

June 30-July 10, 2024 with Chris Benesh & Jay VanderGaast



The Atlantic Puffin colony at Gull Island is one of the greatest spectacles in North America. Chris Benesh captured one of the thousands in flight.

Our 2024 Newfoundland and Nova Scotia birding began in St. John's on July 1st. We started off hitting a couple of ponds right in St. John's. The third of these, Burton's Pond had an over-summering Pink-footed Goose, a rare treat. Also, a female Hooded Merganser was a bonus. We then headed down to Goulds to Bidgood Pond. This spot was great. There was a cooperative Ruffed Grouse, Boreal Chickadees (less cooperative), Cedar Waxwings, a Blackpoll Warbler, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. Then we headed down to Witless Bay and after lunch, a boat trip out to Gull Island where we took in the vast number of sea birds breeding there. Lots of Atlantic Puffins, Common Murres, Razorbills, Black Guillemots, and Black-legged Kittiwakes. After the boat trip we headed out to Cape Spear, the easternmost point in Canada.

We started the next morning with a visit to Signal Hill, a high point overlooking the mouth of St. John's Harbour. It was pretty quiet on the ocean but there were a few passerines around, including a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. Then it was off to start the

Irish Loop down to Trepassey. The weather was a bit raw today, and our attempt to bird La Manche Provincial Park was cut short by rain. We did have a nice stop at the Dunne's place in Renew, including a few Red Crossbills visiting their feeders. Nearby we were able to compare Arctic and Common terns that were roosting on nearby rocks. In the late afternoon we drove a stretch of the Cape Race road. We came across Horned Lark, a territorial Greater Yellowlegs, and a pair of Least Sandpipers.



Not to be outdone, Razorbills are another treat on our trip out to Witless Bay.
Photo by Chris Benesh.

We decided to attempt the Cape Race road again in better weather the next morning. There was a nice Merlin on the way out there. A stop at Biscay Bay yielded lots of scoters, mostly White-winged and a few Surf. We did a seawatch at Drook where we saw thousands of distant Sooty Shearwaters before heading back to Trepassey. We also learned that the ferry scheduled to take us to Nova Scotia from Argentia was broken and not running. This unfortunately meant that we were going to have to drive across Newfoundland to catch the ferry in Port-aux-basques. For the day this meant we had to head right over to Cape St. Mary's to take in the gannet colony the same afternoon. So off we went. The visibility was good, so we ventured a short ways down to the St. Schott's road to spot some Caribou. We made a stop at St. Vincent's Beach

for a wonderful Humpback Whale show. Several were feeding on capelin just off the beach. Gannets were also taking part, plunging in after the fish. Then we drove straight to Cape St. Mary's. Conditions were great there with perfect visibility. And the Northern Gannet spectacle was unforgettable. We had good views of a close Razorbill, and great scope views of Thick-billed Murre and Great Cormorant. Then it was off to Placentia for the night.



Spectacular Cape St. Mary's is home to a large colony of Northern Gannets, seen here in display.
Photo by Chris Benesh.

The following day was unfortunately, a travel day getting across the entirety of Newfoundland. Ten and a half hours and five hundred and thirty-three miles later, we arrived in Port-aux-Basques. Fortunately, the drive was scenic at least. Thankfully our office had secured rooms for us to get some rest before catching the ferry the following morning.

The ferry crossing was mostly uneventful. At one point there were sightings of three Manx Shearwaters and briefly a pod of Atlantic White-sided Dolphins. Once we got ashore, we visited Point Aconi, which had good Great Cormorant sightings. A few

Common Eiders, a Bald Eagle, and Belted Kingfisher were other highlights. Then it was on to Cheticamp.



Much of our land birding takes place in Nova Scotia where we see a nice mix of warblers. One of the scarcest is Canada Warbler. This male was photographed by Chris Benesh.

The next day was ours to explore Cape Breton Island. We walked the Bog Trail in the morning. A smattering of birds competed here with a good wildflower display. Then it was off to Pleasant Bay Harbour to take a boat ride to search for pilot whales. Alas, the whales were no-shows, but we did get some good looks at Black Guillemots and a few gulls, including a Lesser Black-backed Gull. We then hit the Lone Shieling Trail which had a few things. Jay picked out a rare Philadelphia Vireo right away! We also had cracking Ovenbird. Then we hiked the trail to Benjie's Lake. There was a wonderful Mourning Warbler and Blue-headed Vireo here, and a Moose standing out on the lake.

The next day was a travel day. We hit Doyles Bridge Park Reserve which was terrific. Veery showed really well, as did Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Alder Flycatcher, and American Redstart. A stop at Whycomomagh Provincial Park had good Northern Parula and a wonderful Chestnut-sided Warbler. Up at Pomquet Beach, we connected with

Piping Plovers on the beach. They had two chicks! We then made a stop for Bobolinks and found some of these wonderful birds. Then it was on to Liscombe Lodge.

We had a pre-breakfast walk here and had a few goodies. Olive-sided Flycatcher, Palm Warbler, Winter Wren, Black-throated Green Warbler, and briefly Ruffed Grouse. We then headed off to bird the Waternish Road. Such a rich area for birds. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, several warblers, including Canada Warbler, were among the highlights. Further down the road we had Golden-crowned Kinglet, and a great Blackburnian Warbler. That afternoon we birded along the Sinclair Lake Road and had a few more boreal species.

After breakfast the next morning we birded along Indian River Road and had a wonderful Spruce Grouse. Also here was a scarce Bay-breasted Warbler and Blackburnian Warbler. Then we made tracks toward the greater Halifax area, stopping at a couple of coastal spots. Some good sightings of Common Eiders. Along Dyke Road we finally connected with a couple of Nelson's Sparrows and a Short-billed Dowitcher.

Special thanks to our driver Paul who was kind, courteous, and capable, for getting us safely around Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. This tour presented a few challenges with weather and a disruptive ferry schedule. Thank you all for your patience and understanding through these difficulties. Both Jay and I thank you for coming along and exploring Atlantic Canada with us. We wish you all good health and great birding in the future.

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/271738>

-- Chris Benesh

Mammals Seen:

Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*)

Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*)

Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)

Atlantic White-sided Dolphin (*Leucopleurus acutus*)

Harbor Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)

Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)

Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)

American Mink (*Neogale vison*)

Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*)

Gray Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*)

White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

Moose (*Alces alces*)

Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*)

Herps Seen:

Maritime Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis pallidulus*)

Pickerel Frog (*Lithobates palustris*)

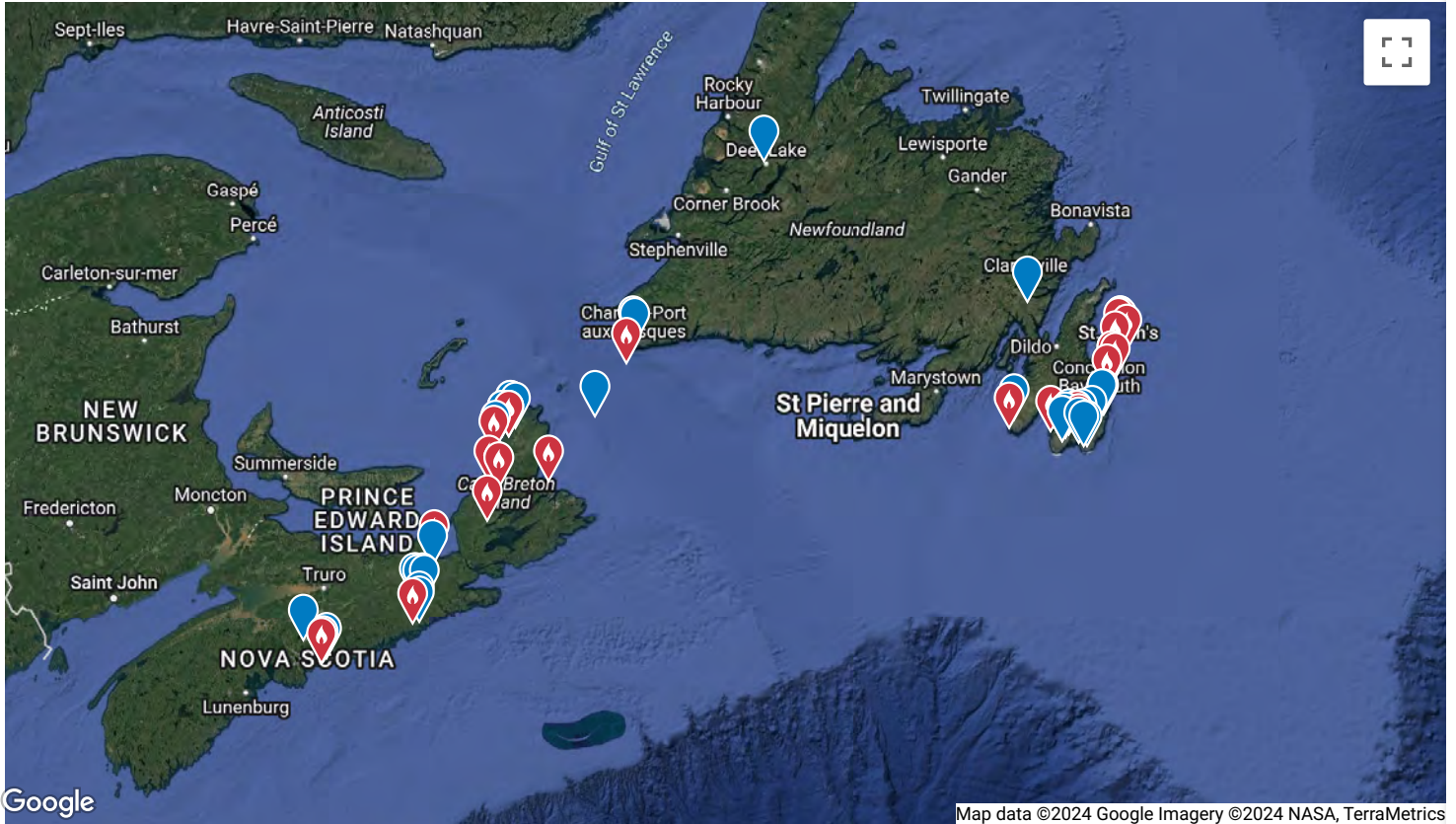
Green Frog (*Lithobates clamitans*)

American Toad (*Anaxyrus americanus*)

Field Guides Birding Tours -- NEWFOUNDLAND AND NOVA SCOTIA (with Chris Benesh & Jay VanderGaast)



1 – 10 Jul 2024 (10 days) Link-only



📍 Canada

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👤 Chris Benesh, Jay VanderGaast, fgi Triplists



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

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Mammals Seen:

Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*)
 Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*)
 Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)
 Atlantic White-sided Dolphin (*Leucopleurus acutus*)
 Harbor Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)
 Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)
 Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)
 American Mink (*Neogale vison*)
 Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*)
 Gray Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*)
 White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)
 Moose (*Alces alces*)
 Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*)

Herps Seen:

Maritime Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis pallidulus*)
 Pickerel Frog (*Lithobates palustris*)
 Green Frog (*Lithobates clamitans*)
 American Toad (*Anaxyrus americanus*)

DATA FOR: **Group (all people)** ▾

 **124**

Species Observed

 **61**





Checklists


























 **9**






Species with Photos

























Species Observed
























[Show all details](#)

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> | ▶  1 |
| 18 | Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i> | ▶  3 |
| 4 | American Wigeon <i>Mareca americana</i> | ▶  1 |
| 28 | Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | ▶  3 |

22	American Black Duck <i>Anas rubripes</i>	▶  5
6	Green-winged Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	▶  1
5	Ring-necked Duck <i>Aythya collaris</i>	▶  1
4	Greater Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>	▶  1
22	Common Eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>	▶  3
8	Surf Scoter <i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	▶  3
71	White-winged Scoter <i>Melanitta deglandi</i>	▶  4
1	Hooded Merganser <i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	▶  1
14	Common Merganser <i>Mergus merganser</i>	▶  2
2	Ruffed Grouse <i>Bonasa umbellus</i>	▶  1  2
1	Spruce Grouse <i>Canachites canadensis</i>	▶  1
31	Rock Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i> *	▶  3
3	Mourning Dove <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	▶  2
1	Common Nighthawk <i>Chordeiles minor</i>	▶  1
1	Ruby-throated Hummingbird <i>Archilochus colubris</i>	▶  1
5	Piping Plover <i>Charadrius melodus</i>	▶  1
1	Short-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus griseus</i>	▶  1
1	Wilson's Snipe <i>Gallinago delicata</i>	▶  1
2	Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶  2
2	Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i>	▶  1
3	Willet <i>Tringa semipalmata</i>	▶  1
7	Greater Yellowlegs <i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	▶  3
8	Least Sandpiper <i>Calidris minutilla</i>	▶  2
2479	Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	▶  4  5

35	Black Guillemot <i>Cepphus grylle</i>	▶  7
114	Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>	▶  4  4
38	Thick-billed Murre <i>Uria lomvia</i>	▶  1  2
7042	Common Murre <i>Uria aalge</i>	▶  2  4
2253	Black-legged Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	▶  2  11
80	Ring-billed Gull <i>Larus delawarensis</i>	▶  8
304	American Herring Gull <i>Larus smithsonianus</i>	▶  21
73	Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	▶  11
1	Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	▶  1  1
5	Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	▶  1
16	Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	▶  5
16	Common Loon <i>Gavia immer</i>	▶  7
2	Great Shearwater <i>Ardenna gravis</i>	▶  1
3001	Sooty Shearwater <i>Ardenna grisea</i>	▶  2
3	Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	▶  1
5127	Northern Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i>	▶  3  8
7	Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	▶  2
154	Double-crested Cormorant <i>Nannopterum auritum</i>	▶  10
5	Great Blue Heron <i>Ardea herodias</i>	▶  3
2	Turkey Vulture <i>Cathartes aura</i>	▶  1
2	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	▶  2
1	Sharp-shinned Hawk <i>Accipiter striatus</i>	▶  1
3	Northern Harrier <i>Circus hudsonius</i>	▶  3

5	Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	▶  3
2	Broad-winged Hawk <i>Buteo platypterus</i>	▶  2
2	Red-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	▶  2
3	Belted Kingfisher <i>Megasceryle alcyon</i>	▶  3
1	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	▶  1
3	Downy Woodpecker <i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	▶  3
2	Hairy Woodpecker <i>Dryobates villosus</i>	▶  2
8	Northern Flicker <i>Colaptes auratus</i>	▶  5
1	Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	▶  1
2	Olive-sided Flycatcher <i>Contopus cooperi</i>	▶  2
2	Eastern Wood-Pewee <i>Contopus virens</i>	▶  1
4	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher <i>Empidonax flaviventris</i>	▶  4
4	Alder Flycatcher <i>Empidonax alnorum</i>	▶  2
3	Least Flycatcher <i>Empidonax minimus</i>	▶  2
7	Blue-headed Vireo <i>Vireo solitarius</i>	▶  5
1	Philadelphia Vireo <i>Vireo philadelphicus</i>	▶  3  1
15	Red-eyed Vireo <i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	▶  9
20	Blue Jay <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	▶  6
24	American Crow <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	▶  12
5	Common Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>	▶  5
10	Black-capped Chickadee <i>Poecile atricapillus</i>	▶  6
4	Boreal Chickadee <i>Poecile hudsonicus</i>	▶  3
3	Horned Lark <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	▶  2

5	Bank Swallow <i>Riparia riparia</i>	▶  2
33	Tree Swallow <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	▶  9
5	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶  2
2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet <i>Corthylio calendula</i>	▶  2
4	Golden-crowned Kinglet <i>Regulus satrapa</i>	▶  2
1	Red-breasted Nuthatch <i>Sitta canadensis</i>	▶  1
1	Brown Creeper <i>Certhia americana</i>	▶  1
2	Winter Wren <i>Troglodytes hiemalis</i>	▶  2
26	European Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> *	▶  5
3	Gray Catbird <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	▶  2
3	Veery <i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	▶  1
1	Swainson's Thrush <i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	▶  1
8	Hermit Thrush <i>Catharus guttatus</i>	▶  6
36	American Robin <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	▶  14
9	Cedar Waxwing <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	▶  4
3	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i> *	▶  2
2	American Pipit <i>Anthus rubescens</i>	▶  1
5	Purple Finch <i>Haemorhous purpureus</i>	▶  2
9	Red Crossbill <i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	▶  1
27	Pine Siskin <i>Spinus pinus</i>	▶  5
19	American Goldfinch <i>Spinus tristis</i>	▶  12
1	Fox Sparrow <i>Passerella iliaca</i>	▶  1
12	Dark-eyed Junco <i>Junco hyemalis</i>	▶  8

11	White-throated Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	▶ 6
2	Nelson's Sparrow <i>Ammospiza nelsoni</i>	▶ 1
33	Savannah Sparrow <i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	▶ 12
15	Song Sparrow <i>Melospiza melodia</i>	▶ 9
4	Lincoln's Sparrow <i>Melospiza lincolni</i>	▶ 2
12	Swamp Sparrow <i>Melospiza georgiana</i>	▶ 6
5	Bobolink <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	▶ 1
5	Red-winged Blackbird <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	▶ 4
21	Common Grackle <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	▶ 2
7	Ovenbird <i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>	▶ 5
5	Northern Waterthrush <i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>	▶ 4
8	Black-and-white Warbler <i>Mniotilta varia</i>	▶ 5
1	Mourning Warbler <i>Geothlypis philadelphia</i>	▶ 1
15	Common Yellowthroat <i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	▶ 7
5	American Redstart <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	▶ 3
8	Northern Parula <i>Setophaga americana</i>	▶ 5
13	Magnolia Warbler <i>Setophaga magnolia</i>	▶ 6
1	Bay-breasted Warbler <i>Setophaga castanea</i>	▶ 1
4	Blackburnian Warbler <i>Setophaga fusca</i>	▶ 3
12	Yellow Warbler <i>Setophaga petechia</i>	▶ 8
1	Chestnut-sided Warbler <i>Setophaga pensylvanica</i>	▶ 1
1	Blackpoll Warbler <i>Setophaga striata</i>	▶ 1
2	Palm Warbler <i>Setophaga palmarum</i>	▶ 2

- 6 **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Setophaga coronata* ▶ 🗑️ 5
- 12 **Black-throated Green Warbler** *Setophaga virens* ▶ 🗑️ 6
- 1 **Canada Warbler** *Cardellina canadensis* ▶ 🗑️ 1
- 1 **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* ▶ 🗑️ 1

ADDITIONAL TAXA

- 14 Mallard/American Black Duck *Anas platyrhynchos/rubripes* ▶ 🗑️ 1
- 240 Thick-billed/Common Murre *Uria lomvia/aalge* ▶ 🗑️ 1
- 6 gull sp. *Larinae sp.* ▶ 🗑️ 1