



Maine 2021: Mountains to the Coast

June 4 to 8, 2021

Maine is unique. It is as large as the rest of New England combined and is the most forested state in the U.S. Over 10 million acres are too sparsely populated to have local governments. “Downeast,” in and around Acadia National Park, the coast of Maine is wild and dotted with fishing villages. A spruce/fir maritime forest dominates the ocean’s edge and just inland, the world’s largest lowbush blueberry fields create unique habitat. Due to precautions for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the original itinerary of this trip was altered to base the group out of the Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park for the duration. The cool, coastal temperatures on campus were a welcome respite from the heatwave the entire region was experiencing at the time of our trip, however!



Daily Report

June 4

The group gathered the morning of June 4 at our hotel in Bangor for pick-up by our local guide, Seth Benz. Seth is the Bird Ecology Program Director at the Schoodic Institute, located in Acadia National Park in Winter Harbor, ME. Our first “welcome to Maine” birding spot was a local wetlands hotspot in Bangor just minutes from the hotel, Essex Woods. We quickly found several singing Yellow Warblers and were treated to a nesting Cedar Waxwing at near-eye-level height along the trail. A Wilson’s Snipe flew over the wetlands, and several in the group caught glimpses of Hooded Mergansers flying into the wooded area at the back of the wetlands. The group also spied a basket-shaped nest of a Baltimore Oriole, the male singing from a nearby perch.

Following our first taste of Maine birding, the group then headed “downeast” towards the Maine coast to check-in to our accommodations at the Schoodic Institute. A hearty lunch of haddock chowder and grilled cheese was just the first of many delicious, home-cooked meals that we would enjoy during our stay.

After settling in to our cabins, the group set out to bird the Schoodic Loop Road, a six-mile one-way loop around the Schoodic Peninsula. Stopping at the Blueberry Hill pull-out, we spied Great Black-backed Gulls, Common Eiders, Herring Gulls, and more out in the water.

June 5

Each morning of our stay began with an optional bird walk led by Seth, and many of the best looks at birds occurred during these morning walks. Red squirrels scolded us, while the ever-present sounds of Black-throated Green Warblers and Northern Parulas added their songs to the mix.

This morning’s adventure was to head out by boat to get an up-close look at the seabird breeding island, Petit Manan Island. Our boat, the *Tricia Clark*, is a 40-foot lobster boat outfitted for nature tours and one of the best vessels for close-access birding in the country. The seas were a bit choppy, but the group got close looks at Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, a handful of Common Murres, Black Guillemots, Common



Atlantic Puffin by Michelle Hamner

Terns, Arctic Terns, and even a few Roseate Terns.

After lunch back on campus, the group set out for an unexpected target on Mount Desert Island – a vagrant Scissor-tailed Flycatcher that had been found several days earlier and enjoyed by many other birders in attendance at the Acadia Birding Festival. After a perilous walk along a busy road, followed by some helpful location information given by the resident farmer, the group repositioned themselves across from the horse farm, scanning nearby fields and treetops for the wayward bird. Luckily, Seth soon spotted the bird sallying from a nearby tree, and all were treated to looks at the flycatcher through Seth's spotting scope.

June 6

Another early morning bird walk on campus before breakfast turned up many exciting birds, including the group's first Magnolia Warbler, as well as a singing Winter Wren perched in the early morning sunlight at the top of a tree. And perhaps one of the best finds, a flock of Red Crossbills calling and providing great looks near the dining hall!

Today's journey from campus took us 2.5 hours north to Burn Road in Topsfield, ME. This area is a working timber forest and was our best chance at finding

several boreal species such as Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, and Canada Jay. Unfortunately, as birders know all too well, just because you're searching for a bird doesn't mean you will always find it! Boreal species were not in the cards for us this morning, though several in the group heard the drumming of two Ruffed Grouse on their territories, and the group picked up its first Olive-sided Flycatcher for the trip. Many other birds were singing, but the heat of the day set in and most birds stayed tucked away in the treetops, just out of sight.

Following a picnic lunch at Burn Road, our trusty van with Seth at the helm set off back towards campus. A stop at the blueberry barrens of Columbia, ME, capped off the afternoon. We had hoped to find some of the breeding Upland Sandpipers in these lowbush blueberry fields, but a couple of Vesper Sparrows flitting about were a welcome consolation prize.



Northern Parula by Michelle Hamner

Returning back to the Schoodic Institute campus and its temperatures 20+ degrees lower than the surrounding areas was quite welcome after spending the day in record-breaking heat.

June 7

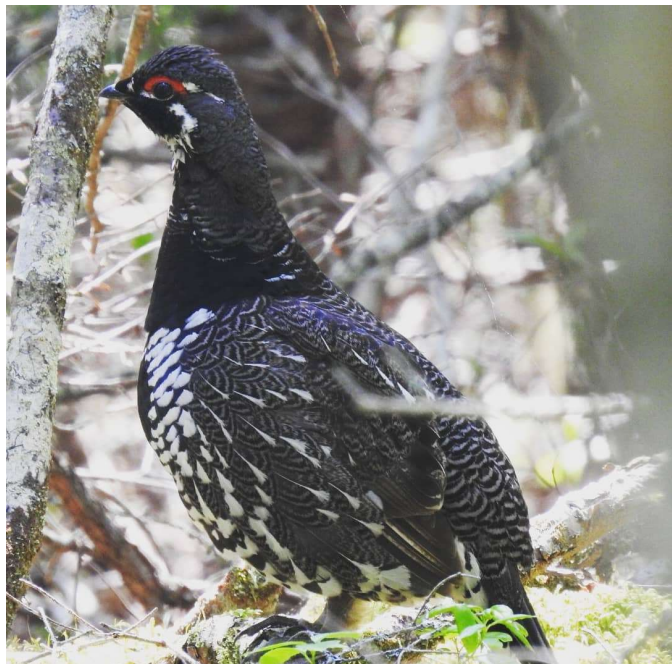
Today's mission: Spruce Grouse! Seth had three spots mapped out for us to hopefully find this "forest chicken" and iconic bird of spruce forests. Stop #1 at Petit Manan Island NWR-Hollingsworth Trail was a beautiful walk through spruce forests and along granite outcroppings. One of the trip's few shorebirds—a Willet—was heard at the trailhead, calling from the nearby shoreline.

Just inside the forested part of the trail, a nest of Hairy Woodpecker nestlings in a snag called excitedly for their parents. Continuing on to the first Spruce Grouse territory, the group encountered two women from Ohio who had been searching for the better part of a week for the grouse. After many tips provided to them by Seth, we wished them luck and continued to make our way to the next territory. Standing in cool, shaded spruce-bog habitat, the group searched high and low for our target bird to no avail. The coos of a nearby Mourning Dove seemed to taunt, "Close, but not quite." Eager to continue our search at the next location, the group made their way back to the van, where bottles of water from the cooler were quite refreshing in the mid-morning heat that had already climbed into the mid-80s.

Onward! On our way for a quick rest stop at a nearby gas station, Seth spied an American Black Duck as we crossed over the Harrington River Bridge. As one traveler backtracked to the bridge to get a better look, she spied two adult ducks with at least five ducklings trailing behind. Life birds for many!

Our second stop in search of a Spruce Grouse was Roque Bluffs, where we again ran into the group of women from Ohio. They had no luck finding the Spruce Grouse before we arrived, but we trekked into the spruce forest to give things a look for ourselves. After looking this way and that, up and down...we also gave this point in the Spruce Grouse Chase to our target. No grouse here.

Beginning to feel a bit nervous that we may be running out of options, we kept heading east towards Canada, this time stopping at Boot Head Preserve, just miles from the border. With our location so close the coast, cool temperatures and breezes were



Spruce Grouse by Michelle Hamner

a welcome surprise as we stepped off the van. We began our walk through the forest, balancing on wooden planks that led us through moss-covered paths. Just then, a beautiful male Spruce Grouse appeared as if from thin air, walking parallel to us, just feet away. We followed the grouse as he made his way further back into the trees, when he stopped and climbed on top of a log. For several minutes, the group whispered with enthusiasm as we admired this dapper bird. Soon, perhaps tiring of the attention, the Spruce Grouse peered up at a nearby spruce branch before flying up vertically onto a branch.

June 8

Our last day of birding began with another morning bird walk on campus, where we walked down to the rocky shoreline and spied Common Eiders loafing in the surf. After packing up and loading the van, we made our way to the western portion of Acadia National Park on Mount Desert Island. The area of our first stop – Precipice Trail Overlook – is the site of one of our country's great conservation success stories.

Since the 1991 reintroduction of Peregrine Falcons at Acadia National Park, these birds have successfully fledged more than 160 young falcons. As we arrived to the overlook mid-morning, a park ranger told us that the adult falcons had not yet been spotted for the day. However, almost on cue after listening to the ranger's interpretive presentation on the falcons, the male Peregrine Falcon flew into the area, landing on the bolder entrance to the nest. Soon, the larger female falcon appeared, and the group was treated to not only the soaring of the two falcons, but also to hearing their piercing calls to one another.

Our final stop of the day was the Orono Bog, back in Bangor, where we enjoyed a final picnic lunch. Following lunch, the group took a one-mile walk along the bog boardwalk where many interesting plants were seen, including blooming pitcher plants. Birds, however, were nestled down, though a singing Canada Warbler did pop out of the shrubs for a bit. Short on time, we made our way to our drop-off point in Bangor to say our goodbyes. Thank you all for a wonderful week of birding!



Bobolink by Michelle Hamner

SPECIES LIST: 113 species, including 18 warbler species and a vagrant Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Canada Goose
Mallard
American Black Duck
Common Eider
Surf Scoter
Hooded Merganser
Ruffed Grouse
Spruce Grouse
Wild Turkey
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Chimney Swift
Wilson's Snipe
Spotted Sandpiper
Willet
Common Murre
Razorbill
Black Guillemot
Atlantic Puffin
Laughing Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Roseate Tern
Common Tern
Arctic Tern
Common Loon
Northern Gannet
Great Cormorant
Double-crested
Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Bald Eagle
Broad-winged Hawk
Belted Kingfisher

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Pileated Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Olive-sided Flycatcher
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Alder Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Blue-headed Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Black-capped Chickadee
Tree Swallow
Barn Swallow
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Red-breasted Nuthatch
House Wren
Winter Wren
Marsh Wren
Carolina Wren
European Starling
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Eastern Bluebird
Swainson's Thrush
Hermit Thrush
American Robin
Cedar Waxwing
House Sparrow
House Finch
Purple Finch
Red Crossbill
American Goldfinch

Chipping Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
White-throated Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Bobolink
Baltimore Oriole
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Black-and-white Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
American Redstart
Northern Parula
Magnolia Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Black-throated Blue
Warbler
Palm Warbler
Pine Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green
Warbler
Canada Warbler
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting

Mammals

Porcupine
White-tailed Deer
Red Squirrel
Harbour Seal
Snowshoe Hare