

AUTUMN GRAND MANAN

**AUGUST 28 – SEPTEMBER 3,
2006**

**LEADERS:
BARRY ZIMMER & BRENNAN MULROONEY**

**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 28 – September 3, 2006

Leaders: Barry Zimmer and Brennan Mulrooney

Our 2006 Autumn Grand Manan tour was, as this tour always seems to be, a stunning success. With its unique combination of superb sea birding, diverse landbird and shorebird migration, unsurpassed marine mammal viewing, and generally wonderful fall weather, this trip is hard to top. Our tour featured two boat trips into the Bay of Fundy where upwellings of nutrients attract hordes of seabirds and whales. A parade of pelagic species was almost always in view around our charter boat. Handsome Greater Shearwaters cruised low over the water by the dozens, and at times by the hundreds, frequently landing within a few feet of the stern. Less common but still numerous were Sooty Shearwaters and the highly sought, but often difficult Manx Shearwater. This was our best tour ever for Manx with nearly 40 individuals seen, some quite close on the water.

Along with the constant parade of shearwaters were an astonishing number of storm-petrels. At one time over 3,500 Wilson's Storm-Petrels were in view around the boat and by day's end we conservatively estimated 20,000 individuals! They skittered about the ocean's surface like so many ants all day long. Amongst the abundant Wilson's were two brief sightings of Leach's Storm-Petrels, another highly sought and uncommon species. Atlantic Puffins were to be had in numbers greater than on any previous fall trip here with over 400 seen during our tour. Other alcids were also more numerous than usual with 40 or so Razorbills, 30 Common Murres, and Black Guillemots by the dozens. Still more pelagic species were to be had with about a dozen each of Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers, a few hundred each of Red and Red-necked phalaropes (often in direct comparison), a couple dozen Northern Gannets, and an Arctic Tern.

All these wonderful bird highlights on our boat trips, and yet none topped the magical experience we had with the northern right whales. Totaling fewer than 350 individuals in the world, this species is the rarest of the whales. We spent about an hour-and-a-half amongst 15 or so of these gentle giants as they spy-hopped, splashed, rolled, and generally seemed to have a good time on the surface of the dead-calm water right next to our boat. It was hard to tear ourselves away. We also had very nice views of finback and minke whales, numerous harbor porpoises, and gray seal.

As wonderful as our boat trips were, they were not the only highlights of our tour. Landbird-migration is in full swing in late August and early September, with every thicket seeming to harbor a variety of warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. We enjoyed flock after flock in the forests on the island, each flock different from the last. Most flocks were led by small groups of Black-capped Chickadees and a Red-breasted Nuthatch or two. Each had its share of warblers, often six or eight species in one flock. By tour's end we had tallied an impressive 20 species of warblers with such gems as Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, Mourning, Chestnut-sided, Canada, and a rare Prairie. The most common species which seemed to be in every flock were Magnolia, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green, and Common Yellowthroat. Other migrant passerine highlights included two Philadelphia Vireos, about a half-dozen Blue-headed Vireos and countless Red-

eyeds, Yellow-bellied and Alder flycatchers, and Scarlet Tanager. For the first time in several years White-winged Crossbills were invading the region, providing us with excellent views. At Castalia Marsh we had unbeatable studies of a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow as it scurried along the shoreline. A Harlequin Duck along a rocky shore provided a tour first. Other noteworthy species included Great Cormorant, Common Eider, and White-rumped Sandpiper.

We stayed in only two hotels during the week (including four consecutive nights on Grand Manan), enjoyed lobster and blueberry pie on numerous occasions, and soaked up a week's worth of gorgeous weather. All this combined with fantastic seabirds, landbirds, and marine mammals. It was a truly memorable and exciting week!

ITINERARY:

- August 28- arrival in Bangor
- August 29 - Frazer Point on Schoodic Peninsula, drive to Grand Manan with ferry ride from Black's Harbor to Grand Manan (61 species)
- August 30 - all day pelagic trip out of Seal Cove to Murre Ledges, the Prong, the Basin, and Bulkhead Rip; afternoon walk around Marathon Inn (53 species; 76 total)
- August 31 - morning boat trip to Bulkhead Rip and Old Proprietor's Shoal; afternoon to Castalia Marsh, The Anchorage, Southwest Head (63 species; 93 total)
- September 1 - The Whistle, Castalia Marsh, Grand Harbor, Dock Road, Dark Harbor Road (64 species; 112 total)
- September 2 - 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 (80 species; 129 total)
- September 3 - departures for home (129 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

American Wigeon G---only one seen

American Black Duck M,G

Mallard M,G

Blue-winged Teal M

Green-winged Teal M

Ring-necked Duck G,M

Harlequin Duck G---a tour first!

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

White-winged Scoter G---a few from the Anchorage

Common Merganser M---small flock on the St. Croix River at the border crossing

Red-breasted Merganser G---oddly only one was seen

Ring-necked Pheasant G

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

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

Greater Shearwater G---total of around 1800 seen including many within 15 feet of the boat!

Sooty Shearwater G--400+

Manx Shearwater G---the best year ever for this species with 37 seen including a couple of close birds on the water

Wilson's Storm-Petrel G---sometimes missed entirely but we had a very impressive 20,000+

Leach's Storm-Petrel G---two seen on our all day boat trip but both were somewhat distant; always tough

Northern Gannet G---a total of 22 seen

Double-crested Cormorant M,G

Great Cormorant G---more numerous than usual this year with about 20 seen

Great Blue Heron M,G

Turkey Vulture M,G---four total

Osprey M,G

Bald Eagle M,G

Northern Harrier G---from our boat!

Sharp-shinned Hawk M---only one seen the whole trip

Broad-winged Hawk G---great studies of birds perched on wires, our first thanks to Eleanor

Merlin M,G---six total

Peregrine Falcon G---two immatures fighting over a shorebird kill in Grand Harbor

Semipalmated Plover M,G---almost daily

Killdeer M---our first morning outside of Bangor

Greater Yellowlegs M,G

Lesser Yellowlegs M,G

Solitary Sandpiper G---great study

Spotted Sandpiper G

Whimbrel G---uncommon

Sanderling G

Semipalmated Sandpiper G,M

Least Sandpiper G
White-rumped Sandpiper G---good views of one at Castalia
Red-necked Phalarope G---about **450** seen from the boat; sometimes missed entirely
Red Phalarope G---about **450** seen from the boat; easily missed; excellent comparative views with Red-neckeds
 Pomarine Jaeger G---a total of ten seen
 Parasitic Jaeger G---a total of eleven, including a couple dark morphs
 Laughing Gull M,G--- at their northern limit
 Bonaparte's Gull M,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 G---a few from the ferry
Arctic Tern G---only one immature seen for certain, though there were other unidentified sternas; easily missed
Common Murre G---the best year ever with thirty or so from the ferry and a handful (including very close views of two) from our boat trips
 Razorbill G---an excellent year for this species also with about 40 seen
 Black Guillemot M,G---almost daily
 Atlantic Puffin G---again the best year ever with hundreds total seen (both on our boat trips and on the ferry)
 Rock Pigeon M,G
 Mourning Dove M,G
 Common Nighthawk M,G---somewhat late
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird G---about a dozen or so seen including some on the boat
 Belted Kingfisher M,G
 Downy Woodpecker G
 Hairy Woodpecker G---heard only
 Northern Flicker G---the "Yellow-shafted" variety
 Eastern Wood-Pewee G---getting late
Olive-sided Flycatcher G---the "all-excited" flycatcher
 Yellow-bellied Flycatcher G---uncommon
 Alder Flycatcher G
 Least Flycatcher G---the most numerous empid
 Blue-headed Vireo G---six seen
Philadelphia Vireo two seen; always uncommon
 Red-eyed Vireo G---abundant with an estimated 65 seen
 Blue Jay M,G
 American Crow M,G
 Common Raven M,G
 Barn Swallow G---two late birds at Black's Harbor
 Black-capped Chickadee M,G---our most common landbird
 Red-breasted Nuthatch G---about 25 seen
White-breasted Nuthatch M---three at Orono; uncommon
 Golden-crowned Kinglet M,G---nice views
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet G---one briefly at the dump
 Eastern Bluebird M---family group along Hwy 1
 Hermit Thrush G---including a few recently fledged juvenile
 American Robin G,M
 Gray Catbird M,G
 European Starling M,G
 Cedar Waxwing M,G---common
 Nashville Warbler G---five seen

Northern Parula M,G---an impressive 39 seen; one of our most common warblers this year
 Yellow Warbler M,G---more numerous than usual with 11 seen
 Chestnut-sided warbler G---a total of four seen
 Magnolia Warbler G---one of the more common migrant warblers with 28 seen
Cape May Warbler G---one spotted by Brennan near Long Eddy Light
 Yellow-rumped Warbler G---Myrtle; only one seen
 Black-throated Green Warbler M,G---about 21 total
Blackburnian Warbler G---one near Dark Harbor put on a nice show
Prairie Warbler G---a nice rarity along The Whistle; the “itty,bitty Pwairie”
Palm Warbler M---one at Orono Bog of the eastern yellow race
 Bay-breasted Warbler G---one only; uncommon
 Blackpoll Warbler G---an impressive 17 seen
 Black-and-white Warbler G---19 seen
 American Redstart M,G---final count of 14
 Ovenbird G---one at Hole-in-the-wall the last morning
 Common Yellowthroat M,G---about 49 seen
 Mourning Warbler G---one at the old dump; uncommon
 Wilson’s Warbler M---by a few only at Frazer Point
Canada Warbler M---nice view at Orono; uncommon
 Scarlet Tanager G---uncommon
 Chipping Sparrow G
 Savannah Sparrow G
 Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow G--- nice views of the dull race *subvirgatus*
 Song Sparrow M
 Lincoln’s Sparrow G---good views
 Swamp Sparrow G---not seen by all
 White-throated Sparrow M,G
 Dark-eyed Junco G---Slate-colored
 Red-winged Blackbird G---one female at the ferry landing in North Head
 Common Grackle G
 Brown-headed Cowbird G---uncommon; one at the ferry landing
 Purple Finch M,G---one each at Frazer Point and along Dock Road
White-winged Crossbill M,G---great views at Frazer Point and another flock along the Whistle; first time in
 about six years for this tour
 Pine Siskin M---two
 American Goldfinch G
 House Sparrow M---always tough on this trip, but we had a pair across from Ho Jo’s the first morning

total species - 129

Mammals: total species - 11

Harbor Seal
 Gray Seal
 Harbor Porpoise
 Northern Right Whale---an estimated 15 seen from the boat including many wonderful displays (playing on
 surface, spy hopping, etc.)
 Finback Whale---great views
 Minke Whale---a few seen very well
 Red Squirrel
 Gray Squirrel---nearly hit by Victor
 Eastern Chipmunk---at Orono the last afternoon
 White-tailed Deer
 bat species

Reptiles & Amphibians: total species – 2

Smooth Green Snake---dead on the road
Wood Frog

Butterflies: total species – 9

Monarch
Mourning Cloak
Cabbage White
Great Spangled Fritillary
Common Wood-Nymph
Orange Sulphur
sulphur species
White Admiral
Common Ringlet

Significant others:

lobster in various forms
blueberries in various forms
miniature golf at Durlan's
 Pam = 46 (the all-time VENT champion)
 Peter = 48
 Barry = 48
 Brennan = 49
 Durlan = 51
 Mary-B = 70
Jupiter and its moons
half moon in the Questar
dulse tasting---yuk!
Stephen King's house
pitcher plants

Summary: This was a very successful trip, combining excellent luck with seabirds, migrant passerines, weather, and whales! Landbird migrants (always unpredictable) were in abundance with an impressive 20 species of warblers tallied, including a very unusual Prairie Warbler, and uncommon species such as Cape May, Mourning, Palm, and Bay-breasted. Seabirds also put on a great showing with huge numbers of Wilson's Storm-Petrels (an estimated 20,000+), our best showing ever for Manx Shearwater (a total of 37 seen), the best year ever for alcid numbers, and hundreds of Red-necked & Red Phalarope (species sometimes missed entirely) in addition to the abundant Greater Shearwaters. We had a great trip for whales as well---with 15+ Northern Rights the rarest whale in the world)---many being right next to the boat, and a few Finbacks and Minkes. Finally we had what was arguably the best weather ever for this trip with beautiful mild sunny days every day on the island.