

Maine Summer Birding, and a New Hampshire Foray!

June 16-22, 2024

Come join GCBO, and our Executive Director Martin Hagne, for a breathtaking and scenic trip to look for some of Maine's (and a few in New Hampshire!) special birds! We have partnered with local Maine bird guide and guru Derek Lovitch with Freeport Wild Bird Supply to guide us to find all our targets! We will have five full days of birding (and two days travel).

Tour Description:

From the enigmatic Bicknell's Thrush on mountain peaks to crowds of comical Atlantic Puffins on offshore islands, Northern New England hosts an incredible array of breeding birds – some of which are nearly impossible to see elsewhere, especially within just a few days! We'll begin in the coastal saltmarshes where we'll see cryptic Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sparrows (not to mention hybrids thereof) and endangered Roseate Terns nearby. Bicknell's Thrushes and Blackpoll Warbler haunt the stunted forests on mountaintops, and we'll have a chance to look for other boreal breeders, such as Boreal Chickadee, Canada Jay, Black-backed Woodpecker, and a wide range of warblers. There could be crossbills around too, and we'll spend time in unique habitats in the lowlands as well, seeking such species as Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper Sparrow, Alder and Willow Flycatchers, Black Terns, and much more.

And that's all before we head offshore! We'll take two boat rides to the world-famous Eastern Egg Rock, home of the Puffin Project. Here, the groundbreaking research of how to restore seabird colonies has resulted in an island teaming with Atlantic Puffins, Arctic, Common, and Roseate Terns, and a few Razorbills. We'll then turn offshore where we have a chance to see early-arriving "wintering" pelagics such as Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Great and Sooty Shearwaters, and perhaps something even rarer. Minke, Fin, and Humpback Whales are also possible.

This unique tour offers the rare opportunity to enjoy alpine and pelagic birding, and everything in between, during the course of a week. Derek Lovitch, our main tour leader, has lived in Maine for 20 years, and guides throughout the state and beyond. He is also the author of "Birdwatching in Maine: A Site Guide," which exemplifies his intimate knowledge of where and when to find the best birding opportunities in the state. Our itinerary is designed to efficiently sample the diversity of breeding birds that Maine and New Hampshire have to offer, including birds at the northern reaches of their breeding ranges and those at the southern extent of their occurrence.

And... we will eat some delicious food at local restaurants to flavor New England's famous fare.

Itinerary:

Day 1- Sunday, June 16

Arrive Portland, ME. Welcome meeting and group dinner.

Stay Portland/South Portland, ME (with hotel shuttle service from airport)

Day 2:

Scarborough Marsh, ME (Roseate Tern, Saltmarsh Sparrows, Nelson's Sparrow, Least Tern, Piping Plover, Willet (Eastern ssp), wading birds, late migrant, shorebirds, etc).

Depending on tides, we may walk up to a mile each way on a hard, flat surface, but most of the birding will be short walks to various viewing points focusing on the saltmarsh and beaches.

Mosquitos are likely. The afternoon itinerary will be dictated by tides, what birds we had not yet seen, and what birds people are interested in seeing. The marsh is 15-20 minutes from our hotel, and we'll likely get an early start, especially if heat or wind is forecast.

Night in Portland/South Portland, ME

Day 3:

Kennebunk Plains, ME (Grasshopper Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, Eastern Meadowlark Prairie Warbler, etc.)

Brownfield Bog (Willow Flycatchers, Alder Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Black-billed Cuckoo)

After an early start, we'll drive about 45 minutes to the blueberry barrens of the Kennebunk Plains to focus on state-rare and endangered grassland specialties. We'll take one or two walks of moderate length with the actual length and time spent out birding depending on conditions and the ease of finding the target species (especially Grasshopper Sparrow and Upland Sandpiper). We'll then drive 1:15 hours to the Brownfield Bog where we'll take another moderate-length but easy walk (pending water levels) for the next range of target species. Mosquitoes can be overwhelming. We'll work our way to New Hampshire with several short stops depending on conditions, interests, and stamina. 1:50 hours drive time direct from Brownfield to Errol.

Night in Errol, NH

Day 4:

AM: Bicknell's Thrush (plus Blackpoll Warbler, Boreal Chickadee, Philadelphia Vireo, Mourning Warbler, etc)

PM: Try for boreal species at Umbagog NWR (Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, Canada Jay, more warblers, etc)

We'll get up very early and make a bee line for the treeline and the realm of Bicknell's Thrush. We'll then slowly work our way downhill, making several stops along the way down. Walking will be minimal. We'll then spend some time looking for other boreal specialties, with an early end to the day because of our early start. Expect plenty of biting insects!

Night in Errol, NH

Day 5:

AM: Second chance at Bicknell's Thrush if necessary. Otherwise, try for some boreals on drive east. Messalonskee Lake (Black Tern, Purple Martin, Sandhill Crane, Willow Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher). 3hr+ drive.

PM: Evening boat cruise to Eastern Egg Rock from New Harbor, ME (Roseate Tern, Artic Tern, Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill)

We'll be flexible today, perhaps starting with a second chance at the Bicknell's Thrush if we were unsuccessful the previous day. Hopefully, however, we'll immediately begin our trek east, as it's a 3 hour drive to New Harbor, ME. One sure-fire stop is at the extensive freshwater marsh complex of Messalonskee Lake for breeding Black Terns, another chance at both Willow and Alder Flycatchers, and much more. Walking will be minimal. We'll then board an evening cruise of about 1.5-2 hours in sheltered waters to the seabird colony of Eastern Egg Rock. 45 minute drive back to our hotel.

Night in Bath, ME

Day 6:

Puffin/whale/pelagic boat watch combo from Boothbay Harbor, ME pending boat schedule for 2024 (second chance for Roseate Tern, Artic Tern, Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill... go to Eastern Egg Rock again, or just go for whales and pelagics). Times and additional birding TBD.

Today's itinerary will be based on the 2024 schedule for boats out of Boothbay Harbor harbor (35 minute drive from Bath), but we'll bird before and after the boat at a relaxed pace, with a few short walks for some casual birding. We may have the chance to return to Eastern Egg Rock for another visit before the boat turns offshore, where we'll look for whales and early-returning "wintering" seabirds such as Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Great and Sooty Shearwater, late migrants such as Red-necked Phalarope and Northern Fulmar, and more. Minke, Fin, and Humpback Whales are all possible, and Harbor and Gray Seals, along with Harbor Porpoise, are likely. If the boat is cancelled due to sea or weather conditions, we'll slowly bird our way back to Portland (1:15 hours direct) Night in Portland/South Portland, ME

Day 7: Breakfast at hotel on your own, and hotel shuttle to airport, and flights home.

Trip Logistics and Info:

Trip Fee:

Single - \$2,725.00

Double - \$2,525.00

Max Participants: 12

Travel: two 12 passenger vans

Arriving and Departing Airport: Portland, Maine

Included in Fee:

- Local bird guide
- Hotel room
- Hotel breakfast
- Vans & fuel during trip
- Drivers for vans
- Boat trips (2)
- Entry fees & parking fees to parks
- Water in vans
- Some snacks in vans
- Insect spray

Does Not Include:

- Flights to and from destination
- Meals (other than hotel breakfast)
- Tips for guide, boat hands, meals
- Drinks & snacks (other than listed above)
- Alcohols drinks
- Personal items

Our Maine Guide:

Derek Lovitch, of Freeport Wild Bird Supply, guides extensively in Maine, and has led tours throughout North America from Alaska's Pribilof Islands to New Jersey. He also worked as a Senior Leader for WINGS Birding, Inc. for over a decade. Derek has lived in Maine for 20 years, and guides throughout the state and beyond. He is also the author of "Birdwatching in Maine: A Site Guide," which exemplifies his intimate knowledge of where and when to find the best birding opportunities in the state.



