



Field Guides Tour Report

Newfoundland & Nova Scotia 2014

Jun 26, 2014 to Jul 6, 2014

Chris Benesh

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One of the icebergs present near St. John's. (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)

The 2014 Newfoundland and Nova Scotia Tour could easily be remembered as being a tour of extremes. What stands out in my mind about this tour includes having the best year ever for icebergs around St. John's. Having four visible from Cape Spear was really impressive! The seabirds were amazing as always. Though the weather was a bit on the raw side, our trip to the Witless Bay sanctuary was fabulous, with an outstanding puffin experience and all of the other great seabirds that go along with it. The close Humpback Whale was superb! The picture perfect day at Cape St. Mary's was one of the best I've ever had there. Seeing all of the gannets so well and enjoying Fin Whales far below us was fantastic. All of the seals and Great Cormorants hanging out on the rocks were an added treat. Throw in our wonderful encounter with a Gray-cheeked Thrush and a scattering of warblers, and Newfoundland had plenty to offer us.

The ferry crossing went smoothly, and with some work we had a nice collection of seabirds. And marine mammals showed well too, especially all of the White-beaked Dolphins that entertained us, often leaping clear out of the water. Cape Breton was its scenic, beautiful self, though unfortunately some bus issues with the steep hills prevented us from enjoying it to the fullest. On top of that, uncharacteristically high winds forced us to scrub our pilot whale trip. But as we departed Cape Breton, we did run into a nice Minke Whale at the Canso Causeway, and have a nice encounter with a Piping Plover and dust-bathing Ruffed Grouse on the north shore. Liscombe Lodge was its usual charming self, and the mother and chick Spruce Grouse that Laura spotted for us were certainly the highlight there. About this time we learned about Hurricane Arthur moving up the East Coast, and it was heading to greet us on the final days of the trip. When Arthur arrived in the Maritimes, it was characterized as a post-tropical cyclone, still packing sixty mile per hour winds. This of course, turned our final day into a travel one, with the focus on getting to Halifax before the worst of it hit. Kudos to our driver Fred for getting us safely there despite the winds.

Thanks to all of you for coming along and making the trip a memorable one. I look forward to our next adventures together.

-- Chris

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*)

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK (*Anas rubripes*) – Some good views of this species in Newfoundland where there are still some relatively pure individuals.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*)

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*)

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*)

COMMON EIDER (ATLANTIC) (*Somateria mollissima dresseri*) – We managed to see four of these close to shore on our misty drive along the southern coast.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (NORTH AMERICAN) (*Melanitta fusca deglandi*)

BLACK SCOTER (*Melanitta americana*)

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*)

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) [I]

RUFFED GROUSE (*Bonasa umbellus*) – Great looks at one dust bathing on the road to Pomquet Beach.

SPRUCE GROUSE (*Falcapennis canadensis*) – Laura found us a mother and chick on one of the Liscombe Lodge trails. Yay!

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – Quite a few seen this year.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

NORTHERN FULMAR (*Fulmarus glacialis*) – We had six on our boat trip to Witless Bay and more seen on the ferry crossing.

GREAT SHEARWATER (*Puffinus gravis*) – We ended up seeing quite a few of these on the ferry crossing from Newfoundland to Nova Scotia.

SOOTY SHEARWATER (*Puffinus griseus*) – Best seen on the ferry crossing.

MANX SHEARWATER (*Puffinus puffinus*) – A small number of these were detected on the ferry crossing.

Hydrobatidae (Storm-Petrels)

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) – We ran into a small pocket of these on the ferry crossing on our early morning vigil.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NORTHERN GANNET (*Morus bassanus*) – Certainly the highlight of the trip, we had absolutely fabulous weather at Cape St. Mary's where we enjoyed thousands.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – Thanks to good viewing conditions at Cape St. Mary's, we had as many as ten on the rocks below us.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*)

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (*Buteo lagopus*)

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

PIPING PLOVER (*Charadrius melodus*) – We were fortunate to run into plover surveyor Hailey who helped us track down one at Pomquet. Not a good breeding year for them.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*)

WILLET (*Tringa semipalmata*)

WILSON'S SNIFE (*Gallinago delicata*)

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)

COMMON MURRE (*Uria aalge*)

THICK-BILLED MURRE (*Uria lomvia*) – We managed to pick out a couple of these on the rocks at Gull Island in Witless Bay. Also seen through scopes at Cape St. Mary's.

RAZORBILL (*Alca torda*) – One of my favorite alcids, these look so regal. Well seen at Gull Island.

BLACK GUILLEMOT (*Cepphus grylle*) – Best views were those in Bay Bulls on the boat trip.

ATLANTIC PUFFIN (*Fratercula arctica*) – Another real spectacle of this tour, we saw thousands of these around Gull Island in Witless Bay. The Witless Bay population is the largest in North America.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*)

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*)

HERRING GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*)

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – We had a single bird in a big gull flock at St. Vincent's Beach.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*)

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*)

ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna paradisaea*) – Great looks at these near St. Vincent's Beach.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*)

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*)

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*)

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*)

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*)

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – We had two of these on our second birding day.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus virens*) [*]

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax flaviventris*) – A rather handsome empid.

LEAST FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax minimus*)

Vireonidae (Vireos)

BLUE-HEADED VIREO (*Vireo solitarius*)

RED-EYED VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*)

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

GRAY JAY (*Perisoreus canadensis*)

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*)

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*)

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*)

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*)

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Poecile atricapillus*)

BOREAL CHICKADEE (*Poecile hudsonicus*)

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

WINTER WREN (*Troglodytes hiemalis hiemalis*) [*]

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus satrapa*)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*)

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (*Catharus minimus*) – One of the most noteworthy bird of the trip was encountering a Gray-cheeked Thrush near La Manche Park. This species has really declined in Newfoundland in recent years.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH (*Catharus ustulatus*)

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*)

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*)

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*)

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*) – Displaying birds at Cape Spear and Cape St. Mary's.

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*)

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*)
BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*)
NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*)
MOURNING WARBLER (*Geothlypis philadelphia*) – Nicely seen south of Placentia.
COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*)
AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*)
NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*)
MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*)
BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (*Setophaga fusca*)
YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*)
CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (*Setophaga pennsylvanica*)
BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*)
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (*Setophaga coronata*)
BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*)
CANADA WARBLER (*Cardellina canadensis*) – A real highlight among the warblers, we had great studies on the Waternish Road.
WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*)

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)
NELSON'S SPARROW (ATLANTIC COAST) (*Ammodramus nelsoni subvirgatus*) – We did manage to connect with several of these when we headed down the coast ahead of the tropical storm.
FOX SPARROW (RED) (*Passerella iliaca iliaca*)
SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*)
LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*)
SWAMP SPARROW (*Melospiza georgiana*)
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)
DARK-EYED JUNCO (SLATE-COLORED) (*Junco hyemalis hyemalis*)

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*)

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

PINE GROSBEAK (*Pinicola enucleator*) – Not very evident this year, but we did connect with this species on the Benjie's Lake Trail.
PURPLE FINCH (*Haemorhous purpureus*) – A great feeder bird at Liscombe Lodge.
PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*)
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*)
EVENING GROSBEAK (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) – Terrific views of this species on the Waternish Road.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [H]

MAMMALS

SNOWSHOE HARE (*Lepus americanus*)
PLAIN EASTERN CHIPMUNK (*Tamias striatus*)
RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)
MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*)
WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHIN (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*) – Quite a few seen from the ferry crossing. This is a north Atlantic endemic.
ATLANTIC WHITE-SIDED DOLPHIN (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*)
COMMON MINKE WHALE (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)
FIN WHALE (*Balaenoptera physalus*) – Some seen from the cliffs at Cape St. Mary's. This is the second largest whale species.
HUMPBACK WHALE (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)
HARBOR SEAL (*Phoca vitulina*)
GRAY SEAL (*Halichoerus grypus*)
WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*)
MOOSE (*Alces alces*) – Joann spotted one in the trail ahead of us near Benjie's Lake.
CARIBOU (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) – We connected with a large group of these on the Irish Loop.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 110 bird taxa and 14 mammal taxa