

Birding Coastal Maine & Monhegan Island With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



Sept. 12 – 19, 2021

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Experience Maine's TOP Birding Location at the Peak of Fall Migration

Experience the joy of fall migration from Maine's beloved Monhegan Island. Imagine a birding holiday on a remote and picturesque island where life slows down, and there are no roads, and no cars. Monhegan's geographic position forms a natural migration hotspot, and YOU can spend a week here, with a bird expert, to learn, see, and do!

Birds flying south in migration, particularly if there are northwest winds, can get off track and find themselves at dawn out at sea. Once they correct, the almost 2-mile long island is a magnet, a patch of green where they can land for food and shelter. They find shelter in the island's spruce woods as well as the ample food sources found in the village gardens—viburnum berries, lots of seeds, and insects existing in the clusters of branches and leaf litter. Migrants include a wide variety of warblers, thrushes, vireos, and flycatchers, such as Black-throated Blue Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Cape May Warbler, Swainson's Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, and more!

The island is privately owned and has over a dozen miles of trails; 350 of its 513 acres are protected by an easement with a local conservation organization, the Monhegan Associates. In addition to the spruce woods to explore, there are gardens, rocky shorelines, 150+ ft. sea cliffs, raspberry tangles, two wet meadows, and a narrow band of red maple swamp. Less than 70 residents live here year-round, with a week's stay you'll start to feel like a local. The lighthouse site goes back to 1824 while the current light structure dates from 1856 and was automated in 1959. A bench atop Lighthouse Hills affords a fine view!

Tour Highlights

- ✓ En route to the island, bird wetlands, farmlands and coastal areas near Portland, Maine, a major hotspot for migrating shorebirds and waders
- ✓ Watch for seabirds such as Great Shearwater on the ferry ride to and from Monhegan Island
- ✓ Discover in-depth Maine's TOP eBird hotspot over your six island days
- ✓ Settle into the lovely Island Inn, known for its cozy island atmosphere, prominent location and fine food.
- ✓ Search for warblers, vireos, and flycatchers around Ice Pond, a freshwater inland pond
- ✓ Bird from the island's unpaved roads and well-established trail system
- ✓ Learn new skills with time to study fall plumage warblers, sparrows, gulls, and other groups in detail
- ✓ Relax and go with the flow of migration; each day brings a new surprise (porch time on the rocking chairs with a view allowed!)
- ✓ Bookend your island time with a night before and after in Portland as we add twenty or more species to our island list

Tour Summary

8-Day / 7-Night Maine Fall Migration Tour with Dan Donaldson
\$2995 from Portland
Airport is Portland International Jetport (PWM)



We stay at the island's largest landmark building, the historic Island Inn, dating from 1907. It has been renovated and is most comfortable, just right for simple island life. The food is truly fine dining, with some wonderful local dishes (yes lobster—even at breakfast with scrambled eggs). Take a peek at their menu on the Island Inn website. Our rooms have private bath, and most of our breakfasts and dinners will be here, with a chance to sample other island fare at lunch time. The Inn has WIFI, a common phone in the lobby, and bring-your-own for alcoholic libations.

Buildings of the small village are colorful. So are the docks, fishing gear, stacks of lobster pots, and lichens which grown on rocks and aging wood structures. Rocking chairs on the large front porch lend a view of Manana Island which protects the quiet Monhegan harbor. For the first three years of Naturalist Journey's history, we made annual fall treks with our groups to Monhegan Island, introduced to us by friend and colleague Tom Potter. After a long hiatus (so many places to go!) we are pleased to revive this trip for September 2020—timed for the peak of fall bird migration.

Join our senior guide Dan Donaldson for fantastic birding and experience the quaint, quintessentially "Maine" coastal village that is established here, home to artists in the summer and some hardy fishermen year-round. Ten miles off the mainland, we take a one-hour ferry to get on and off the island. Our tour first and last nights are near the airport in Portland, Maine.

Itinerary

Sun., Sept. 12 Arrivals in Portland, Maine

Welcome to Maine! Your trip starts today from Portland where you are met at the airport by your guide. For birding today, please plan to arrive no later than 2 p.m. If you arrive later, simply take the hotel shuttle and plan to meet the group for dinner, a lobby meet-up at 6:45 p.m. From the airport we plan to stop at our hotel, check in, and then head out for some afternoon birding. Tonight, we kick off the trip with our welcome dinner, and a chance to meet all our traveling companions and guides.

Accommodations at the Airport Fairfield Inn (D)

Mon., Sept. 13 Morning Birding | Afternoon Ferry to Monhegan Island

This morning we depart by 7:30 a.m. after breakfast and packing up our gear. We will check a few birding hotspots (mainly marshes and ponds, with hopes of secretive Nelson's and Saltmarsh Sparrow and some mainland-preferring shorebirds such as Dunlin) close to the city, and a few more as we head north to New Harbor to catch the Hardy Ferry, passing through New Brunswick. If we drove straight it's about an hour and a



half, so we have time for stops. If its good weather we will pick up seafood or a picnic, if not, we'll find some nice fresh fish or lobster rolls indoors to sample.

The good news is the ferry ride is only about an hour, you may want to be up on deck to spot possible seabirds en route. Even if foggy we should get glimpses of Northern Gannet, Common Eider, Black Guillemot, Red-necked Phalarope, and perhaps all three scoters. With good light we may spot Great Shearwater or see big flocks of migrating Blue Jay. An excellent find would include Black-legged Kittiwake mixed in with the more common gulls—Ring-billed, Herring and Great Black-backed being the most common of this clan.

We dock and have help to get our luggage up to the hotel, which sits imposingly over the harbor, commanding a lovely view. Immediately you are thrown back in time, and for the next few days the only thing you really have to do is to eat and bird! As time permits, we wander the few streets of the village where gardens provide food and shelter for migrants, getting an immediate read on the bird activity. Over thirty species of warblers have been noted on the island—you have a superb chance to see at least 25 on this trip.

The first glance at the Island Inn's dinner menu will bring you a smile, thankfully you have several evenings to make a dent in it. Start with New England Clam Chowder, Lobster Bisque, or try the Heirloom Beets. Then how about halibut, haddock or fresh scallops, or if you prefer, pork chops or several vegetarian options including Hen-of-the-Woods Mushrooms and Lemon Risotto and watercress.

Accommodations at the Island Inn (B,L,D)

Tues., Sept. 14 – Fri., Sept. 17 Four Full Days on Monhegan Island

Fall Migration is in full swing! While we never know if our check of the southeast facing beaches will reveal scores of birds arriving, we do know we'll find a steady stream of a variety of species, usually tallying about 100-120 species for the trip, depending on conditions and how we do on the mainland as well. Over the next four days, our daily plans are fluid, moving with the flow of migration and following up on sightings reported around the island. There is an excellent trail map, and we need time to both check the always-productive village and garden area, but to also make it over to sea watch areas on headlands where we gaze out for possible Cory Shearwater, Great Shearwater, Northern Gannet and Northern Fulmar. Offshore ledges and coastlines are attractive to Double-crested and Great Cormorant sunning themselves, and in quiet coves we may find Great Blue Heron, Snowy or Great Egrets, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, or a Belted Kingfisher.

Raptors use the island, with Merlin being one of the most common, to hunt birds on the wing over land and sea. Osprey and Bald Eagle call, both fairly common, as well as Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, and Sharp-shinned Hawk. Peregrine Falcons patrol the cliff areas.

Island trails are a mix, many are wide, well-marked and leisurely, some have steeper and rocky sections that when wet can require caution. All cliff edges and rocky sea areas require caution. But for the most part we move



at ease, searching for bird activity. We may split up and talk by radio to survey more areas, meeting up at viewpoints. Some of the more common forest birds include Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Blue-headed, Philadelphia and Red-eyed Vireos, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, White-throated and Swamp Sparrows, Baltimore Oriole and more. Rusty Blackbird, Dickcissal, and Bobolink are all good and regular finds.

Possible warblers? The mix changes each week of this month as migration conditions lure them south. We should see Northern Waterthrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Tennessee, Nashville, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Cape May, Northern Parula, Yellow, Blackpoll, Pine, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, and Wilson's Warblers. We will be on avid watch for Connecticut—often one of the most sought-after by our groups. Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian and Canada are all possible. This is a super opportunity to learn fall plumage of the fabulous New World Warblers, America's avian darlings.

We typically do a walk in the morning, another in the afternoon, and we make quick trips to close-in areas such as the village gardens regularly. You are welcome to take a seat at the local brewery to chat with locals, browse the galleries or explore on your own. Our pace will answer that of the birds, some years can be quieter than others, but all years are good! The basic recipe for a day on Monhegan starts with Earth, Wind, Sea and Sky, adding in birds, views, smells of the ocean, colors—natural and cultural, and always the sound of the bell buoy. We trust the island infusion will kick in to make this a most-memorable birding holiday.

Accommodations at the Island Inn (B,L,D each day)

Sat., Sept. 18 Portland | Mainland Birding Sites

After breakfast today we say goodbye to the island and our gracious hosts at the Island Inn before boarding the ferry back to the mainland. We plan to take the morning ferry off to leave time for birding en route back to our airport hotel. The spots we visit will be determined by what we still have left to see and hope to see.

Dinner tonight will be festive, a time to recap the week, talk over our highlights and enjoy one last great meal together.

Accommodations at the Airport Fairfield Inn (B,L,D)

Sun., Sept. 19 Departures | Scarborough Marsh Morning Birding

The hotel has a complimentary shuttle so you can leave any time today. For those leaving in the afternoon, there will be a final morning birding option with Dan to an area south of the city, Scarborough Marsh, which is one of the top three eBird spots for Maine. We will return to the airport by 11:30 a.m. for flights out after 1 p.m.

Guide Dan Donaldson



Dan Donaldson is an accomplished naturalist-birder based in Northeastern Ohio. Dan has developed his skills while working as a naturalist for a local park district for 15 years as well as with his full-time job as director of the local soil and water conservation district. With varied audiences from novices to experts, Dan incorporates much more than just identification in his tours and programs. Dan led tours for Discovery Tours and this is where Peg and Dan met. His specialization in birding locales ranges from the Great Lakes to coastal destinations from the Maritime Provinces of Canada to the Florida Keys. Dan has led a number of historical tours including Michigan's lighthouses.

Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Travel Information

Plan to arrive at Portland International Jetport (PWM) no later than 4:00 PM on September 12, and plan to depart after 1 PM on September 19

Cost of the Journey

The cost of this journey is **\$2995 DBL / \$3845 SGL**, from Portland, Maine. This cost is based on double occupancy and includes all accommodations; meals as specified in the itinerary, professional guide services, local park and other area entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses. The cost is based on a minimum number of 8 participants. The cost does not include transportation to or from your home to Portland or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone charges, portage, maid gratuities, or beverages from the bar.

Photo Credits

Portland, Maine, Greg Smith (GRSM); Orange-crowned Warbler, Nick Tepper (NITE); Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, NITE; Philadelphia Vireo, NITE; Magnolia Warbler, NITE; Harbor, Walter Brust (WABR); Canada Warbler, NITE; Chestnut-sided Warbler, NITE; Black-throated Green Warbler, NITE; Song Sparrow, NITE; Blackburnian Warbler, NITE; Cape May Warbler, NITE; Yellow-rumped Warbler, NITE.

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