

ITINERARY

Maine in Fall: Seabirds & Coastal Migrants

September 6-15, 2026



Razorbills breed in small numbers in Maine, and more move in as migrants during the non-breeding season. We'll see them on the coast and on our pelagic trip. Photograph by guide Sam Wilson.

We include here information for those interested in the 2026 Field Guides Maine in Fall: Seabirds & Coastal Migrants tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for, and keeping track of, the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, an annotated list of birds seen on the tour

This exciting tour hits one of the most scenic states on the Atlantic Coast near the height of fall migration for many shorebird, songbird and seabird species. We will seek a rich diversity of birds along the coast with emphasis on the regional specialties—from beak to claw (lobsters and fantastic seafood, anyone?). The majority of the tour will be based out of just two locations to minimize hotel transfers.

As the Sanderling flies, there are just over 200 miles between the coast of New Brunswick and the coast of New Hampshire. However, the circuitous undulations of Maine's shoreline stretch out to over 3,500 miles! Rocky peninsulas, islands, rivers, and creeks draw a host of coastal migrants: sandpipers, plovers, dowitchers, yellowlegs, herons and more. The rich waters of the Gulf of Maine attract many pelagic seabirds such as alcids, phalaropes, loons, shearwaters, storm-petrels, jaegers and skuas (if we are lucky). Migrant songbirds like warblers, vireos, thrushes and sparrows pile up along

the coast as well. Most notable among our coastal targets are Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill, Common Murre, Black Guillemot, Pomarine Jaeger, Black-legged Kittiwake, Great Cormorant and the rare Great or South Polar skuas.

Our birding adventure together starts off with birding along the southern coast, based out of Portland. We will visit shorebirding hotspots like Biddeford Pool and Scarborough Marsh for excellent studies of sandpipers, plovers, yellowlegs, dowitchers and more. We will search Spartina marshes for Nelson's and Saltmarsh sparrows. From Portland, we will make our way out to the enchanting Monhegan Island for three nights.



Red-eyed Vireos and other migrant songbirds find their way to Monhegan Island during fall migration. We'll have two full days there to see what we can find. Photograph by guide Sam Wilson.

Monhegan Island is a quaint fishing village and artist enclave sitting ten miles off the mainland and also happens to be one of the best migration hotspots for songbirds in the Northeast. We will casually bird the small community and neighboring trails while taking life down a notch and disengaging from the rest of the world. Those fall warblers won't be so confusing by the time we take the ferry back to the mainland. Migrant raptors such as Merlin and Sharp-shinned Hawk are always swirling about and chasing passerines to keep things interesting. After Monhegan, we head Downeast to Bar Harbor.

The last chapter of our amazing adventure will be spent based out of Bar Harbor -- our gateway to Acadia National Park and Downeast. A boat trip on a private charter out of Eastport will cruise the calm, nutrient-rich waters of Passamaquoddy Bay as far out as Head Harbor Passage. This adventure visits the mesmerizing "Old Sow," the largest whirlpool in the Western Hemisphere and we will likely encounter Minke Whale and Harbor Porpoise. Scanning through the flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls might turn up a rarity like Little Gull or Sabine's Gull. Great Cormorants and Black-legged Kittiwakes can be found here reliably. Razorbills are typically close to the boat in good numbers and Common Murres are a realistic possibility. Acadia National Park is a national treasure and the gorgeous coastal sites in the park produce good birding. A full day pelagic trip organized by Maine Audubon will put us far out into the Gulf of Maine for our grand finale. We will likely see Black Guillemots, Wilson's Storm-Petrels, Northern Gannets and we remain vigilant for more uncommon encounters with species such as Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill, Red-necked Phalarope, Pomarine Jaeger, multiple shearwater species and Northern Fulmar. Both South Polar Skua and Great Skua are possibilities as well! After Bar Harbor, it's back to Portland and departures for home.

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of walking on flat ground (up to five miles per day), some of it on paved roads, some on gravel or dirt roads, most on trails that have no significant obstacles except on Monhegan Island. The village roads on Monhegan Island have good footing but as you get onto undulating trails away from the village, expect to have rocks and exposed roots to step over. Walking into the woods or dewy grass in pursuit of a bird is possible (hiking boots recommended). We will probably walk a short distance on open beach as well.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We may stand for long periods to observe flocks of birds. We cover some ground on this tour, and a few days will feature long periods of time in the vans, with roadside birding and much getting in and out of vans. We have two one-hour ferry rides between Port Clyde and Monhegan Island; the crossings can be choppy (motion sickness remedies recommended). Our full-day pelagic trip is on a large vessel that is relatively stable, but those susceptible to motion sickness may wish to take precautions. Our Eastport boattrip is on protected waters.
- **PACE:** Early mornings (Departures around 6:00 a.m. most days); both morning and afternoon birding sessions, with occasional afternoon breaks.
- **WEATHER:** Early fall weather in Maine is usually delightfully mild but highly variable. Expect temperatures in the low 50s in the evening, with days ranging from the low 60s to mid-70s F. Rain showers and windy conditions are possible. Early mornings might be surprisingly cool and the conditions during the pelagic always feel harsher than when on land.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Bathroom stops at indoor restrooms will be made regularly; comfort stops in nature are also possible, should the need arise.
- **OPTING OUT:** As this short tour stays multiple nights at each of the hotels, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or half-day.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with one of the guides.



We'll be able to work on shorebird ID along the coast. Here, a Western Sandpiper tries to blend in with the more common (in Maine) Semipalmated Sandpipers. Photograph by guide Eric Hynes.

About the Birding Areas



Southern Coastal—Sites in this area we might visit are: Portland city parks, Scarborough Marsh, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, Biddeford Pool, Goose Rocks, and Pine Point. We will be birding marshes, river mouths, rocky shores, tidal lagoons, beaches, and scanning the open ocean. Focus in this region will be on ducks, loons, gannets, cormorants, herons, shorebirds, gulls, and a select group of passerines.

Acadia & Downeast—Sites in this area include Acadia National Park and Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge (Petit Manan Division), Schoodic Peninsula, Boot Head Preserve, Lubec Flats, West Quoddy Head and Passamaquoddy Bay. Our primary purpose is to get out on the water for seabirds. We will be in Bar Harbor for multiple nights to insure a departure on the spectacular boat that will take us out into the Gulf of Maine. The coastline Downeast is so beautiful in places, you might find yourself forgetting that you are supposed to be searching for birds! Boreal forest meets the coast all the way Downeast so specialty species like Spruce Grouse and Black-backed Woodpecker are a possibility as well.

Monhegan Island—Ten miles off the coast of Maine and barely a square mile in area, Monhegan Island is huge when it comes to birding hotspots in Maine. This remote refuge is the last bit of land a migrant songbird is going to see if it finds itself out over the ocean.

ocean. If we are lucky enough to be out there when a cold front blows through, the fallout on Monhegan can be amazing. The quaint little town has less than 100 year-round residents but it draws many artists, fisherman and tourists seasonally. The charming community is welcoming and much of the island is in conservation.

Itinerary for Maine in Fall: Seabirds & Coastal Migrants

Day 1, Sun, 6 Sep. Arrival in Portland. Please plan to arrive in time to meet in the lobby of our hotel at 4:00 p.m. for introductions and a quick overview of the tour. We'll then head to a beautiful spot on the coast for dinner. While waiting for our lobster rolls (or whatever catches your eye on the menu), we can scope the ocean for Common Eiders, Black Guillemots, gulls, and shorebirds. Night in South Portland.

Day 2, Mon, 7 Sep. Southern Coastal. We will begin with coastal birding and our route will be determined by the tide. We'll be covering shorelines from Kennebunkport to Scarborough Marsh—Maine's largest saltmarsh. We will scan for shorebirds, seabirds, waders and more at places like Fortunes Rocks, Biddeford Pool, Hills Beach and Pine Point. Nelson's and Saltmarsh sparrows are a possibility. Night in South Portland.

Day 3, Tue, 8 Sep. Portland to Monhegan Island. After a morning of birding in the Portland area, we will make our way up to Port Clyde to catch the afternoon ferry to Monhegan Island. Night on Monhegan Island.

Day 4, Wed, 9 Sep. Monhegan Island. We won't be going anywhere this day that our feet don't take us. At a relaxed pace, we will explore this enchanting island looking for migrants. Night on Monhegan Island.

Day 5, Thu, 10 Sep. Monhegan Island. The magic of Monhegan will keep us entertained for another spectacular day. Night on Monhegan Island.

Day 6, Fri, 11 Sep. Monhegan Island to Bar Harbor. We will enjoy a final walk around Monhegan before checking out of the Monhegan House and catching the 12:30 p.m. ferry back to the mainland. The afternoon will be focused on getting from Port Clyde up to Bar Harbor, which will take a few hours. Night in Bar Harbor.

Day 7, Sat, 12 Sep. Gulf of Maine Pelagic. A spectacular pelagic trip will bring a whole new suite of birds into play. Maine Audubon sponsors a chartered, full day pelagic trip covering a significant chunk of the Gulf of Maine. The vessel is one of the most impressive pelagic platforms you will ever board – fast and stable. We will be searching for multiple shearwater species, phalaropes, storm-petrels, alcids like Atlantic Puffin, Pomarine Jaegers, and a reasonable chance at seeing a South Polar Skua or a Great Skua. Whales and other marine mammals are likely as well. Night in Bar Harbor.



Cape May Warblers and other passerine migrants will be our targets when we visit Monhegan Island and Acadia National Park. Photograph by guide Sam Wilson.

Day 8, Sun, 13 Sep. Acadia National Park. Acadia is one of the most popular national parks in the NPS system for good reason. The rocky coast, mountains that meet the ocean, pristine lakes and majestic conifer forests are truly sublime. The birding can be quite good as well. We will explore several favorite sites within the park. Night in Bar Harbor.

Day 9, Mon, 14 Sep. Downeast. We make a beeline all the way to Eastport and enjoy a private cruise around Passamaquoddy Bay. Old Sow, the largest whirlpool in the Western Hemisphere, is truly a site to behold. The nutrient-rich waters attract thousands of gulls and alcids. Expect to see Minke Whales, Harbor Seals, Harbor Porpoise, Bald Eagles, and Great Cormorants up close. We will scan through the hordes of Bonaparte's Gulls for rarities like Little, Sabine's, and Lesser Black-backed gulls too. Common Murre, Razorbill, and Black-legged Kittiwake will likely get added to the list this day. In the afternoon we will visit some boreal habitat hoping to kick up a Spruce Grouse. This day will cover quite a few miles but this region offers some gorgeous coastal scenery and quality habitat that will definitely make it worth the driving time. Night in Bar Harbor.

Day 10, Tue, 15 Sep. Bar Harbor to Portland for Departures. Our adventure has come to its conclusion. We will pack up in the morning, say goodbye to Acadia and make our way back down to Portland for departures. Flights should be booked no earlier than noon.

About Your Guide

Sam Wilson grew up in New Jersey and had his spark moment as a young adult visiting Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. On his first visit he witnessed an epic migration of 10,000 Broad-winged Hawks as they took to the skies over the Appalachian ridges. He was hooked, and his fascination with bird migration has only grown.

Sam spent four years working in Cape May, New Jersey, for New Jersey Audubon developing bird migration programs for school groups and families and leading group trips for Cape May Bird Observatory and New Jersey Young Birders Club. He enjoyed a stint in the Hawaiian Islands doing breeding bird surveys in the remote Alakai Swamp for the Kauai Forest Birds Recovery project (though his gear didn't recover!).

Eventually, wanderlust led him to Alaska, where he led backcountry trips focused on birds and wildlife in Denali National Park, as well as guided trips for birding festivals along the Kenai Peninsula and Copper River. He has since led group trips as a naturalist-guide in most regions of the country with a special focus on National Parks and Wilderness areas. Sam is an eBird reviewer in Alaska and contributor to both *Cape May Magazine* and ABA's *Birding* magazine.

When not experimenting with flight photography, investigating nocturnal migration, or researching biodiversity hot spots, Sam enjoys backpacking, growing super-hot peppers, discovering new music, and creating experimental dishes (usually Asian cuisine). Sam and his wife, Margeaux, have spent months traveling around the world seeking out rare birds and wildlife. They currently reside in Anchorage, Alaska.

"Sam is an expert guide and one of the best spotters we've ever experienced. He was great to get us on hard-to-see birds. He worked well with all the participants and was knowledgeable about the birds and plants."
A.D., Texas Coast Migration Spectacle

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Sam's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Financial Information

FEE: \$5725 from Portland

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1575

DEPOSIT: \$575

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: March 10, 2026

LIMIT: 7

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Ruth Kuhl. Ruth will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: September might just be the best time to be in Maine. Kids are back in school so the summer vacationers are thinning out, the heat is less intense but it's not cold yet, maple leaves are morphing into gorgeous shades of flame and scarlet...and the hotels know it. Seasonal rates at lodgings this time of year are at a premium but the cost is so worth it. We will be staying at the Merry Manor Inn-Best Western while in Portland. This a pretty standard large hotel facility. The hotels for the rest of our adventure however, are charming, distinctive, and come with spectacular views. While we are on Monhegan Island, we will be staying at the quaint Monhegan House. Patrons have found this historic guesthouse enchanting since 1870. It has undergone numerous renovations over the decades but manages to retain its inviting character. Their kitchen creates wonderful food. Please note the limitations of being on an island and the effort to preserve its historic ambience dictate that they still lack an elevator and only offer shared bathrooms. Learn more at: <http://monheganhouse.com/>. Our nights in Bar Harbor will be spent at the Atlantic Oceanside Inn. We have selected an isolated building at this magnificent complex. Your room will be comfortable, spacious and have a stunning view of famous Frenchman Bay. We know you will love it.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: The tour begins and ends in Portland, ME (Portland International Jetport, PWM).

Arrival: Portland (PWM) on September 6, in time to meet in the hotel lobby at 4pm.

Departure: Portland (PWM) on September 15, after 12pm.

Please wait to purchase airline tickets until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate. At that time, we'll be glad to assist with your flight arrangements at no service fee.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$5725 for one person in double occupancy from Portland.

It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 9, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 10, all ground transportation, boat trips, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Portland, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The single supplement is \$1575 for those requesting a single room. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR LIMITS: Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, one seat in the van or bus will be taken by the guide in training. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please send your deposit of \$575 per person; see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or by March 10, 2026.** We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later. Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to protect your investment in case of injury or illness to you or an immediate family member before or during a trip. Because we must remit early and substantial deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer refunds for cancellations outside of our Cancellation Policy. If a participant is unable to join or continue a tour due to

illness, all related expenses will be their responsibility, and no refunds can be issued for missed days. Please wait to purchase insurance until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate, as most policies are non-refundable.

For full details, visit our Trip Cancellation Insurance page at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/>.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

NCP 7/2020; 1/26 RK; mz; peg