

AUTUMN GRAND MANAN

AUGUST 30 - SEPTEMBER 5, 2010

**LEADERS:
BARRY ZIMMER AND BRENNAN MULROONEY**

COMPILED BY: BARRY ZIMMER

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Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.

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Leaders: Barry Zimmer & Brennan Mulrooney

“Skua!” came the cry from Durlan in the back of the boat. Everyone looked up to see the hulking dark brown bird with the prominent white wing patches sail overhead. The view was good as it passed over, but I expected it to be brief, as skua sightings almost always are. They seem to fly by and check out the boat and then just keep going. This time, however, the bird banked when it got to our wake, and circled down and lit on the water. Our captain maneuvered the boat right next to the skua, as it sat on the water with Greater Shearwaters and Great Black-backed Gulls. We floated to within 30 feet of this rarity (fewer than five documented records for New Brunswick) before it took off. What incredible luck!

The pelagic trip on this year’s Autumn Grand Manan tour was arguably our best boat trip ever! It was nothing short of nonstop excitement from start to finish. Within minutes of departing from Seal Cove we had an adult Razorbill with young on the water right next to the boat. Several groups of Black Guillemots dotted the surface as we headed for deeper water near Northeast Banks. Soon Greater Shearwaters began appearing in the wake. First one or two, then several, then dozens, and eventually nearly 300 were in view at once. For the day we estimated a total of 8,000 of these stunning shearwaters, many literally within 10 feet of the boat! Storm-Petrels soon joined the mix. First a few distant Wilson’s, and then an uncommonly seen Leach’s (a bird we had missed the past two years completely). Numbers of both increased as we went along, topping out at 700 Wilson’s and an astounding 129 Leach’s. Phalaropes were everywhere, with an estimated 3,000 Reds for the day and hundreds of Red-neckeds. Northern Gannets joined the crowd following our boat with regularity, as did Black-legged Kittiwakes. Though less common than usual this year, we had stunning views of several Atlantic Puffins. Four Manx Shearwaters, 100 Sooties, and 4 Pomarine Jaegers rounded out the avian highlights.

Then, of course, there were the whales. A couple of finbacks and a skulky minke started things off, and they were followed by several humpbacks. One in particular put on an amazing show with a prolonged period of pectoral fin flapping on the surface, culminating with a complete breach as we departed the area! Our chances for the rare northern right whale (rarest whale species in the world) dwindled as the day went along, though it was hard to be disappointed with the fantastic birds and other whales we had seen. A mola mola (ocean sunfish) was spotted floating lazily on the surface, and we had wonderful studies of this strange creature. At 4:30 PM it was time to start heading in, giving up our search for the right whales. At that very moment two were spotted on the starboard side of the boat and we were able to watch them for over 15 minutes at close range! This was the perfect ending to the perfect pelagic trip.

Of course our Autumn Grand Manan tour is about much more than just the full-day pelagic. We also scoured the picturesque island for migrant passerines, tallying 20 species of warblers (including such gems as Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, and Palm),

Philadelphia Vireo, Purple Finch, Bobolink, Baltimore Oriole, and many others. We had great views of the breeding Nelson's Sparrows at Castalia Marsh, where a very rare Yellow-headed Blackbird was viewed within 10 feet! Shorebirds also put on a great showing with 17 species tallied. White-rumped Sandpiper, Dunlin, Red Knot, Pectoral Sandpiper, a vagrant Western Sandpiper, and American Golden and Black-bellied plovers were among the more noteworthy. A very uncommon Boreal Chickadee our last day on the island proved to be the favorite bird of the tour. Other highlights included Great Cormorant, Common Eider, Red-necked Grebe, and White-winged Scoter.

All of this while enjoying the gorgeous coasts of New Brunswick and Maine, eating lobster and blueberries, and tallying our second highest list ever!

Itinerary:

August 30 - arrival in Bangor

August 31 - Orono Bog Boardwalk, drive to Grand Manan via Hwy 9 and Hwy 1 with ferry ride from Black's Harbor to Grand Manan (63 species)

September 1 - Castalia Marsh, all day boat trip off Grand Manan (Northeast Bank, Old Proprietor's Shoal, Bulkhead Rip, The Prong) (41 species; 85 total)

September 2 - The Whistle, Castalia Marsh, Dock Road, Dark harbor Road, The Anchorage, Long Pond, Castalia Marsh (75 species; 115 total)

September 3 - Whale Cove Road, Dock Road, Dark Harbor Road; ferry ride to Black's Harbor one day early to avoid Hurricane Earl, Moosehorn NWR, Hwy 9 (67 species; 128 total)

September 4 - morning off due to residual rain and wind from hurricane; afternoon to Orono Bog Boardwalk, Taylor Bait Farms, Chestnut Trail & Fox Hollow, Essex Woods (32 species; 131 total)

September 5 - departures for home (133 total species)

Key:

M = all areas in Maine

G = all areas on Grand Manan including boat trip, plus other parts of New Brunswick

bold-faced species indicate birds of rare, casual, or accidental occurrence

underlined species indicate birds of very uncommon occurrence or species that occur regularly but in such low numbers as to be easily missed

Birds:

Canada Goose M,G

Wood Duck M,G

American Wigeon G,M

American Black Duck G,M

Mallard M

Blue-winged Teal G

Green-winged Teal G

Ring-necked Duck G,M

Common Eider G---a few males in decent plumage

White-winged Scoter G---one male at The Anchorage

Hooded Merganser M---very distantly by some at Moosehorn

Red-breasted Merganser G---great views of mother with two young at Castalia

Ring-necked Pheasant G---first spotted by Lea

Common Loon G

Pied-billed Grebe G

Red-necked Grebe G---superb views at Castalia
 Northern Fulmar G---very early were two white morphs from the boat
 Greater Shearwater G---an estimated 8000 on our boat trip, some within six feet of us!!!
 Sooty Shearwater G---100+ in one day
Manx Shearwater G---four seen from the boat; always uncommon
 Wilson's Storm-Petrel G---about 700 on our boat trip; great views
Leach's Storm-Petrel G---our best year ever for this very difficult species with 129 seen on our boat trip; many great comparative views with Wilson's; often missed entirely
 Northern Gannet G---a total of 86 seen of varying ages and plumages; a good year for this species
 Double-crested Cormorant G
 Great Cormorant G---five seen, all from the ferry
 Great Blue Heron M,G
 Turkey Vulture M,G
 Osprey G
 Bald Eagle M,G
 Northern Harrier G---a couple of early migrants
 Sharp-shinned Hawk M
 Cooper's Hawk M---one at Orono our last day
 Broad-winged Hawk G---one distantly by some at North Head
 American Kestrel M
 Peregrine Falcon G---three on Grand Manan
 Black-bellied Plover G---a total of 51 birds, some still in breeding plumage
American Golden-Plover G---one in with Black-bellieds at Castalia; very uncommon
 Semipalmated Plover G---45 in one day
 Spotted Sandpiper G
 Solitary Sandpiper G---great study along The Whistle
 Greater Yellowlegs G
Red Knot G---four at Castalia; uncommon
 Sanderling G
 Semipalmated Sandpiper G---the most numerous peep with 200+ in one day; mostly juveniles
Western Sandpiper G---one adult bird found by Brennan at Castalia was a tour first
 Least Sandpiper G---nice views of fresh juveniles
White-rumped Sandpiper G---only one near grand Harbor; scope views
Pectoral Sandpiper G---three at Castalia Marsh; uncommon
Dunlin G---very close juvenile at Castalia; uncommon
 Short-billed Dowitcher G
 Red-necked Phalarope G---about 375 total
 Red Phalarope G---an estimated 3000 on our boat trip!
 Black-legged Kittiwake G
 Bonaparte's Gull G---more numerous than usual
Laughing Gull G---one spotted by Brennan from the ferry; very uncommon this far north
 Ring-billed Gull M,G
 Herring Gull M,G
Lesser Black-backed Gull G---one or two adults seen our boat trip; increasing here but still considered rare to very uncommon here
 Great Black-backed Gull M,G---by the hundreds
 Common Tern G---numerous from the ferry crossings

South Polar Skua G---incredible study of one on the water right next to our boat; only a handful of documented provincial records; another unidentified skua was also seen later on the same day; tied for second favorite bird of the tour!

Pomarine Jaeger G---six total with both light and dark morphs seen

Parasitic Jaeger G---one from the ferry and another possible on our boat trip

Common Murre G---a total of 14 from the ferry; uncommon

Razorbill G---a total of 13 seen; great views

Black Guillemot G

Atlantic Puffin G---a down year for this species with only 12 seen, but we had superb views of several; tied for second favorite bird of the tour

Rock Pigeon M,G

Mourning Dove M,G

Ruby-throated Hummingbird G

Belted Kingfisher G,M

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker M

Downy Woodpecker G

Hairy Woodpecker G---in the Marathon parking lot

Northern Flicker M,G---yellow-shafted variety

Eastern Wood-Pewee M---getting late for this species

Alder Flycatcher M---one seen briefly by some in Bangor the last afternoon

empidonax species G---probably a Least Flycatcher seen by David at the Marathon

Eastern Phoebe M

Eastern Kingbird G

Philadelphia Vireo G---great study of one near Whale Cove; tied for second favorite bird of the tour

Red-eyed Vireo G---fairly common with 14 seen

Blue Jay M,G

American Crow M,G

Common Raven M,G

Tree Swallow G---one late bird seen well out over water on our boat trip

Black-capped Chickadee M,G---our most common landbird

Boreal Chickadee G---we hadn't seen this species for about six years, but had great views near Dark Harbor; voted the favorite bird of the tour!

Red-breasted Nuthatch M,G---about 8 seen (below average)

White-breasted Nuthatch M---several around Orono

Brown Creeper M---a few along the Orono boardwalk

Golden-crowned Kinglet M,G

Eastern Bluebird M---three along Hwy 9 the first day and another half dozen on Chestnut Trail

Swainson's Thrush G---heard only by David

Hermit Thrush G

American Robin M,G

Gray Catbird M,G

European Starling M,G

Cedar Waxwing M,G---common

Tennessee Warbler M---one seen

Nashville Warbler G--- two seen, one still singing as if on territory

Northern Parula M,G---total of 18 for the trip

Yellow Warbler G--- six total

Chestnut-sided Warbler M,G---two seen

Magnolia Warbler G---12 total

Cape May Warbler G---one along the Whistle; uncommon at this time

Black-throated Blue Warbler M---male spotted by Bill at Orono; uncommon; tied for second favorite bird of the tour

Yellow-rumped Warbler M---Myrtle; six seen

Black-throated Green Warbler M,G--- the most common warbler this year with an estimated total of

27

Blackburnian Warbler G---one along the Whistle

Pine Warbler M---one at the Boardwalk was a surprise

Palm Warbler M---two at Orono Bog; uncommon; the yellow eastern race

Blackpoll Warbler G---only one

Black-and-white Warbler M,G--- six total

American Redstart M,G---final count of seven

Ovenbird M,G---one seen by a few at Orono and another heard on Grand Manan

Northern Waterthrush G---getting late for this species

Common Yellowthroat M,G---our second most common warbler with 21 seen

Wilson's Warbler M,G---three total

Savannah Sparrow G

Nelson's Sparrow G--- superb views; the duller race *subvirgatus*; tied for second favorite bird of the tour

Song Sparrow M,G

Swamp Sparrow G

White-throated Sparrow G

Dark-eyed Junco G---Slate-colored

Bobolink M---nice views of four at Chestnut Trail; uncommon

Red-winged Blackbird G

Yellow-headed Blackbird G---a stakeout vagrant at Castalia allowed ridiculously close views; a trip first

Brown-headed Cowbird G---uncommon; only one immature bird seen

Baltimore Oriole G---five total

Purple Finch G---seven total

American Goldfinch M,G---scarcer than usual

House Sparrow M---always tough on this trip, but some were spotted at our Bangor hotel

Total species - **133 (our second highest total ever)**

Leader only birds:

Indigo Bunting

Mammals: total species - 12

Harbor Seal

Gray Seal---lengthy studies of these strange creatures

Harbor Porpoise---very common

Northern Right Whale---two seen at the last minute on our boat trip---great views for about fifteen minutes of the rarest whale in the world!

Finback Whale---from the ferry

Humpback Whale---several on our boat trip including one constantly flapping its huge pectoral fins against the water and another completely breaching!

Minke Whale---one briefly on our boat trip
Red Squirrel
Eastern Gray Squirrel
Eastern Chipmunk
bat species
Muskrat

Butterflies: total species - 10

Cabbage White (plus other unidentified whites)
Great Spangled Fritillary
sulphur species (most were probably Clouded)
Mourning Cloak
Common Ringlet
Monarch
White Admiral
Northern Crescent
American Copper---leader only
Red Admiral

Reptiles & Amphibians:

Painted Turtle
frog species---by Brennan only

Significant others:

Mola mola (Ocean Sunfish)---up close and personal
Common Whitetail---dragonfly at Essex Woods
darnier species---another dragonfly seen several times at various locales
lobster in various forms
blueberries in various forms
miniature golf at Durlan's---(Durlan = 48, Peter=46 Barry = 52, Brennan 52, Lea 64)---Brennan wins
play-off by one stroke
dulse tasting---yuk!
Stephen King's house
pitcher plants
the Moosehorn ditch incident
Hurricane Earl