

ITINERARY
NEWFOUNDLAND & NOVA SCOTIA
June 30-July 10, 2019



Atlantic Puffins are always favorites! These charming seabirds are quite common in Newfoundland, where we will see several thousand at a nesting colony near St. John's. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

We include here information for those interested in the 2019 Field Guides Newfoundland & Nova Scotia 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

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- 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 (may be downloaded from our web site)
- 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 reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

Newfoundland and Nova Scotia offer a wonderful summer getaway. These two provinces differ greatly in the flavor of their landscape and people. Here we find a strong Celtic and Irish influence. And here is blended some of the best summer birding in eastern Canada, with lovely scenery that ranges from the temperate forests and gentle coastline of mainland Nova Scotia, to the jagged peaks of the Cape Breton Island highlands and the rugged, tundra-like barrens of Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula. In addition to the birding spectacle, this trip offers some fantastic opportunities to see a variety of marine mammals.

Our tour originates in St. John's, Newfoundland, where our attention will first be directed towards seabirds. We'll begin with a boat trip around Witless Bay, home of some 300,000 nesting pairs of Atlantic Puffins, plus more than 400,000

other alcids, including both murres, Razorbill, and Black Guillemot! The sight of all these seabirds whirling around the few select nest islands is reminiscent of bees swarming around a newly disturbed hive—very memorable. This area is also a wonderful whale-watching site with Fin, Humpback, and Minke whales all good possibilities. We will then travel southwest along the coast, eventually heading to the towering cliffs of famous Cape St. Mary's, nesting site for thousands upon thousands of Northern Gannets, Black-legged Kittiwakes, and Common Murres, plus smaller numbers of Thick-billed Murres, Razorbills, Black Guillemots, Great Cormorants, and nesting American Pipits and Horned Larks.

We will make a ferry crossing from Argentia to North Sydney, Nova Scotia. Though the ferry now travels mostly at night, we will have some time in the morning to pick up a few pelagic species. We could see Manx, Great, and Sooty shearwaters, jaegers, Red Phalarope, Leach's and Wilson's storm-petrels, and a number of whales.



Once on Cape Breton Island, the magnificent sweeping coastal vistas and great birding will leave a lasting impression. We'll take a short boat trip out of Pleasant Bay to see the marvelous Long-finned Pilot Whales, Gray Seals, and perhaps a few alcids. And we'll also go birding at some productive wetlands near Port Morien. Proceeding south along the province's eastern shore, we'll be watching for Common Eiders, American Black Ducks, Osprey, Bald Eagles, and other coastal birds as we go. Protected marshes and beaches are frequent, and we'll check a few of these sites looking for the maritime form of Nelson's Sparrow, migrant shorebirds, and maybe even a stray southern heron. Back from the shoreline, the land is covered in dense spruce forest with rich mats of sphagnum moss—the woodland haven of such boreal specialties as Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadee, and White-winged Crossbill, not to mention a nice variety of warblers and other landbirds.

A special note about Bicknell's Thrush: while this species is a rare breeder in Cape Breton, the population there has declined some 90% in just the past decade, making it extremely unlikely to be seen on our tour. We will look for it while we are in Cape Breton, but one's expectations should be suitably low. Those really wishing to see Bicknell's Thrush should seek it out in the

stronghold of its range, either the White Mountain National Forest of New Hampshire, or at several of the highest peaks in Vermont and New York.

By the time we arrive in Halifax, we will have seen most of the landbirds possible in this region. Join us for some great birding in the cool and lovely Maritimes!

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: One of the first things the visitor to eastern Canada notices is the more relaxed pace of life here, and we will work hard to fit in right away! Throughout this tour we will be walking on generally good trails or along roadsides. Most of our walks will be less than a half-mile at a time, with the longest planned single walk (to the gannet colony) being about one-and-a-half miles in total. Most days will begin around 6:00 a.m., and we'll stay out until mid to late afternoon. There may even be a chance at a few places to have a brief mid-day break.

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 the guide.



The Black-backed Woodpecker is an uncommon resident of boreal forests. This beautiful male posed nicely for our 2018 tour group near Liscombe Lodge in Nova Scotia. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

Itinerary for Newfoundland & Nova Scotia

Day 1, Sun, 30 Jun. Arrival in St. John's, Newfoundland. (*Please note that this tour begins in St. John's, Newfoundland and ends in Halifax, Nova Scotia.*) Upon arrival, please take a taxi to the hotel. At 6:30 p.m. we will meet for a get-acquainted dinner and go over a brief outline for the trip. Night in St. John's.

Day 2, Mon, 1 Jul. Witless Bay/St. John's area. Today we'll have the first boat trip of our tour. Witless Bay, with several large islands, is Newfoundland's premier seabird nesting area and home to hundreds of thousands of nesting alcids, kittiwakes, sometimes a few Northern Fulmar, and others. Gull Island and Green Island in the Bay are home to 300,000 pairs of Atlantic Puffins and 400,000 pairs of Common Murre. Whale-watching on this trip can be very rewarding, too, with Humpback and less commonly Minke likely to be seen. It should be an exciting way to start our tour. We'll also check scenic Cape Spear, the easternmost point of land in North America (if one omits Greenland), which in addition to its scenic setting is a great place for seawatching and spotting whales. Night in St. John's.

Day 3, Tue, 2 Jul. St. John's to Trepassey. We may briefly check St. John's Harbor for unusual gulls—Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed being the most likely "rare" gulls—then spend a relaxing day driving along the beautiful eastern shore of the Avalon Peninsula, stopping at a number of good birding areas along this scenic drive. We'll seek out a few species in the spruce woodlands such as Gray-cheeked Thrush, Blackpoll and Wilson's warblers, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. Continuing south, the forest gives way to mostly treeless barrens. We'll keep an eye out for Caribou and maybe even a Willow Ptarmigan as we explore this area. Night in Trepassey.

Day 4, Wed, 3 Jul. Southern Avalon. This morning we will take time to explore a few productive areas near Trepassey, including Cape Pine and St. Shott's. If conditions are right, we can do some seawatching in the hopes of picking up three species of shearwaters. If Caplin—the small fish that whales eat en masse—are running, we could also see whales very close to shore. We'll also have time to explore the barrens for caribou and Willow Ptarmigan. We'll make several quick birding stops at various sites along the way. Night in Placentia.

Day 5, Thu, 4 Jul. Cape St. Mary's and Ferry to Nova Scotia. About an hour south of our hotel is one of the greatest bird sights on the continent—the huge and growing colony of seabirds, especially Northern Gannets, at Cape St. Mary's. Located at the southwestern tip of the Avalon Peninsula, the Cape and its spectacular cliffs are the nesting site for

thousands of Northern Gannets, Common and Thick-billed murres, Black-legged Kittiwakes, and small numbers of Black Guillemots and Razorbills. As we walk the trail near the cliffs toward the “stack,” we’ll pass American Pipits and Horned Larks nesting on the barren ground here, while gannets and kittiwakes wheel and call alongside us, floating on the updrafts off the cliff faces. The stack itself, a huge rock separated from the mainland by a narrow but sheer vertical drop, is literally covered with nesting gannets, tightly clustered on the top and draped over the edge of the rock. Needless to say, photographic opportunities here are superb. We’ll hope for a clear day, but even fog adds to the eerie experience of the Cape. We’ll have plenty of time to observe the various species and bustling activity of the colony.



*The enormous Northern Gannet colony at Cape St. Mary's is a spectacle that we will witness firsthand. The colony also hosts other breeding seabirds, such as Common and Thick-billed murres, and Black-legged Kittiwakes.
Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

This afternoon we will make our way to Argentia where this evening we will sail across the Cabot Strait to Nova Scotia aboard a large passenger ferry. The crossing takes about fourteen hours—we will depart at around 8:00 p.m. (time subject to change). The waters here are a rich feeding ground for large numbers of seabirds and, barring dense fog, we have an excellent chance of seeing Northern Fulmars and Great, Sooty, and Manx shearwaters. (The Manx’s major North American nesting colony lies near the ferry route.) The ferry also offers excellent opportunities for observing Leach’s Storm-Petrels and their less common relative Wilson’s, sometimes side by side. Northern Gannets and alcids are fairly common, too. Past tours have seen most of these well and also had, on occasion, South Polar Skua and three species of jaeger. The crossing is aboard a large vessel, so even those unused to (or wary of) sea crossings should find this a relatively comfortable day. Since it is a night crossing, we will book sleeping accommodation on board the ferry. Please note that single rooms won’t be available. Those prone to seasickness should consult their physician regarding adequate and effective medication in case of rough weather. Be sure to dress appropriately (your guides will go over this with you the day before), for even on a fine-weather day it can be quite chilly with a breeze off the water. Night on ferry

Day 6, Fri, 5 Jul. Cape Breton Island. We’ll spend part of today searching a productive barrier beach for shorebirds and others we may not yet have seen. The marshes at Port Morien have always been interesting to check. It’s an excellent place to compare nesting Common and Arctic terns and usually has a small but interesting selection of migrant shorebirds, including scarce species such as Hudsonian Godwit. It is also a great spot to see Nelson’s Sparrow. Port Morien also has a history of hosting many fine vagrants including Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, and Northern Wheatear, to name a few. We’ll then head west to the Cape Breton Highlands where we will spend the night in scenic Pleasant Bay, Cape Breton Island.

Day 7, Sat, 6 Jul. The Cabot Trail in Cape Breton Island National Park The upland barrens, where the trees give way to open bogs, are the summer home of this “split” from Gray-cheeked Thrush, and we will make an effort to get a look at one. The weather on the barrens is often windy, so we may need to devote a fair bit of time searching for this scarce species. Other birds we hope to encounter here include Mourning Warbler and Pine Grosbeak, and Moose is possible, too. We’ll also leave time for a short boat trip out of Pleasant Bay to see Long-finned Pilot Whales and Gray Seal, an unforgettable wildlife spectacle. Throughout the day the coastal vistas along this stretch of the island are stunning. Night in Pleasant Bay.



We will search for woodland birds such as this stunning Mourning Warbler when we visit the Cape Breton Island National Park. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

Day 8, Sun, 7 Jul. Sydney to Liscombe Lodge. We will head south today with a couple of short birding stops along the way where we should pick up a few new species. We’ll continue south toward the Strait of Canso, where we will cross to mainland Nova Scotia. Much of the island drive will be alongside Lac Bras d’Or, a huge inland sea now home to the Maritimes’ greatest Bald Eagle nesting population (about 125 pairs!). We will make several birding stops as we go, including a visit to one of the last easily accessible nesting beaches for the lovely Piping Plover. We’ll get to Liscombe in the latter half of the afternoon, and we may do some birding around the lodge feeders, which can be quite active with Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks, among others. Night at Liscombe Lodge.

Day 9, Mon, 8 Jul. Coastal Nova Scotia. In the morning we can try a quick walk around the lodge’s nature trails in search of crossbills, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and various boreal birds, including Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, and Spruce Grouse. Then it’s off to a rich forested area nearby that abounds with nesting warblers, including such beauties as Canada, Northern Parula, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Magnolia, and more. In the afternoon we can bird along the fish ladder road, an excellent birding road good for grouse that is located right beside the lodge. Night at Liscombe Lodge.

Day 10, Tue, 9 Jul. Liscombe Lodge to Halifax. Our route back to Halifax will be designed around some of our remaining target birds and may include a coastal route or an interior one. Whichever it becomes, we are sure to pick up a few interesting birds along the way. Night near Halifax.

Day 11, Wed, 10 Jul. Departure for home. Halifax has numerous flights connecting to major cities in the US and Canada, and we are likely to be departing at different times throughout the morning. Have a safe return home!

About Your Guide

Chris Benesh grew up studying natural history in California, where he was inspired by his father to take up birding as a teenager. After earning a degree in zoology from UC Santa Barbara in 1987, Chris moved to Austin to join the Field Guides staff. Since then, his life has undergone a wonderful transformation. The intervening years at Field Guides have taken him to many corners of the world and across both the Arctic and Antarctic circles! Chris takes an interest in nearly anything that flies, and you might catch him sneaking a peek at a passing aircraft or stopping to examine a butterfly or odonate. You might also notice him getting especially excited at the sighting of a rare or wonderful mammal (heck, he can get excited about a squirrel).

Chris serves on the Arizona Bird Committee, and additionally his passion for education has led to his ongoing work on a photoguide to North American flycatchers (can you say "glacial pace"?), as well as the occasional workshop or birding convention presentation. These days, most of his "down time" is spent at home in Tucson watching his two wonderful kids, Sean and Linnea, grow.

*"Chris Benesh is a top-notch guide, with amazing skills and a great personality. I had such a great time on this tour that I refuse to check it off my "bucket list." I really want to do it again."
D.C., Newfoundland & Nova Scotia*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for Chris's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

A **second guide** will be added as tour size warrants.

Financial Information

FEE: \$5250 from St. John's, Newfoundland

DEPOSIT: \$525 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: March 2, 2019

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$725

LIMIT: 12

Other Things You Need to Know

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

DOCUMENTS: **US citizens will need a valid passport for travel to Canada.** If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Canadian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: *Please note that this tour begins in St. John's, Newfoundland, and ends in Halifax, Nova Scotia.* Please check with our office for rates on flights to St. John's and from Halifax. Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$5250 for one person in double occupancy from St. John's. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 10, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner 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 St. John's or return from Halifax, airport taxes, 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** for the tour is \$725. 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, the guide in training will be taking a seat in the van or bus. 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, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$525** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by March 2, 2019. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 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.

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.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (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 the 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 airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs

incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

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 reverse side of 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. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility 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.

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