Eagle-Eye Tours

New Brunswick & Grand Manan Itinerary

Link: New Brunswick & Grand Manan

Tour Overview

Our New Brunswick & Grand Manan birding tour combines diverse bird life with beautiful panoramas of wildflowers, picturesque fishing villages and fabulous views of whales.

We visit Grand Manan Island when fall migration peaks for several groups of birds, and we could see well over 20 species of warblers, including a good chance for rarities like Prairie Warbler.

The interior forests support breeding populations of Black-backed Woodpecker, Spruce Grouse, White-winged Crossbill and Boreal Chickadee.

Seabirds are diverse; along with Black Guillemots and Northern Gannets, we are quite likely to see Great and Sooty Shearwaters, Razorbills, Atlantic Puffins, Common and Arctic Terns, and Northern Fulmars, and there is always a good chance of seeing jaegers, Storm-Petrels and Black-legged Kittiwakes.

We also take in the amazing shorebird concentrations of the Bay of Fundy, renowned for the highest tides on earth, and the sand dunes of Kouchibouguac National Park.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Moncton, New Brunswick



Our New Brunswick & Grand Manan birding tour officially begins in the evening in our hotel lobby where we will meet and head off to a nearby restaurant for dinner. Night in Moncton.

Day 2: Birding Johnson's Mills, Sackville, Petit Cap



Today we will explore Johnson's Mills Shorebird Reserve for some morning shorebird watching. In August, Semipalmated Sandpipers gather in the hundreds of thousands. Even though we will be past this peak, there will still be large numbers present. The sight of all these birds twisting and turning in unison is an awesome spectacle. There will almost certainly be Peregrines and Merlins attracted by the shorebirds here. From here we will make our way to Sackville and spend the rest of the morning exploring the Tantramar Marshes which border onto neighbouring Nova Scotia looking for marsh dwellers like Sora and Virginia Rail, American Coot, Common Moorhen, various waterfowl such as American Wigeon, Northern Pintail and Lesser Scaup plus open habitat species like Northern Harrier, and Nelson's Sparrow. We also visit the Sackville Waterfowl Park where a surprisingly diverse collection of waterfowl, rails and shorebirds can be seen from the observation tower, 2 km of boardwalk and picnic facilities. We will then head towards Johnston Point and Petit Cap before returning to Moncton for the night.

Day 3: Kouchibouguac National Park



Kouchibouguac National Park is a beautiful assemblage of seashore, salt marshes, barrier beach, boreal forests and acid bogs. Here we will hope to catch up with the endangered Piping Plover, which nests here. The salt marshes host large numbers of migrating shorebirds including Short-billed Dowitcher, Red Knot and Hudsonian Godwit and sometimes westerners like Baird's Sandpiper. Nelson's Sparrows nest in the marshes and Northern Gannets fish offshore. Further inland we will search for Pileated Woodpeckers and for flocks of migrant passerines including many warbler species, some of which nest here as well. We will investigate the Black Spruce bogs for northerners like Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee and Canada Jay. Night in Moncton.

Day 4: Birding Westmorland County to Saint John



Today we will make our way towards Saint John, making a number of birding stops along the way, including stops at Wilson's Marsh in Moncton where we can find Bitterns, Rails and Marsh Wren, Salisbury Highland Park for American Coot and Common Gallinule who have been breeding there for a few years and Hampton Rotary Nature Park for more ducks and gulls. Night in Saint John.

Day 5: Ferry to Grand Manan



We depart early in the morning for Black's Harbour, about 90 minutes away from Saint John. We catch the 60-minute ferry for Grand Manan at Black's Harbour, docking at North Head on the island. The ferry ride itself can be exciting and very productive. Seabirds and marine mammals abound and we spend most of the trip watching for wildlife from the salon or on deck. Great and Sooty Shearwaters cruise the Grand Manan channel and we have a good chance of seeing Manx Shearwater and, possibly, some rarer species. Alcids flush from the ocean's surface as the ferry passes by, and we look particularly for Razorbills and Atlantic Puffins. Arctic and Common Terns are usually in sight throughout the trip. Marine mammals can be very exciting, and with luck we could encounter Fin, Minke, and Humpback Whales as we cross the channel. Harbour Porpoises should be close inshore at Black's Harbour and at North Head. The ferry ride itself is just one of several opportunities to see marine mammals during the week. Once docked, we drive the short distance to our home for the next three days, where we find friendly and comfortable accommodation that caters to naturalists. There is a naturalist's book for entries from guests, a library and a cheery lounge with a fireplace, and a broad veranda for just sitting outside and enjoying the view. After lunch, we take a couple of trails close to the inn, to the lighthouse at Swallowtail and to Whale Cove and the pond. We look for migrating passerines in the windblown trees en route to the lighthouse and we have a good chance of seeing marine mammals and seabirds off the headland. Night on Grand Manan island.

Days 6-7: Exploring Grand Manan Island



Exploration of the island's various birding hotspots. We travel to the northern tip of the island to visit several excellent sites. We stop at the Whistle and Long Eddy Point, considered the best location on the island for landbirds, before they take off for the mainland and seabirds which forage along the rip tides just offshore. We visit Castalia Marsh, a salt marsh that can be very good for shorebirds, especially at high tide; 40 species of shorebirds have been reported here! We also visit Ingall's head, Miller Pond near the island's tiny airstrip, and Southwest Head for passerines and other boreal residents. On one day we take a pelagic trip out into the Bay of Fundy to look for seabirds and marine mammals. The trip lasts 4-6 hours and is very exciting! On our way out past the barrier islands we will hopefully encounter Razorbills, Great Cormorants that sit amongst numerous Double-crested Cormorants, and nesting Bald Eagles. Once we hit the deeper waters, small flocks of Red and Red-necked Phalaropes dot the surface of the ocean, while the first tubenoses begin to appear as we get further out from the barrier island. If the weather is calm, the spray of Humpback and Fin Whales can be seen great distances. The large rafts of shearwaters consisting of Great and Sooties may contain a few Manx Shearwaters. The occasional Northern Gannet flaps by and Atlantic Puffins appear out of nowhere with a beak full of fish. If we are lucky, a migrant Pomarine or Parasitic Jaeger will be attracted to large foraging groups of shearwaters. Graceful Wilson's Storm-Petrels dart in and out amongst the waves, as we try to pick out a Leach's Storm-Petrel. Arctic Terns fly by in small groups, and the first groups of Northern Fulmars and Black-legged Kittiwakes coming south appear here and there. Every trip finds something different on the Bay of Fundy! Nights on Grand Manan island.

Day 8: Ferry Ride to Black's Harbour and return to Saint John



After spending the morning birding, we catch the ferry back to the mainland (again, watching for wildlife on the crossing), arriving in Saint John by mid-afternoon. Depending on timing we will visit Irving Nature Park. Night in Saint John.

Day 9: Fundy National Park and Shepody Bay



We will explore a number of sites as we return to Moncton including Fundy National Park, where we'll take in a couple of nature trails, looking for boreal forest species such as Boreal Chickadee, Canada Jay and White-winged Crossbill, and keeping a watch for Moose. We then head along the coastline to Mary's Point Shepody National Wildlife Area where we will enjoy the sightings of flocks of semipalmated sandpipers. Nearby is a collection of freshwater dykes and marshes, edged by a nature trail, which we will explore for other shorebirds, gulls and terns. If time permits we will explore more of the Shepody Bay area, including the amazing flowerpot formations of Hopewell Rocks Provincial Park. Night in Moncton.

Day 10: Departure

Our New Brunswick & Grand Manan birding tour ends today, you can depart for flights home anytime today.

What to Expect

Overview

The New Brunswick & Grand Manan tour is a fast-paced birding tour. We focus on finding a diversity of birds. Most days begin with breakfast at 6:30 – 7:00am, followed at mid-day by a picnic lunch. When on Grand Manan Island we return to our hotel in the afternoon to have time to relax.

Food

We generally have breakfast at the hotel before we head out for the day. We often take a picnic lunch in the field, but will occasionally stop at a restaurant for lunch. Dinner is usually at the hotel or a nearby restaurant. Each evening after dinner we compile the day's checklist, review the day's activities, birds, mammals and other observations, and plan the next day's activities.

Accommodation

Generally we stay in comfortable hotel rooms in locations close to where we want to go birding. Please note that in the remote community of Grand Manan, there are less options available and we therefore stay in more basic lodgings.

Walking

The walking on this tour is rated as easy. The terrain is mostly flat, with some gentle slopes and occasional sandy or pebbled areas. The longest walk at approximately 2km (1.25 miles) roundtrip over boardwalk. We generally walk 1–2 km at a very slow, leisurely pace with frequent stops for birding. While the walking is generally easy, the main challenge is the potential fatigue from consecutively long days.

Driving

The driving on this tour will generally be short forays to birding locations. However there will be two

3-4 hour drives on separate days to reach prime birding destinations.

Climate

Weather in August is often very pleasant, with warm days and cool nights, but conditions can vary considerably. Very hot weather is possible, while days on the islands or out on the water can be noticeably cooler, especially with wind or fog. We recommend bringing layers so you can adjust to changing temperatures throughout the day, as well as a light waterproof or windproof jacket.

Waterproof footwear is also a good idea. We recommend bringing mosquito repellent, although mosquitoes are generally not a significant problem except perhaps along sheltered trails.

Boat Trips

We take one 4-6 h pelagic trip off the south end of Grand Manan into the Bay of Fundy. The pelagic boat trip is conducted using local fishermens' vessels, which comply with Canadian Safety Standards. These vessels can comfortably hold 30 people with bench seating. The pelagic boat trip can be quite cool, so appropriate layered clothing, gloves and hat are recommended.

We also take the ferry to and from Grand Manan. The ferries are comfortable, with shelter and lots of seating space.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes	**Tour Price Does Not Include**
• Good quality accommodation in New Brunswick • Basic accommodation in Grand Manan • Ferry ride to/from Grand Manan • Boat trip into Bay of Fundy • All meals and soft drinks • 4 - 8 Participants will be guided by one guide. 9 - 12 participants will be guided by two guides. • Gratuities to local guides • All park, conservation and entrance fees	• Flights to and from Moncton • Travel Insurance • Alcoholic beverages • Items of a personal nature • Taxi from airport to start hotel • Taxes (15% HST)
