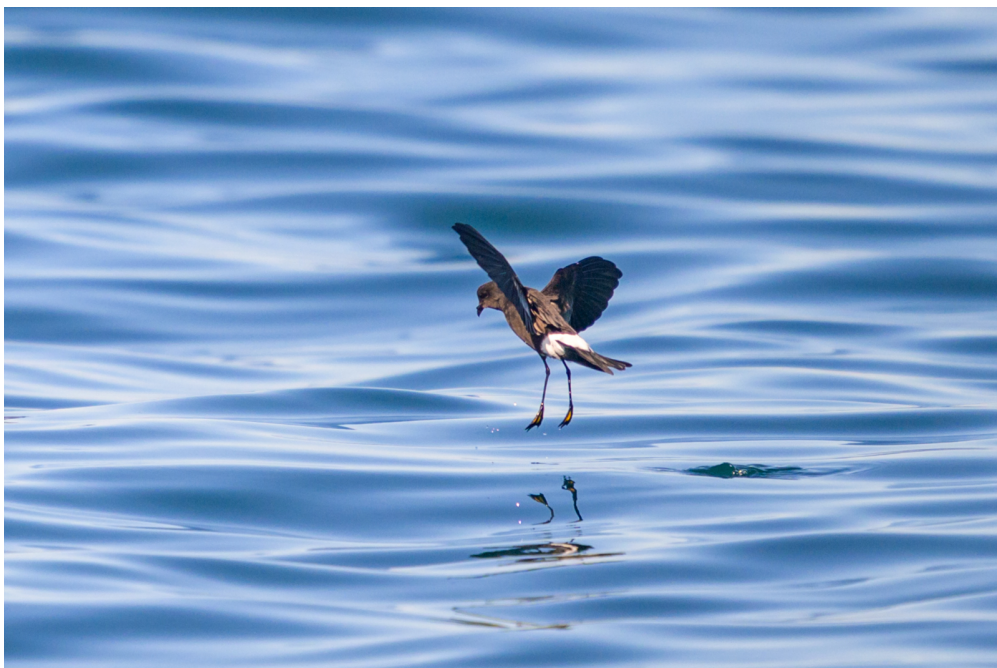
*South Polar Skua © Jason Dain*



*Cory's Shearwater © Jason Dain*



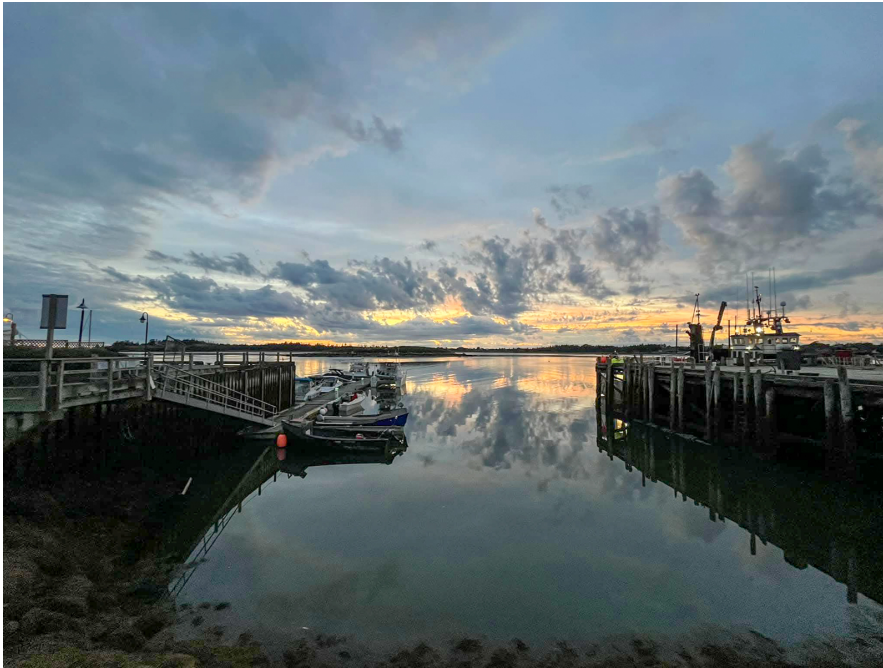
*Parasitic Jaeger, Brier Island © Jason Dain*



*Wilson's Storm-Petrel © Jason Dain*

After making it ashore, we enjoyed a picnic lunch with the company of the Wood Stork at Big Meadow Bog and made our way back to the mainland and headed south to Yarmouth. Once we arrived at Yarmouth, we made a pit stop into Broad Brook Wetland where we had excellent views of a Wilson's Snipe and two Sora splashing around in a puddle! After yet another wonderful day of birding, we enjoyed a great meal at Rudder's Seafood Restaurant and Brewery and watched the sun

set over Yarmouth Harbour with the iconic schooner, the Bluenose II, moored nearby.



*Sunset Over Yarmouth Harbour © Kyle d'Entremont*

## **Day 7: Yarmouth and Cape Sable Island**

A brilliant rainbow outside our windows in the morning ended up being a good omen for our day ahead! We started our day by birding Gerry Lane and Thomas Road on the Cape Forchu peninsula just outside the town of Yarmouth. On Gerry Lane we had excellent views of two Cape May Warblers, a brilliant male American Redstart, and Common Yellowthroats. We then walked up Thomas Road where a group of passerines flitting around through some alders caught our attention. From these alders, a bright flash of yellow emerged before our eyes, which we quickly identified as a stunning Prothonotary Warbler that gave us immaculate views for several minutes! On our way out of Yarmouth, we stopped into the Sunday Point Road where we had excellent views of our second Stilt Sandpiper for the trip, and also picked up some Bobolinks across the salt marsh from us.



*A Good Omen Rainbow © Kyle d'Entremont*



*Prothonotary Warbler, Cape Forchu © Jason Dain*

We then continued southward to Cape Sable Island where we found a juvenile Wilson's Phalarope at yet another location named "The Guzzle" after missing out on a couple previously reported birds along our trip route! Here, we also picked up Willet and Whimbrel for the trip, and great close-up views of a Solitary Sandpiper. We then made our way down to The Hawk Beach which houses a couple pairs of breeding American Oystercatchers. We caught a brief glimpse of the oystercatchers

in flight in the distance and thought they landed on the distant shore, so we waited for a while to try and catch a closer look. Running out of time and with no further sightings of the oystercatchers, we decided to leave The Hawk and make one last check at Daniel's Head Beach. Here, our persistence paid off, as we located four American Oystercatchers (including two juveniles) out on the mud flats and got excellent views of them in our scopes! While scanning the other shorebirds on the flats, we also noticed a juvenile Piping Plover nearby! We then made our way to The Loyalist Inn in Shelburne and enjoyed our meal at The Emerald Light while reminiscing over an incredible day of birding along the southern edge of Nova Scotia.



*Solitary Sandpiper, Cape Sable Island © Jason Dain*



*American Oystercatcher, Cape Sable Island © Jason Dain*

## **Day 8: Blanche Peninsula and South Shore beaches en route to Lunenburg**

We began our day with a great catered breakfast provided by Daily Dish Delivery in Shelburne and then made our way down to the Blanche Peninsula in search of migrant passerines. At Blanche, we had great views of a Palm Warbler, numerous inquisitive Red-breasted Nuthatches, an Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, and heard a distant Alder Flycatcher. We then visited several beautiful white sand beaches characteristic of the South Shore of Nova Scotia in search of shorebirds. At one of these beaches, Louis Head, we stumbled across a group of Red Crossbills in the spruce trees by the parking lot!



We then enjoyed a picnic lunch under the shade of some pine trees at Sable River Provincial Park before making our way northward and taking the ferry across the LaHave River en route to the picturesque fishing village of Lunenburg. We then enjoyed our dinner at The Old Fish Factory and watched the sun set over the historic Lunenburg waterfront.

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

With a quick pit stop for breakfast where most great Canadian road trips begin, the local Tim Horton's, we made our way into the forest in search of some boreal specialties. While driving down a logging road, a dark chicken-like bird darted across the road and grasped our attention. A Spruce Grouse! With a bit of searching, we were able to locate it again, perched in some of its namesake Spruce trees. On our way out of the woods we also came upon a group of five Canada Jays flitting through the trees and were able to get excellent views of them.



*Spruce Grouse © Catherine Douglas*

We then made our way to the iconic Peggy's Cove lighthouse and enjoyed the scenery before making one last birding pit stop at Sandy Cove Road in hopes to find one last vagrant before our trip ended. We didn't have any luck with vagrants here, but did have good looks at Yellow Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo and Palm Warbler. Afterwards we drove through Halifax and up along the historic Halifax Citadel with narration provided by Jason and yours truly! We then reminisced over our favorite birds and experiences from an incredible 8 days of birding spent along the scenic coast of Nova Scotia with an amazing group of people, while enjoying an excellent fine dining experience at The Five Fisherman in downtown Halifax. After dinner, we said our goodbyes and parted ways after an incredibly fulfilling adventure!



*Our group at Brier Island © Jason Dain*

[Nova Scotia Birding Tour eBird list \(Aug 24-Sep 2, 2025\)](#)