

Trip Report — Maine in Fall: Seabirds & Coastal Migrants 2024

September 8-17, 2024 with Sam Wilson



Sabine's Gull is a rare find and was one of the highlights of our boat tour on Passamaquoddy Bay. Photo by guide Sam Wilson

It hardly felt like fall with 80 degree highs and clear blue skies for the entirety of the tour but we certainly weren't complaining about the perfect weather. A sizable cold front is always nice to have during migration but we had enough light NW winds to send us some nice flocks of neotropical migrants our way. Seas were glassy calm for our pelagic trip out with Maine Audubon out into the Gulf of Maine and continued for a second exciting boat trip out into the Canadian waters of Passamaquoddy Bay.

Our first full day took advantage of southern Maine's mix of sandy beaches and rocky outcrops to find migrant shorebirds. We were fortunate to get great looks at some

sought after and sometimes difficult to find migrants like White-rumped and Baird's Sandpiper, both Dowitcher species, and an exciting flyover American Golden-plover. We also targeted some local breeders and were lucky to find a pair of Piping Plovers who nearly ran over our feet! It was great to see the next generation of these endangered birds so close and at this late date, as most of these birds have already begun their journeys south to their winter home in the Bahamas. A couple families of American Oystercatchers at East Point were also a nice surprise, hanging out on the rocks amongst the hundreds of Common Eiders, rafts of these large sea ducks ever-present near rocky headlands. We finished off a big day of birding with some delicious local lobster rolls at a restaurant on the marsh while watching Black-crowned Night-Herons fly in at sunset.



Magnolia Warbler giving us a close look on Monhegan Island! Photo by participant Mary Lou Barritt.

Moving north and on our way to Monhegan Island, we stopped at some inland locations for pond and marsh birds like Pied-billed Grebes and Wood Ducks. Unfortunately, a flat tire stalled our progress, but after a fairly quick tire change, we hit the road again! Time had been built in to insure our departure to Monhegan, and we quickly forgot about our vehicle woes after boarding the charming Monhegan Ferry.

We had a beautiful passage day off the coast to the very special Monhegan Island. Cape May Warblers greeted us from the island's fir trees before our first dinner at Monhegan House. The cuisine we enjoyed each night at MOHO was agreed to be the best of the trip, with a set menu by gourmet chefs and professional bakers highlighting Maine's diversity of delicious food beyond the lobster roll.

One of the charms of Monhegan island is the lack of vehicles for visiting tourists, the island being small enough to leisurely walk from one side to the other in less time than it takes to watch an episode of Seinfeld. Each morning, we began the day with coffee and some fresh baked goods before an excursion looking for new island arrivals, spotting a slew of warblers, vireos and other passerines. We enjoyed the 'pink pink' calls of Bobolinks, the squeeks of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and zits, zeeps, and buzzes of migrant warblers arriving on the island. After a delicious multi-course breakfast later in the morning (deemed 'second breakfast') we set out again on foot to different areas of the island, finding exciting seabirds like White-winged Scoters, Black Guillemots, Great Cormorants and the procession of passerine migrants fueling up for their journeys into the late afternoon. Raptors were not in short supply, including 3 species of falcons we saw hunting tired migrants on the island. We even witnessed a quick but thrilling chase of a Merlin in hot pursuit of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird! Other bird highlights on the second and third day included Solitary Sandpiper, Philadelphia Vireo, Winter Wren, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, good numbers of Baltimore Orioles, and Red-eyed Vireos seemingly everywhere we looked. Monhegan is an absolute delight and the summery weather actually made it quite warm for most of our stay there!



While watching American Oystercatchers at East Point in Biddeford Pool, participant Sid spotted a mink working the rocks along the oceanfront! Photo by guide Sam Wilson.

After leaving the island, a vehicle swap, and our own migration north to Bar Harbor, we enjoyed a day of scenic day birding in Acadia National Park. Besides the natural beauty of Acadia National Park, Mount Desert Island afforded us both some fun forest and coastal birds. A morning stop in the wetlands of Sier de Monts Spring netted Swamp Sparrow, Northern Parulas, and an extremely cooperative Ovenbird. We moved on to some retention ponds by the highschool for some migrant birds like Solitary Sandpiper and a quick look at Purple Finch. After a lunch on the water at beautiful Southwest Harbor, we went to the seawall, spotting Red-necked Grebe, Common Loon, and local Black Ducks. It was nice to see the road opened here as there had been a powerful winter storm that caused major damage to the infrastructure of these exposed headlands.



Long-tailed Jaeger is always a thrilling bird to find. We were lucky to see all three Jaeger species and a South Polar Skua at close range! Photo by guide Sam Wilson

The next day was the highly anticipated Maine Audubon Pelagic trip; it was a showstopper! It also may have been the calmest seas I have seen for a pelagic trip on the Atlantic seaboard! Though we didn't have the winds for large numbers of expected shearwaters, we encountered all three jaegers and a fantastic flyby of the beastly South Polar Skua. We encountered both Phalaropes, two tern species, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Wilson's and Leach's Storm Petrels, Great and Manx Shearwater, and great looks at 3 alcid species, Atlantic Puffins, Black Guillemots, and Razorbills. Another highlight was the absolute abundance of offshore marine life including Atlantic White-sided Dolphins bowriding the boat, many Long-finned Pilot Whales, and an impressive show of feeding Humpback Whales, Minke's, and a couple of Fin Whales. There was even a bit of tropical meets polar feel, with many sightings of Ocean Sunfish (*Mola mola*) sunning themselves on the surface while streams of Northern Gannets flew overhead.



Early Morning in Acadia National Park. Photo by guide Sam Wilson

Our last day we headed all the way Downeast to Eastport - the eastern most point in the US, for a half day boat trip out Passamaquaddy Bay.

We were tipped off by Captain Butch to a possible rarity in the area hanging out by the famous Old Sow whirlpool bridging the Canadian-US marine border, and after sifting through 1000's of Bonaparte's Gulls managed to find a Sabine's Gull! Quite the exciting rarity almost anywhere, this individual was a sharp, fresh looking juvenile that allowed close approach as we spun in the turbulent whirlpool. We capped off the boat trip with point blank Razorbills, Great Cormorants, and simply enjoying the impressive spectacle of Bonaparte's Gulls.

We spent some additional time that afternoon at the paradoxically named West Quoddy Light (eastern most point in US) and a patch of coastal spruce forest where we had a few flocks of warblers moving through the dense canopy. We spent one last night in beautiful Bar Harbor before having to bid Maine adieu.

In addition to birds, we had some great **Mammal** sightings including:

American Mink, Wood Chuck, Eastern Chipmunk, Red Squirrel ,White-tailed Deer, Harbor Seal, Grey Seal, Harbor Porpoise, Atlantic White-sided Dolphin, Humpback Whale, Fin Whale, (Possible) Sei Whale, and Long-finned Pilot Whale. Herps included Green Frog & Painted Turtle.

Other notable marine life included Mola Mola (Ocean Sunfish) and Blue Shark.

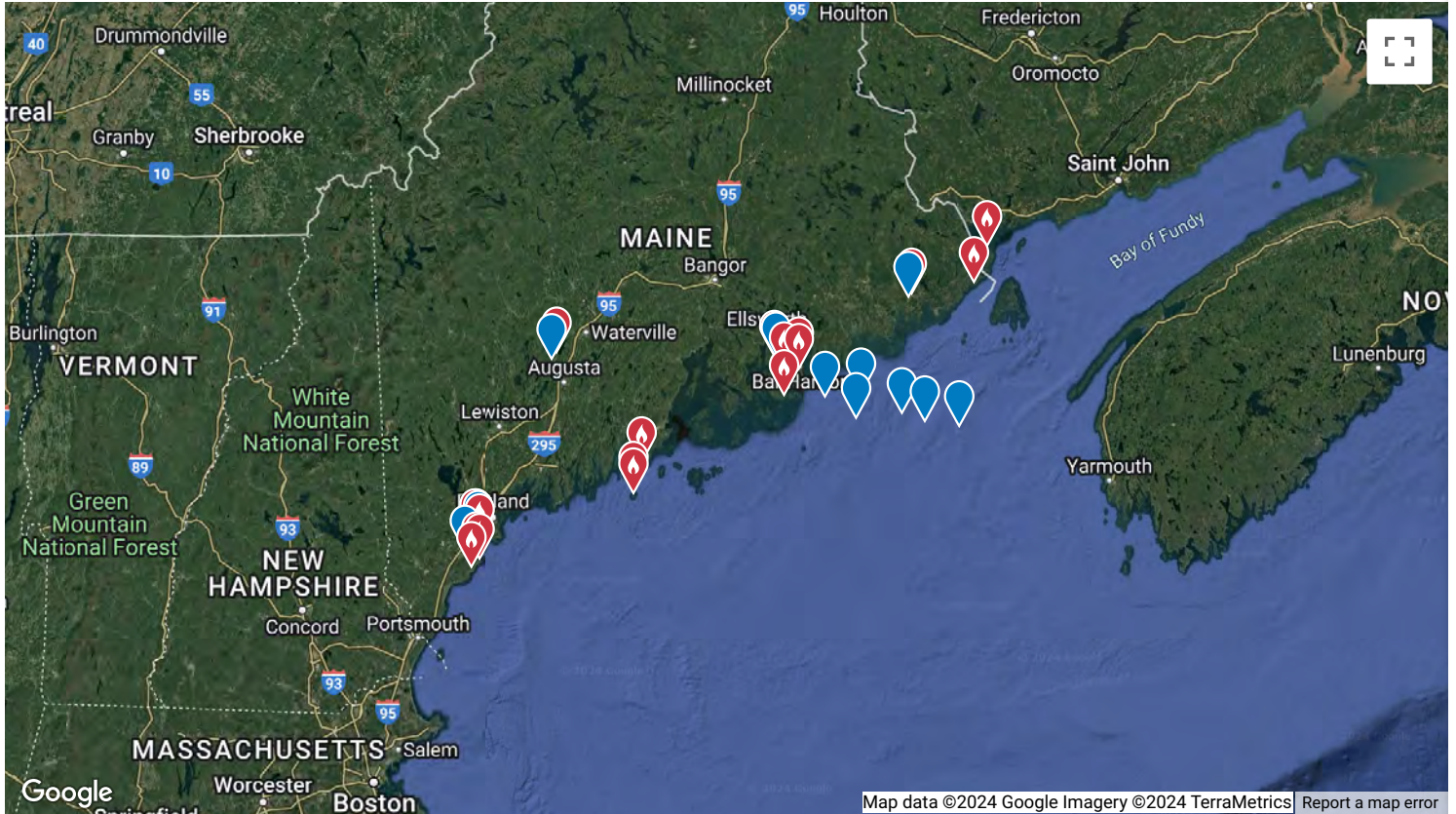
You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/274126>

Sam Wilson

Field Guides Birding Tours—Maine in Fall: Seabirds and Coastal Migrants, 2024 (with Sam Wilson)



8 – 17 Sep 2024 (10 days) Link-only



Canada | United States | Subregions

Sam Wilson



For a narrative summary of this tour, including a Field Guides photo gallery and additional media for this trip...

146
















































35













































43






































LIFERS  1  18 

































Species Observed

[Show all details](#)

8	Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	  1
5	Wood Duck <i>Aix sponsa</i>	  2
3	Gadwall <i>Mareca strepera</i>	  1
46	Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	  4
20	American Black Duck <i>Anas rubripes</i>	  5
10	Green-winged Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	  3
361	Common Eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>	  9
1	White-winged Scoter <i>Melanitta deglandi</i>	  2  1
1	Common Merganser <i>Mergus merganser</i>	  1
1	Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>	  1
1	Rock Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i> *	  1
26	Mourning Dove <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	  9
1	Yellow-billed Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	  1
5	Ruby-throated Hummingbird <i>Archilochus colubris</i>	  1  3
8	American Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus palliatus</i>	  1
1	Black-bellied Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	  1
1	American Golden-Plover <i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	  2  1
1	Killdeer <i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	  1
65	Semipalmated Plover <i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	  2  5
2	Piping Plover <i>Charadrius melodus</i>	  5  1
9	Short-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus griseus</i>	  2

1	Long-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	▶  1
1	Wilson's Snipe <i>Gallinago delicata</i>	▶  1
1	Red Phalarope <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	▶  1
22	Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	▶  1
2	Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶  2
4	Solitary Sandpiper <i>Tringa solitaria</i> 	▶  1  2
2	Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i>	▶  2
33	Greater Yellowlegs <i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	▶  7
2	Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	▶  1
28	Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	▶  2
1	Baird's Sandpiper <i>Calidris bairdii</i>	▶  4  1
6	White-rumped Sandpiper <i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>	▶  1  2
15	Least Sandpiper <i>Calidris minutilla</i>	▶  4
476	Semipalmated Sandpiper <i>Calidris pusilla</i>	▶  5  6
3	Long-tailed Jaeger <i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i> 	▶  3  1
4	Parasitic Jaeger <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i> 	▶  4  2
13	Pomarine Jaeger <i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	▶  6
1	South Polar Skua <i>Stercorarius maccormicki</i> 	▶  4  1
94	Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i> 	▶  3  5
20	Black Guillemot <i>Cephus grylle</i> 	▶  1  6
22	Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i> 	▶  1  4
29	Black-legged Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	▶  1  2
1	Sabine's Gull <i>Xema sabini</i> 	▶  3  1
1552	Bonaparte's Gull <i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>	▶  1  2

9	Laughing Gull <i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>	▶  5
340	Ring-billed Gull <i>Larus delawarensis</i>	▶  9
614	American Herring Gull <i>Larus smithsonianus</i>	▶  23
410	Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i> 	▶  2  16
37	Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	▶  2  8
1	Forster's Tern <i>Sterna forsteri</i> 	▶  1  1
21	Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	▶  1  3
3	Pied-billed Grebe <i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	▶  1
1	Red-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	▶  1
5	Common Loon <i>Gavia immer</i>	▶  4
132	Wilson's Storm-Petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i> 	▶  3  4
2	Leach's Storm-Petrel <i>Hydrobates leucorhous</i>	▶  2
2	Great Shearwater <i>Ardenna gravis</i>	▶  2
1	Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i> 	▶  1
457	Northern Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i> 	▶  6  6
25	Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> 	▶  2  2
203	Double-crested Cormorant <i>Nannopterum auritum</i>	▶  16
7	Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	▶  3
4	Snowy Egret <i>Egretta thula</i>	▶  3
27	Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	▶  5
11	Great Blue Heron <i>Ardea herodias</i>	▶  1  7
2	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	▶  2
7	Sharp-shinned Hawk <i>Accipiter striatus</i>	▶  5

6	Cooper's Hawk <i>Astur cooperii</i>	▶  4
5	Northern Harrier <i>Circus hudsonius</i>	▶  1  3
4	Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	▶  3
1	Red-shouldered Hawk <i>Buteo lineatus</i>	▶  1
5	Belted Kingfisher <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i> 	▶  1  5
8	Downy Woodpecker <i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	▶  4
1	Hairy Woodpecker <i>Dryobates villosus</i>	▶  1
1	Pileated Woodpecker <i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	▶  1
18	Northern Flicker <i>Colaptes auratus</i>	▶  6
3	American Kestrel <i>Falco sparverius</i>	▶  1  3
11	Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	▶  8
3	Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	▶  1  3
1	Eastern Wood-Pewee <i>Contopus virens</i>	▶  1
5	Least Flycatcher <i>Empidonax minimus</i> 	▶  5  5
3	Eastern Phoebe <i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	▶  1  3
3	Eastern Kingbird <i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	▶  2
3	Philadelphia Vireo <i>Vireo philadelphicus</i>	▶  2
2	Warbling Vireo <i>Vireo gilvus</i>	▶  2
62	Red-eyed Vireo <i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	▶  1  10
24	Blue Jay <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	▶  7
25	American Crow <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	▶  8
1	Common Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>	▶  1
69	Black-capped Chickadee <i>Poecile atricapillus</i>	▶  11

1	Tufted Titmouse <i>Baeolophus bicolor</i>	▶ 📄 1
1	Bank Swallow <i>Riparia riparia</i>	▶ 📄 1
1065	Tree Swallow <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	▶ 📄 6
9	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶ 📄 4
2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet <i>Corthylio calendula</i>	▶ 📄 2
14	Golden-crowned Kinglet <i>Regulus satrapa</i>	▶ 📄 6
5	White-breasted Nuthatch <i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	▶ 📄 1
7	Red-breasted Nuthatch <i>Sitta canadensis</i>	▶ 📄 4
2	Winter Wren <i>Troglodytes hiemalis</i>	▶ 📄 1
12	Carolina Wren <i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i>	▶ 📄 6
70	European Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> *	▶ 📄 3
18	Gray Catbird <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	▶ 📄 2 📄 9
2	Brown Thrasher <i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	▶ 📄 2
7	Northern Mockingbird <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	▶ 📄 5
2	Eastern Bluebird <i>Sialia sialis</i>	▶ 📄 1
1	Veery <i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	▶ 📄 1
9	Swainson's Thrush <i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	▶ 📄 2
2	Hermit Thrush <i>Catharus guttatus</i>	▶ 📄 1
17	American Robin <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	▶ 📄 5
461	Cedar Waxwing <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i> 🌐	▶ 📄 3 📄 7
25	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i> *	▶ 📄 2
1	American Pipit <i>Anthus rubescens</i>	▶ 📄 1
10	House Finch <i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i> *	▶ 📄 1

4	Purple Finch <i>Haemorhous purpureus</i>	▶ 📄 2
37	American Goldfinch <i>Spinus tristis</i>	▶ 📄 11
20	Chipping Sparrow <i>Spizella passerina</i>	▶ 📄 1
1	Dark-eyed Junco <i>Junco hyemalis</i>	▶ 📄 1
4	White-throated Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	▶ 📄 3
4	Savannah Sparrow <i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	▶ 📄 2
27	Song Sparrow <i>Melospiza melodia</i>	▶ 📄 13
1	Lincoln's Sparrow <i>Melospiza lincolni</i>	▶ 📄 1
8	Swamp Sparrow <i>Melospiza georgiana</i>	▶ 📄 2
18	Bobolink <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	▶ 📄 6
10	Baltimore Oriole <i>Icterus galbula</i>	▶ 📄 1 📄 3
46	Common Grackle <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	▶ 📄 5
1	Ovenbird <i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i> 🌐	▶ 📄 3 📄 1
2	Northern Waterthrush <i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>	▶ 📄 2 📄 2
7	Black-and-white Warbler <i>Mniotilta varia</i>	▶ 📄 5
1	Tennessee Warbler <i>Leiothlypis peregrina</i>	▶ 📄 1
1	Nashville Warbler <i>Leiothlypis ruficapilla</i>	▶ 📄 1
22	Common Yellowthroat <i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	▶ 📄 8
2	American Redstart <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	▶ 📄 2
12	Cape May Warbler <i>Setophaga tigrina</i>	▶ 📄 2 📄 5
11	Northern Parula <i>Setophaga americana</i>	▶ 📄 5
3	Magnolia Warbler <i>Setophaga magnolia</i>	▶ 📄 3
9	Yellow Warbler <i>Setophaga petechia</i>	▶ 📄 1 📄 7

- 1 **Chestnut-sided Warbler** *Setophaga pensylvanica* ▶ 📄 1
- 7 **Blackpoll Warbler** *Setophaga striata* ▶ 📄 2
- 1 **Palm Warbler** *Setophaga palmarum* ▶ 📄 1
- 1 **Pine Warbler** *Setophaga pinus* ▶ 📄 1
- 5 **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Setophaga coronata* ▶ 📄 2
- 6 **Black-throated Green Warbler** *Setophaga virens* ▶ 📄 2 📄 5
- 1 **Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla* ▶ 📄 1
- 24 **Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis* ▶ 📄 8
- 13 **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* ▶ 📄 6

EXOTIC: ESCAPEE

- 32 **Ring-necked Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus* 🌿 📄 1 ▶ 📄 6

ADDITIONAL TAXA

- 1 Mallard/American Black Duck *Anas platyrhynchos/rubripes* ▶ 📄 1
- 1 Short-billed/Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus/scolopaceus* ▶ 📄 1
- 48 Red/Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius/lobatus* ▶ 📄 1 📄 3
- 11 peep sp. *Calidris sp. (peep sp.)* ▶ 📄 3
- 2 shorebird sp. *Charadriiformes sp. (shorebird sp.)* ▶ 📄 1
- 12 jaeger sp. *Stercorarius sp. (jaeger sp.)* ▶ 📄 4
- 6 large alcid sp. *Alca/Uria sp.* ▶ 📄 1
- 200 gull sp. *Larinae sp.* ▶ 📄 1
- 4 tern sp. *Sterninae sp.* ▶ 📄 2
- 1 Accipitrine hawk sp. (former Accipiter sp.) *Aerospiza/Tachyspiza/Accipiter/Astur sp.* ▶ 📄 1
- 2 diurnal raptor sp. *Accipitriformes/Falconiformes sp.* ▶ 📄 1
- 5 Empidonax sp. *Empidonax sp.* ▶ 📄 4

- 1 Catharus sp. *Catharus sp.* ▶ 🗑️ 1
 - 1 Nelson's/Saltmarsh Sparrow (Sharp-tailed Sparrow) *Ammospiza nelsoni/caudacuta* ▶ 🗑️ 1
 - 1 Bay-breasted/Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga castanea/striata* ▶ 🗑️ 1
 - 13 passerine sp. *Passeriformes sp.* ▶ 🗑️ 2
-