

AUTUMN GRAND MANAN

**AUGUST 27 –
SEPTEMBER 2, 2007**

LEADER: BARRY ZIMMER

COMPILED BY: BARRY ZIMMER

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC.
2525 WALLINGWOOD DRIVE, SUITE 1003
AUSTIN, TX 78746
WWW.VENTBIRD.COM**

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.

Autumn Grand Manan

August 27 - September 2, 2007

Leader: Barry Zimmer

Pelagic trips out of Grand Manan are consistently the best I do anywhere in the world, and this year was no exception. On our full-day boat trip on the recent Autumn Grand Manan tour we enjoyed beautiful blue skies and nearly dead calm seas. Those factors alone make for a great pelagic trip, but when you throw in incredible bird and whale spectacles, it is impossible to beat.

The nutrient-rich waters of the Bay of Fundy attract an amazing diversity of seabirds and marine mammals. From the moment we pulled out of the harbor we had small rafts of Razorbills right next to the boat, with a sprinkling of Common Murres thrown in. Black Guillemots were numerous in the nearshore waters and several small flocks of Common Eiders cruised by. In less than an hour we had reached deeper water near Gannet Rock and the real fun began. Greater Shearwaters appeared first, followed quickly by Sooty Shearwaters. Initially there were just a few of each, then dozens, and eventually hundreds. For the day I estimated 4,000+ Greater Shearwaters and 1,000+ Sooties.

With the arrival of the shearwaters came our first whale sightings. A minke cruised by in typical stealthy style and then we had nice views of a huge finback. Atlantic Puffins were spotted, at first zipping past like bumblebees, and then providing excellent views of many on the water right next to us (over 200 were estimated for the day). Flock after flock of phalarope swirled about the boat; most groups were mixed, with Red and Red-necked offering superb comparative views. Cumulative phalarope numbers for the day were around 1,500. Northern Gannets periodically cruised in to check out our chum slick, as did the occasional jaeger (both Pomarine and Parasitic were tallied) and Arctic Tern. Wilson's Storm-Petrels arrived in large numbers, buzzing around the ocean like so many swallows. We searched diligently through the hundreds of Wilson's in hopes of spotting the uncommon Leach's. Eventually our efforts were rewarded as one paralleled the port side for a minute or so, allowing us to study its unique flight pattern.

As we headed toward the Basin, an area renowned for its population of northern right whales, we spotted a Manx Shearwater on the water within 30 yards. We would end up with 17 Manx for the day, a great total for this generally uncommon species. Almost as soon as we started up again, a cluster of four right whales (the rarest species of whale in the world) were sighted just ahead, some eight miles short of the area in which we normally find them. These four magnificent animals were engaged in a courtship display on the surface of the water with constant splashing, rolling, spy-hopping, and bumping as the males competed for the attention of the female. We marveled at these wonderful giants for over a half-hour before moving on.

Our final destination, The Prong, yielded a tour first—Northern Fulmar—and a group of humpback whales in a large seaweed patch. As with the right whales, the humpbacks put on an amazing display with pectoral fin-flapping and constant spy-hopping, as if they were as interested in us as we were in them. On our way back in we had good views of Great Cormorants

near the Gannet Rock Lighthouse and many gray and harbor seals. More Razorbills (an estimated 400 for the day, shattering our previous best) signaled our arrival back into shallower waters. In all we tallied 14 species of pelagics (with many thousands of individuals) and seven species of marine mammals.

Of course, this boat trip was but one day of an all-around fantastic tour. Grand Manan is an ideal place for seeing the fall migration of both landbirds and shorebirds as well. While scouring the forests of the island we saw 16 species of warblers (including the likes of Canada, Prairie, Chestnut-sided, and Blackpoll), a very impressive 11 Philadelphia Vireos, and a variety of flycatchers, thrushes, etc. Other highlights included a rare Lark Sparrow, stunning views of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and 14 species of shorebirds including White-rumped Sandpiper. We had wonderful weather, enjoyed lobster and blueberries, and reveled in the spectacle of fall migration.

Summary: This was a very successful trip, combining excellent luck with seabirds, migrant passerines, weather, and whales! Land-bird migrants (always unpredictable) were in abundance with sixteen species of warblers tallied, including a very unusual Prairie Warbler, as well as the uncommon Cape May. Philadelphia Vireos were present in record numbers with an unprecedented eleven individuals seen. Seabirds (always the highlight of this tour) also put on a great showing with numbers of Wilson's Storm-Petrels (an estimated 1000+), a good view of one Leach's Storm-Petrel, one of our best years ever for Manx Shearwater (a total of 17 seen), the best year ever for alcid numbers (especially for Razorbill with an astounding 400+ in one day), and hundreds of Red-necked & Red Phalarope (species sometimes missed entirely) in addition to the abundant Greater Shearwaters. Rarities included a Northern Fulmar, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, a Prairie Warbler, and a Lark Sparrow. We had a great trip for whales as well--- with 4 Northern Rights (the rarest whale in the world) right next to our boat in a wild courtship display for over half an hour. We also had an amazing Humpback show with several spy-hopping and pectoral fin-flapping in a large seaweed patch at close range. In addition we had several Finbacks and Minkes. Finally we had generally superb weather throughout the trip.

Itinerary:

August 27- arrival in Bangor

August 28 - Howard Johnson's parking lot (!), Frazer Point on Schoodic Peninsula, drive to Grand Manan with ferry ride from Black's Harbor to Grand Manan; the Whistle Road (55 species)

August 29 - all day pelagic trip out of Seal Cove to Old Proprietor's Shoal, the Prong, Gannet Rock, and Bulkhead Rip (38 species; 67 total)

August 30 - morning boat trip to Bulkhead Rip and Old Proprietor's Shoal; Castalia Marsh, Ducks Unlimited Pond, Dark Harbor Road (52 species; 83 total)

August 31 - The Whistle, Whale Cove, Grand Harbor, Dock Road & Dark Harbor Road, Castalia Marsh, The Anchorage (74 species; 112 total)

September 1 - Hole-in-the-wall Park, The Whistle, ferry ride to Black's Harbor, return to Bangor via Hwy 9 with brief stops at Moosehorn NWR and Orono Bog Boardwalk (60 species; 119 total)

September 2 - departures for home (119 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 G

American Wigeon G

American Black Duck M,G

Mallard M

Green-winged Teal M

Ring-necked Duck G

Common Eider M,G---especially close at Schoodic

Common Merganser M---small flock near Machias; uncommon

Red-breasted Merganser G

Ring-necked Pheasant G

Common Loon G---some still in nice breeding plumage

Red-necked Grebe G---very distant view of this uncommon species off the Anchorage

Northern Fulmar G---a tour first; rare at this season

Greater Shearwater G---total of around 4000 seen including many within 10 feet of the boat!

Sooty Shearwater G--1000+---more numerous than usual

Manx Shearwater G---one of the best years ever for this species with 17 seen including a couple of close birds on the water

Wilson's Storm-Petrel G---sometimes missed entirely but we had an impressive 1000+

Leach's Storm-Petrel G---one seen well on our all day boat trip; always tough

Northern Gannet G---a total of 36 seen

Double-crested Cormorant M,G

Great Cormorant G

Turkey Vulture M,G---three total

Osprey M,G

Bald Eagle M,G

Sharp-shinned Hawk G---only two seen the whole trip

American Kestrel M

Merlin M,G---four total

Peregrine Falcon G---one briefly from our boat

Black-bellied Plover G---flock of 51 near North Head; uncommon

Semipalmated Plover G

Killdeer M---our first morning outside of Bangor

Greater Yellowlegs M

Lesser Yellowlegs M,G

Solitary Sandpiper G---great studies; our first thanks to Mary

Spotted Sandpiper G---distant

Semipalmated Sandpiper G---500+ in one flock

Least Sandpiper G---nice views of fresh juveniles

White-rumped Sandpiper G---good views of three in Grand Harbor

Short-billed Dowitcher G---one in with Black-bellied Plovers

Red-necked Phalarope G---about **750** seen from the boat; sometimes missed entirely
Red Phalarope G---about **1000** seen from the boat; easily missed; excellent comparative views with Red-neckeds
 Pomarine Jaeger G---two on our first boat trip
 Parasitic Jaeger G---two on our second boat trip
 Laughing Gull M--- at their northern limit
 Bonaparte's Gull G
 Ring-billed Gull M,G
 Herring Gull M,G
 Great Black-backed Gull M,G---by the hundreds
 Black-legged Kittiwake G
 Common Tern M,G
Arctic Tern G---nice studies of about six juveniles from the boat; easily missed
Common Murre G---fifteen or so total (including very close views of two) from our boat trips
 Razorbill G---an excellent year for this species also with about 450 seen; some years we have struggled to see a couple!
 Black Guillemot M,G---almost daily
 Atlantic Puffin G---over 200 seen on our all day boat trip; many great views; voted the favorite bird of the tour
 Rock Pigeon M,G
 Mourning Dove M,G
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird G
 Belted Kingfisher G---at the ferry landing
 Downy Woodpecker G
 Hairy Woodpecker G
 Northern Flicker G---heard only
 Eastern Wood-Pewee G---seen only by a few
Olive-sided Flycatcher G---uncommon & late
 Alder Flycatcher M,G
 Least Flycatcher G---the most numerous empid
 Eastern Kingbird M---at HoJo's the first morning (almost our first bird)
 Blue-headed Vireo G---three seen
Philadelphia Vireo eleven seen (by far the most of any year); generally uncommon
 Red-eyed Vireo G---common with an estimated 22 seen
 Blue Jay M,G
 American Crow M,G
 Common Raven M,G
 Black-capped Chickadee M,G---our most common landbird
 Red-breasted Nuthatch M,G---about 20 seen
 Golden-crowned Kinglet M,G---nice views
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet G
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher G---within five feet along the Whistle; rare here
 Hermit Thrush G---heard only
"Gray-cheeked" Thrush G---a member of the Gray-cheeked/ Bicknell's complex was seen briefly in one flock by some; rare
 American Robin G,M
 Gray Catbird G
Northern Mockingbird M---pair at HoJo's were our first birds of the trip; very uncommon this far north

European Starling M,G
 Cedar Waxwing M,G---common
 Tennessee Warbler G---two seen
 Nashville Warbler G---nine seen
 Northern Parula M,G---total of eleven
 Yellow Warbler M,G---seven seen
 Chestnut-sided Warbler G---a total of three seen
 Magnolia Warbler G---ten total
Cape May Warbler G---three total; very uncommon
 Yellow-rumped Warbler M,G---Myrtle; about nine total
 Black-throated Green Warbler M,G---by far the most common warbler this year with an estimated total of 85
Prairie Warbler G---a nice rarity along The Whistle
 Blackpoll Warbler G---just two
 Black-and-white Warbler M,G---six total, but several really nice views
 American Redstart M,G---final count of 8
 Common Yellowthroat M,G---our second most common warbler with 39 seen
 Wilson's Warbler G---about five
Canada Warbler M---nice view along the Whistle; uncommon
 Chipping Sparrow G
Lark Sparrow G---one seen well along the Whistle was a real rarity; tied for third favorite bird of the tour!
 Savannah Sparrow G---much scarcer than normal
 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow G---superb views with almost no effort of the dull race *subvirgatus*
 Song Sparrow M,G
 Lincoln's Sparrow G
 Swamp Sparrow G---nice studies
 White-throated Sparrow G
 Dark-eyed Junco G---Slate-colored
 Common Grackle G---flock at Ossie's our last day
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak G---one near Whale Cove
 Indigo Bunting M---one by some at Frazer Point
 Brown-headed Cowbird M,G---uncommon
 Purple Finch M,G---more numerous than usual this year with about 20 seen
 Pine Siskin G---one only
 American Goldfinch M,G
 House Sparrow M---always tough on this trip, but we had several in the McDonald's parking lot our last afternoon

Total species - 119

Mammals: Total species - 11

Harbor Seal

Gray Seal

Harbor Porpoise

Northern Right Whale---four right next to the boat for over a half hour in courtship display!

Humpback whale---four spyhopping and pectoral fin-flapping in a patch of seaweed very close; an amazing overall count of nearly 25 individuals

Finback Whale---nice views

Minke Whale---a few

Red Squirrel

Gray Squirrel

Eastern Chipmunk

bat species---at the golf course and the Bangor hotel

Reptiles & Amphibians: total species - 2

Smooth Green Snake---great views

toad species

Butterflies: total species - 7

Monarch

Cabbage White

Great Spangled Fritillary

Common Wood-Nymph---scope study

Clouded Sulphur

American Copper

Red Admiral

Significant others:

lobster in various forms

blueberries in various forms

miniature golf at Durlan's---(Durlan= 42; Peter=44; Barry=58; Don=58; the mysterious "Mrs. X"=70)

lunar eclipse for some

dulse tasting---yuk!

caesar salad for dessert

Stephen King's house

pitcher plants