

# Autumn migration on Grand Manan

Grand Manan Island is situated in the Northeast Atlantic Ocean and is politically a part of the Canadian province of New Brunswick. The island is literally the entrance to the Bay of Fundy, whilst habitats on the island include spruce forest, rocky headlands, marshes, ponds and little-used roads. Grand Manan has a special charm shared with many coastal communities along Canada's eastern seaboard with old wooden houses and piers reflecting the importance of the fishing industry to the local communities. September is a prime time to visit the island as migrants from further north and west are regularly blown onto, or use the island as a resting place. Our visit is also timed to coincide with the peak passage of seabirds and whales off the Grand Manan coast and includes two short pelagic trips to observe this unique spectacle of the natural world. Our base on Grand Manan is near North Head which is a major area of landfall for migrants.

**Day 1:** Fly to Saint John, the state capital of New Brunswick, for an overnight stay.

**Day 2:** This morning we travel to Black's Harbour, the ferry departure point to Grand Manan. Before reaching Black's Harbour, a visit to Red Head Marsh is planned, one of the most productive birding areas in Saint John. September brings many migrating wildfowl and wetland birds including American Bittern, Pied-billed Grebe and Sora Rail. The ferry crossing to Grand Manan is good for seabirds with Northern Gannet, Greater, Sooty and Manx Shearwaters regularly being observed. On landing in Grand Manan we visit North Head where feeders attract the commoner species: Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee and Purple Finch. Transfer to our base on Grand Manan for the next six nights.

**Days 3-7:** Over the next five days we explore the many and varied habitats of the island searching for migrants and observing seabirds. One of the birding hotspots is along Whistle Road which eventually leads to the lighthouse. Trees, gardens and patches of scrub adjacent to the road regularly produce Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Northern Flicker, Alder and Least Flycatchers, Blue-headed, Warbling, Philadelphia and Red-eyed Vireos, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets,

## Dates

Saturday August 26th - Saturday  
September 2nd 2017

Leader: Chris Bradshaw

Group Size: 8

Birds: 130-150

Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes, Cedar Waxwing, Northern Parula, Nashville, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Black-and-White and Wilson's Warblers.

Castalia Marsh is one of the premier birding spots of Grand Manan situated on the eastern shore and adjacent to the North Atlantic Ocean. The entrance road into Castalia is a magnet for migrant flycatchers, warblers and sparrows and we may encounter Grey Catbird, Eastern Kingbird, Lark, Savannah, Song, Lincoln's, Swamp and White-throated Sparrows, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Northern Cardinal, and perhaps some of the rarer migrants such as Olive-sided Flycatcher, Blue-winged, Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Cape May, Prairie, Palm and Canada Warblers and Pine Siskin. Waders use Castalia at high tide and roosts regularly contain Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, American Golden and Grey Plovers, Ruddy Turnstone, Short-billed Dowitcher and Greater and



**Downy Woodpecker** Photo: Suzanne Bowden

Lesser Yellowlegs. In the marsh and cattails we may find Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Common Yellowthroat, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Rusty and Red-winged Blackbirds although the latter two species are scarce. Raptors use the area on a regular basis and comprise Osprey, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle and American Kestrel. Further south we visit Southern Head a dramatic area of high basalt cliffs and a known area for raptor and warbler migration. Regularly occurring species are Sharp-shinned and Broad-winged Hawks, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon.

On one day we make a visit to White Head Island which is reached by a vehicular ferry. On arrival, we head towards the northern end which attracts a wide variety of birds on their autumn migration. Species seen on a regular basis include Semipalmated Plover, Spotted, Solitary, White-rumped, Pectoral and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Whimbrel and Common Tern. The inland waters and bays around White Head and Grand Manan Islands also attract Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes, Common Eider, Surf, White-winged and Black Scoters, Red-throated and Great Northern Divers.

On two mornings of our stay on Grand Manan we make short pelagic trips into the Bay of Fundy for pelagic birds and cetaceans. The deep waters are a magnet

for seabirds and we should see Greater and Sooty Shearwaters, Wilson's and Leach's Storm Petrels, Red-necked and Grey Phalaropes, Sabine's Gull, Pomarine and Arctic Skuas, Black, Common Guillemots, Razorbill and Atlantic Puffin. Nearer to shore, the harbours hold a wide range of gulls including Bonaparte's and Ring-billed. Cetaceans present in the surrounding seas in September are Fin, Northern Right, Humpback and Minke Whales, Harbour Porpoise and Atlantic White-sided Dolphins.

Ponds and lakes within Grand Manan attract Wood, American Black and Ring-necked Ducks, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teals, Hooded Merganser and the commoner herons. Patches of forest are home to American Woodcock, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Blue Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren (split from the European races), Dark-eyed Junco and American Goldfinch.

**Day 8:** A final morning on Grand Manan revisiting our favourite haunts or checking on any unusual species which may have appeared overnight. The early afternoon ferry takes us back to Black's Harbour and the journey south to Saint John. In the evening, we fly back to London where arrival is on the next morning.

## Prices

Ground Price: £1,995  
Single room: £200  
Deposit: £250  
\*Air Fare: £650

This holiday is fully inclusive of flights, ferry and pelagic trips, accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, and items of a personal nature, air passenger duty taxes and fuel surcharges.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*