

# **AUTUMN GRAND MANAN**

**AUGUST 28–SEPTEMBER 3, 2017**



**Atlantic Puffin, off Grand Manan, New Brunswick, August 30, 2017, Barry Zimmer**

**LEADERS: BARRY ZIMMER & BRENNAN MULROONEY  
LIST COMPILED BY: BARRY ZIMMER**

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**BY BARRY ZIMMER**

We departed Seal Cove on an absolutely glorious morning for our all-day boat trip into the Bay of Fundy. The temperatures were mild, and there was no wind whatsoever. The ocean was literally like glass as we headed eastward, and anticipation was high among our group. I had built up this boat trip as one of the best pelagic adventures anywhere, and in 25 years, it had never disappointed me.

Almost immediately out of the harbor, we began seeing Black Guillemots dotting the water's surface, and within the first 30 minutes we had tallied more than a hundred individuals. Great Black-backed Gulls followed our boat looking for a handout, and several Common Loons were spotted nearby. We slowed down as we approached Black Rocks and found them covered with Great Cormorants. The light was good, and the birds did not flush, so we had superb views. Numerous Gray Seals with their odd horse-shaped heads were hauled out on the rocks below. Soon, we arrived in deeper water, and shearwaters began to appear around the boat. Our chumming operation began, and within minutes we had Great Shearwaters approaching closely in the wake. A Sooty Shearwater joined in the mix, followed quickly by some Wilson's Storm-Petrels fluttering by in the distance. A couple of Northern Gannets sailed in to check things out, and a small flock of Red-necked Phalaropes went streaming past. Shearwater numbers started to increase rapidly, as we continued onward. Many cruised by nearly at arm's-length with their stunning reflections showing in the mirrored waters of the dead-calm ocean. A Pomarine Jaeger was next to appear and was followed by our first Atlantic Puffin zipping past in the distance like a chubby bumblebee. Activity was so intense now that it was hard to know where to look. Literally dozens of Great Shearwaters and a couple of Sooty Shearwaters were in tow, and some were coming up to within a few feet of the stern. Phalarope numbers took a sharp increase, as hundreds now bobbed about on the ocean around us. Most were Red, but there were many Red-necked for direct comparison. In short time, a pair of Atlantic Puffins were spotted sitting on the water, and they allowed close approach. Storm-Petrel numbers were also increasing, going from scattered individuals to dozens in view at once. Many were flying up the wake, attracted to the fish oil we had put into the water. It wasn't long before Durlan, the mate, spied a Leach's in with the many Wilson's. Its distinctive, erratic nighthawk-like flight distinguished it from the fluttery, swallow-like flight of the Wilson's. As the day progressed, we would estimate nearly 10,000 Wilson's Storm-Petrels seen (a staggering total) and 35 Leach's.

Whales were the next additions to our ever-growing list. We saw incredible Humpback displays with two different breaching individuals and two that were engaged in pectoral fin flapping. For the day, we would tally 17 Humpbacks. A lone Northern Fulmar joined the party and eventually came up to within a few feet of the boat for several minutes. This species typically arrives later in the season, so we were lucky to get one this early.

A very uncommon Lesser Black-backed Gull was spotted in the mix, and a few juvenile Arctic Terns winged past the boat. After much searching, we finally found a Manx Shearwater in with the Sootys and Greats. This North Atlantic specialty is usually high on the list of most-wanted birds for the trip.

As the day wound down, we were still missing one target, the Razorbill. Cruising through an area known as Murre Ledges on our way back into Seal Cove, we found an adult and chick that allowed amazing, prolonged studies. We had found all of our targets and had enjoyed incredible views of nearly every species. Once again, this boat trip proved to be one of the best all-around pelagic trips anywhere!

Of course, the Autumn Grand Manan tour is about so much more than just this one day-pelagic trip. The tour is timed to coincide with both landbird and shorebird migration as well. We scoured the spruce and birch forests of the island, checking out every mixed species flock we could find. In all, we tallied a record-setting 23 species of warblers, including two rarities (Black-throated Blue and Prairie) and several gems like Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, Canada, Chestnut-sided, and Magnolia to name a few. Black-throated Green was our most common warbler with a very impressive 72 individuals seen. Additionally, we found Alder Flycatcher, Philadelphia and Blue-headed vireos, and Scarlet Tanager among the migrant flocks. A pair of Boreal Chickadees was especially noteworthy, as this species is low density and often difficult to find.

On the shorebird front, we found a robust 17 species including Baird's (rare), White-rumped, and Pectoral sandpipers, and American Golden-Plover among others. Additionally, furtive Nelson's Sparrows were coaxed out of a marsh, providing decent views for all. This trip had its share of rarities as well. Two adult Northern Goshawks were seen in the island forests (the first on this trip in 20 years), a Burrowing Owl (only the second New Brunswick record ever) found in early August lingered at Castalia for our group's arrival, and Brennan spotted a juvenile Northern Wheatear (the bird of the trip!) along a rocky beach!

Incredible seabirding, the best migrant land birds ever for this trip, plentiful shorebirds, and several rarities, all combined for a superb birding adventure. With the gorgeous setting of the Maine and New Brunswick coasts, the superb seafood, and the absolutely splendid weather, this trip was hard to top!

### **ITINERARY:**

August 28 - arrival in Bangor

August 29 – City Forest & Orono Bog Boardwalk, drive to Grand Manan via Hwy 9 and Hwy 1 with ferry ride from Black's Harbor to Grand Manan (54 species)

August 30 – Ball Field Beach in Castalia, all day boat trip off Seal Cove, Grand Manan (Black Rocks, Clark's Ground, Old Proprietor's Shoal, Bulkhead Rip, The Prong, Murre Ledges) (44 species; 76 total)

August 31 – The Whistle to Long Eddy Light, Castalia Marsh, Dark Harbour Road  
(67 species; 112 total)

September 1 –Ball Field Beach in Castalia, Castalia Marsh, The Anchorage & Long Pond, Dock Road & Dark Harbour Road, post lunch to Castalia Marsh, down to Southwest Head, Miller Pond Road, Grand Manan Museum, Dock Road (74 species; 133 total)

September 2 –Dock Road, Whale Cove Road, ferry ride to Black's Harbor, Moosehorn NWR, drive to Bangor (74 species; 138 total)

September 3 - departures for home (138 total species)

### **KEY:**

M = all areas in Maine

G = all areas on Grand Manan including boat trip, plus other parts of New Brunswick

**bold-faced species** indicate birds of rare, casual, or accidental occurrence

underlined species indicate birds of very uncommon occurrence or species that occur regularly but in such low numbers as to be easily missed

### **BIRDS:**

Canada Goose G,M---almost daily

Wood Duck G,M---a half dozen at the hidden pond at The Anchorage

American Wigeon G---about 25 total at the hidden pond and at Long Pond

American Black Duck G,M

Mallard G,M

Green-winged Teal G,M

Ring-necked Duck G---two at Long Pond

Common Eider G---mostly females & young, but a few eclipse males as well; almost daily with a high count of 100 one day

Surf Scoter G---four males just offshore towards the south end of the island

Red-breasted Merganser G---unusually scarce; not seen by all

Wild Turkey M---large group of 20 or so near Amherst along Hwy 9; uncommon

Ring-necked Pheasant G

Common Loon G---five total

Pied-billed Grebe G--- spotted by Howard at the Saint George marsh

Red-necked Grebe G---distant flock of a dozen or so off The Anchorage

Rock Pigeon M,G

Mourning Dove M,G



**Burrowing Owl** G---incredibly this second New Brunswick record had been hanging out at Castalia Marsh for about three weeks; obviously a tour first, and tied for the third favorite bird of the tour!



**Burrowing Owl, Grand Manan, New Brunswick, August 30, 2017, Barry Zimmer**

Ruby-throated Hummingbird G---four total, including one from the ferry  
Black-bellied Plover G---an impressive 95 total, some still in breeding plumage  
American Golden-Plover G---one at the Ball Field Beach during the wheatear chase;  
uncommon  
Semipalmated Plover G---29 total; many close views  
Ruddy Turnstone G---one at The Anchorage; generally uncommon  
Sanderling G---seven at The Anchorage  
**Baird's Sandpiper** G---one very cooperative juvenile on the beach at The  
Anchorage; very uncommon to rare here



**Baird's Sandpiper, Grand Manan, New Brunswick, September 1, 2017, Barry Zimmer**

Least Sandpiper G---36 total, mostly bright juveniles  
White-rumped Sandpiper G---three total; good scope studies; uncommon  
Pectoral Sandpiper G---two at Castalia Marsh; uncommon migrant  
 Semipalmated Sandpiper G---235 total, mostly juveniles  
 Short-billed Dowitcher G----flock of 8 almost always at Castalia; bright rufous-edged juveniles  
 Spotted Sandpiper G---two total  
 Solitary Sandpiper G---three total in a small pond along the Whistle; uncommon  
 Greater Yellowlegs G---two total  
 Lesser Yellowlegs G---eighteen total  
 Red-necked Phalarope G---about 72 total, all from the boat or ferry; great views  
 Red Phalarope G---500 seen on boat trip, many quite close  
 Pomarine Jaeger G---a total of 6 seen; several very good views  
Common Murre G----sixteen on ferry ride from Grand Manan to Black's Harbour; uncommon  
Razorbill G---great views of a group of five from the boat just after leaving Seal Cove, plus ten additional birds split between the boat trip and the ferry rides; can be tough; tied for third favorite bird of the tour



**Razorbill, off Grand Manan, New Brunswick, August 30, 2017, Barry Zimmer**

Black Guillemot    G---122 total; many excellent views  
 Atlantic Puffin    G---44 total with several nice views of birds on the water; our first  
 spotted by Letty; tied for the second favorite bird of the tour!  
 Black-legged Kittiwake    G---23 total; scarcer than normal  
 Bonaparte's Gull    G---21 total, most from the ferry  
 Ring-billed Gull    G---incredibly only one seen the entire trip (at Blacks Harbour)  
 Herring Gull    M,G  
Lesser Black-backed Gull    G---two adults and one juvenile seen on our boat trip;  
 increasing here but still considered very uncommon  
 Great Black-backed Gull    M,G---by the hundreds  
 Common Tern    G---four total  
 Arctic Tern    G---a good year for this species with 43 total between the ferry rides and  
 our boat trip  
Black Tern    G---four seen from the first ferry ride; very uncommon migrant here  
 Common Loon    G---19 total, some still in breeding plumage  
Northern Fulmar    G---normally not seen on this tour as it is a bit early, but we had  
 superb views of one just feet off the stern for about ten minutes





**Northern Fulmar, off Grand Manan, New Brunswick, August 30, 2017, Barry Zimmer**

Sooty Shearwater    G---about 24 total; less numerous than usual  
Great Shearwater    G---an estimated 500 on our boat trip (plus an additional 137 on  
the ferry rides), some within three or four feet of us!!!; voted the favorite bird of the tour!



**Great Shearwater, off Grand Manan, New Brunswick, August 30, 2017, Barry Zimmer**

Manx Shearwater G---four total---three distantly on the first ferry ride and one much closer on our boat trip; always tough

Wilson's Storm-Petrel G---an estimated **8000+** on our boat trip (one of the best years ever!); tied for the second favorite bird of the tour!

Leach's Storm-Petrel G---repeated, excellent views between Bulkhead Rip & The Prong; often missed entirely or seen in very low numbers, but we had an impressive **35** individuals



**Leach's Storm-Petrel, off Grand Manan, New Brunswick, August 30, 2017, Barry Zimmer**

Northern Gannet    G---a total of 92 seen of varying ages and plumages; generally a good year for this species  
 Double-crested Cormorant    G---seen daily  
Great Cormorant    G---great views of 38 on Black Rocks; this species can be tough on this tour  
 Great Blue Heron    G,M  
Great Egret    M,G---four in Bangor and one in the Saint George marsh; very uncommon to rare in New Brunswick  
 Black-crowned Night-Heron    G---heard by Greg & Karen on their walk one evening  
 Turkey Vulture    M,G  
 Osprey    G---only one this year (by my van near Blacks Harbour)  
 Bald Eagle    M,G---nine total  
 Northern Harrier    G---one at Castalia Marsh  
 Sharp-shinned Hawk    G---five seen  
**Northern Goshawk**    G---two adults (one along The Whistle and another along Dock Road) were the first on this tour in almost twenty years; rare  
 Broad-winged Hawk    G,M---four total, including close perched birds along Hwy 9 in Maine  
 Belted Kingfisher    G---five total  
 Downy Woodpecker    G  
 Hairy Woodpecker    G---one at Alexandra Park  
 Northern Flicker    G---yellow-shafted variety



Pileated Woodpecker M---seen flying over the road by a few in Brennan's van the last afternoon; uncommon  
 American Kestrel M---one male along Hwy 9 the last afternoon  
 Merlin G---great show of three chasing each other near Castalia & another male attacking shorebirds at the Ball Field Beach  
 Peregrine Falcon G---one at Castalia attacking a Double-crested Cormorant!!!  
Alder Flycatcher G---two along The Whistle; scope views of the second bird; getting late  
 Least Flycatcher G---six total  
 Eastern Kingbird G---two total  
 Blue-headed Vireo G---two total  
Philadelphia Vireo G---an impressive five total; nice views; uncommon



**Philadelphia Vireo, Grand Manan, New Brunswick, September 1, 2017, Barry Zimmer**

**Warbling Vireo** G---two seen briefly; generally rare to very uncommon on the island  
 Red-eyed Vireo M,G---**41** seen  
 Blue Jay M,G---more numerous than usual  
 American Crow M,G  
 Common Raven M,G  
 Tree Swallow G----one at The Anchorage  
 Barn Swallow G---a half dozen or so at The Anchorage; getting late  
 Black-capped Chickadee M,G---our near constant companion with an estimated **189** seen in the mixed species flocks

**Boreal Chickadee** G---excellent views of a pair along the Dark Harbor Road; this species is very scarce & only seen on about a third of our visits here

Red-breasted Nuthatch M,G---generally another regular flock member/ leader but this was a down year with only 22 seen

White-breasted Nuthatch M---one at Orono and another heard at Stephen King's house; uncommon

Winter Wren M---pair along the Orono Bog Boardwalk for some; very uncommon

Golden-crowned Kinglet G---six total

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** G---one near Southwest Head; a rare migrant here

Eastern Bluebird M---family group near Amerherst

Swainson's Thrush G---one seen along The Whistle and another on Dock Road

Hermit Thrush G---one seen very well at Eel Lake

American Robin M,G

**Northern Wheatear** G---a juvenile spotted by Brennan at Ball Field Beach was certainly the bird of the tour; accidental in New Brunswick and a tour first!!!!

Gray Catbird G---four total (fewer than usual)

European Starling G---incredibly only four seen the entire trip!

Cedar Waxwing G---fairly common

House Sparrow M---always tough on this trip; one at the Bangor hotel spotted by Patti and ten or so near the Burger King

Purple Finch G---oddly, only one this year

American Goldfinch M,G

Ovenbird G---singles on Dock Road on two occasions; uncommon

Northern Waterthrush G---one seen very briefly by some along The Whistle; uncommon & late

Black-and-white Warbler M,G---18 total

Tennessee Warbler G---13 total

Nashville Warbler G---three total

Common Yellowthroat M,G---our second most common warbler with 31 seen

American Redstart M,G---23 for the trip (tied for our third most common warbler) including several stunning males





**American Redstart, Grand Manan, New Brunswick, September 1, 2017, Barry Zimmer**

Cape May Warbler M,G---an amazing seventeen total; often missed this early

Northern Parula M,G---total of 23 for the trip (tied for our 3<sup>rd</sup> most common warbler)

Magnolia Warbler M,G---22 total

Bay-breasted Warbler G---as with Cape May, this species is often missed entirely this early, but we had a record setting 18 for the trip with many excellent views; uncommon

Blackburnian Warbler G---one fall female along the Dark Harbor Road; uncommon



**Blackburnian Warbler, Grand Manan, New Brunswick, September 1, 2017, Barry Zimmer**

Yellow Warbler G---seven total

Chestnut-sided Warbler M,G---six seen with some great views

Blackpoll Warbler G---six total; uncommon this early

**Black-throated Blue Warbler** G----a female at the old dump site spotted by Woody; rare

Pine Warbler M---one hanging out with bluebirds along Hwy 9 near Amherst; very uncommonly seen on this tour

Palm Warbler M---one for some along Hwy 9 near Amherst; uncommon

Yellow-rumped Warbler M,G---only three seen

**Prairie Warbler** G----one along The Whistle spotted by Brennan; a nice rarity

Black-throated Green Warbler M,G--- the most common warbler this year with an estimated total of **72**

Canada Warbler M---two along the Orono boardwalk; often missed entirely

Wilson's Warbler G---four total

Chipping Sparrow G

Savannah Sparrow G

Nelson's Sparrow G---an impressive thirteen seen at Castalia Marsh (the race *subvirgatus*), though none posed for scope views this year

Song Sparrow G

Swamp Sparrow G---one the last morning

White-throated Sparrow G---fewer than normal

Baltimore Oriole G---one female along The Whistle

total species - 138

### **MAMMALS:**

Eastern Gray Squirrel---in Stephen King's yard  
Red Squirrel  
Woodchuck---near our hotel the final afternoon  
Common Muskrat---by Karen only  
Gray Seal---75 in one day!  
Harbor Seal  
White-tailed Deer  
Humpback Whale---about 17 from the boat trip; very close views of several, including one breaching and one pectoral fin flapping  
Harbor Porpoise---very common

total species - 9

### **BUTTERFLIES:**

Cabbage White  
Clouded Sulphur  
Blue species  
Common Ringlet  
American Copper  
Painted Lady  
Viceroy  
Monarch  
Great Spangled Fritillary  
Common Wood-Nymph---first one spotted by Rae

total species - 10

### **SIGNIFICANT OTHERS:**

lobster in various forms  
blueberries in various forms  
poutine  
**miniature golf at Durlan's Brookside Mini-Golf---Fourth Annual VENT Fall Classic---**  
Durlan = 39 (a course record!), Brennan = 43 (a personal best), Peter = 46, Barry = 49, Buffie = 54, Greg = 58, Julia = 59; Durlan is crowned the champion of 2017 (no repeat winners yet)  
Tales of the spooky girl at the Marathon, but little paranormal activity this year  
dulse tasting---yuk!  
Stephen King's house  
The Paul Bunyan statue