



Quebec in Fall - Birds & Whales, Trip Report 2022

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Quebec in Fall - Birds and Whales -Sept 2022



Mother Nature sent us resplendent autumn colours! © Gareth Thomson

Our recent 'Quebec in Fall - Birds and Whales' trip was outstanding, and a great adventure for everyone! We discovered some wonderful things together... First and foremost the people, always the people. Our little group gelled and bonded during our time together, as we explored the vibrant landscape and shared our experiences in the vehicle or over dinner. Everyone appreciated everyone's different gifts, it seemed: the retired land conservation professional, who effortlessly turned nature interpreter at a moment's notice, sharing what he knew about rocks and plants and mammals; the always-alert university professor, who would unfailingly ask the toughest questions of the beleaguered bird guides - and then smilingly pull out her smart phone, answer her own question, and help the group learn. Two of our group had that most important of gifts we call Photographers Eye, capturing wonderful bird images - and also fabulous landscape and abstract images, that somehow captured the essence of these places we were lucky enough to visit. Every trip has a few SOB's, and this trip was no exception - although in this case SOB stands for Spouse of Birder, those wonderful and tolerant spouse who laughingly accept the various peccadillos of their bird-passionate life partner. Our dinnertime conversation was eclectic and wide ranging, as we went around the table to share with one another our Best Birding Story Ever. One night, in a more thoughtful vein, we found ourselves discussing the 101 ways in which we can move beyond a simple appreciation of birds, and act to help protect and conserve their populations. Another theme that emerged: the evident pride felt by the wonderful, warm-hearted Quebecois in their home place. Our tour took us along the north shore of the Saint Lawrence River, and over the course of several days every house we saw was neatly painted and in great condition.



Wonderful Maritime colours © Gareth Thomson



Prettiest Toilet Ever with guide Adam © Gareth Thomson

We saw this pride as we toured the many landscapes: from Taiga to rocky oceanside, from boreal forest to marshland. We visited many federally, provincially, and even municipally protected areas, and were impressed by how well maintained these parks were, particularly the proliferation of thoughtful and well-designed interpretive signs. These folk care for, and invest in, nature.



Exploring caribou habitat - and searching for boreal birds - at Grands Jardin Park © Gareth Thomson

And what are the birds you ask, you ask? We saw almost 120 species, so we had both diversity and,

well, volume! We had a flurry - nay, a veritable blizzard - of over 6000 snow geese, wending their way through most of our birding days on this tour. Over 1000 Common Eiders! Hundreds of Horned larks! We had large numbers of some species, but we also had bird Rock Stars: exciting Hudsonian godwits calling urgently. A Manx shearwater effortlessly banking over the ocean, catching the wind in its stiff wings. Boreal chickadees wheezing away amidst their Blackcapped cousins. A whale watching tour is a great way to view pelagic birds, too: it was wonderful to see 30 Red-Necked phalaropes, delicately pattering over the ocean surface, many miles from land. Parasitic Jaegers! Common Murre, Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Atlantic Puffin, Oh my!



Boat tour © Gareth Thomson

We also enjoyed more than our fair share of mammals: many views of Beluga, Minke, and a Humpback whale that came so close, we could see down its blowhole. A herd of over 100 grey seals, seen from above from our whale watching boat. We had to have our heads on a swivel as we tried to keep up, viewing these superb creatures as they swirled around us in one of Canada's best nature hotspots...



Some of our best looks at whales where from the shore! Minke whale at Cap de Bon Desir © Gareth Thomson



Gray Seal © Gareth Thomson

...And once, to our incredulous delight, a Canada lynx that calmly walked out onto a rocky headland in front of us our one of our lunch stops.



Lynx © Evelyn Kennedy



Scanning the marshland at Cap Tourmente. We saw Great Egret and American Bittern at this spot! © Gareth Thomson



Adam pointing out birds © Gareth Thomson



At Pointe Noire Interpretive Centre, where the Saguenay and St. Lawrence rivers meet. These lucky guests saw Beluga and Minke whales, and a Peregrine falcon, in rapid succession. © Gareth Thomson



Birding with the morning light behind you, and the Grand Hotel Tadoussac in plain view! What could be finer?



Wonderful mature deciduous forest, Jacques Cartier National Park © Gareth Thomson



A Magnolia warbler - one of a dozen warbler species we saw on tour - draws a crowd. © Gareth Thomson



Our scope and binoculars are close at hand during even the tastiest picnic lunch! © Gareth Thomson



EET Group 2022



Guides Adam and Gareth