

Maine's Monhegan Island Species List | September 8 – 15, 2024 with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guide Michael Good (NJ). Our clients include Carol, Janet, Marria, Mary D, Mary H, Michelle and Susan

Our ultimate goal was two very distinct and famous Islands along the coast of Maine; Monhegan and Mount Desert Island. Both islands were used and lived on by Wabanaki people for nearly 10,000 years. There is good physical evidence that the Wabanaki were using Monhegan Island, at least 4000 years ago and the name "Monhiggon or Monahigon" was an Algonquian word for "out-at-sea". The distance of 10 miles off shore would have been a long way out to sea for native people. It would also have been an incredibly important place for gathering food like bird eggs, fish and Harbor Porpoise. Monhegan was known to early Europeans around 1550, but it was Samuel de Champlain who, in 1604, while mapping the coastline of Maine for the King of France, named "Ile des Monts-deserts." or Mount Desert Island" and visited Monhegan Island. This began the eventual European population of Monhegan and Mount Desert Island and the beginning of birding for to two historically important places that we visited ourselves.

On Monhegan the first known "bird observations" were made by George Weymouth in 1605 where he noted that "much fowl of divers kinds breed upon the shore and rock" leading to the foundation of decades of birding and birders exploring the shores of this "island out to sea. Birding on Monhegan today has taken on a level of importance like no other place in Maine. Birders from across the country and world make their way to Monhegan during the spring and fall migrations simple because it is an amazing migrant trap and every sort of bird species has been recorded and the reason why our Naturalist Journey trip visits this location. The ecotourism arriving on the shores each year bring much needed financial income to the local people, hence the tight relationship with the birding community. The diversity of habitat, with boreal, early successional forests, wetlands, fresh and salt water, rocky outcroppings, fields and coves, making this a mecca for migratory birds desperate for respite from their journey over the water. According to Ewald (2023), there are 14 species of trees, 175+ species of wildflowers and herbs, 19 shrubs, 8 ferns and an assortment of grasses and sedges. No wonder 336 species birds have been recorded as of 2023 (Ewald, 2023). One of my favorite moments of the trip took place at Lobster Cove, on the southern end of the island. We were about to leave, when I thought I spotted a whale spout. Sure enough, a Humpback whale was seen fluking several times and we followed its movement north for many minutes. A good omen for our whale watch/pelagic trip scheduled for Mount Desert Island! We enjoyed many hours of diverse birding while staying on Monhegan. We found 79 species of birds, including 15 species of warblers. The most numerous species was Cedar Waxwing at

1092 individuals recorded. Whimbrel and Parasitic Jaeger were memorable and the comradery and fun everyone had will be a lasting memory. Mount Desert Island, home to the majority of Acadia National Park's 48,000 acres, with about 30,500 acres on MDI, is also a birding mecca. Our economy is tourism based, with recreational activities like bird-watching, biking, camping and hiking being some of the most popular activities. Our NJ group had an opportunity to walk and bird some of the 57 miles of carriage roads, designed and built by John D. Rockefeller Jr, who began building this system around 1909. We drove along the extensive, well-maintained system of paved roads, including the historic 27-mile Park Loop Road, which we experienced in the downpouring rain during our first full day. The loop road hugs the shoreline and also transects the park, including ascending 1532-foot Cadillac Mountain, which we saw in the fog and from a distance the following day! Of the 6400 plus islands, MDI is the largest in the Gulf of Maine, with an extensive diversity of habitats, forests, rocky coastlines, wetlands and watersheds. The first recorded bird records took place by the Wabanaki people collecting eggs of migratory species for nearly 10,00 years. European bird records include collections of bird eggs from "Egg Rock" where hundreds of dozens of eggs were collected for food. During the early 1880s, members of the Champlain Society, a group of student naturalists, compiled a list of 97 species found on Mount Desert Island during the summer months. In the case of warblers and other migratory songbirds, they were documenting breeding or nesting birds. Our Naturalist Journeys field trip recorded 77 species of birds, only 7 species of warblers but added many pelagic species with the AtlantiCat whale watch crew on our way to Canada. Yes! we were in Canada for all of the Humpback Whales we saw during this 3-day portion of our trip.

Summary: Our Monhegan and Mount Desert Island and Gulf of Maine trip produced 115 species of birds, 16 species of Warblers, 12 species of mammals, 4 species of Butterflies and 7 species of reptiles and amphibians scattered across these diverse habitats we traveled during our 7-day Gulf of Maine tour. We witnessed the importance of Islands in the sea to migratory species across bird taxonomy. The Gulf of Maine is now a real place for you after our spectacular pelagic trip southeast of Mount Desert Island (MDI). From Ruby-throated Hummingbird to Northern Gannet, coastal Maine is an enigma, with Atlantic Puffin and Razorbill as examples of birds breeding nowhere else in the US. The marine and coastal habitats vary as diversly as those the mainland. A semi-enclosed sea, the "Gulf of Maine" has 1500-foot-deep basins surrounded by the coast and shallower Jordan, Wilkinson, Georges and Brown's Banks, and seamounts like Cashes Ledge all giving way to the world's most diverse and dynamic marine ecosystem due to the immense amount of up-welling and nutrients available in the Gulf of Maine. The large diurnal tidal amplitude which reaches 52 feet in the Bay of Fundy, produce mixing of surface and deep water to produce the scene we all saw in Segment 9 at the upwelling 50+ miles from Bar Harbor. Birds everywhere, 44 total Atlantic Puffin counted. It was spectacular and overwhelming at the same time. The observations of large whales exceeded my expectation and the exceptional bird diversity, all point to this remarkable requirement that we must nurture our Oceans for exponential growth and maximum food production. That means enhancing our sea-run fisheries on land by revamping our fish-ladders and dams.

BIRDS: (115) species were recorded. Details are included below.

The eBird link below details the 115 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Maine Monhegan Island | September 8-15, 2024 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

MAMMALS: (12)

Eastern Chipmunk *Tamias striatus*---
Eastern Gray Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*---
Eastern Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*---
White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*---
Gray Seal *Halichoerus grypus*---
Harbor Seal *Phoca vitulina*---
Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*---
Harbor Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*---
White-sided Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus acutus*---
Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*---
Woodchuck *Marmota monax*---
Norway rats *Rattus norvegicus*---

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS: (7)

Common Garter Snake *Thamnophis sirtalis*---
Smooth Green Snake *Opheodrys vernalis*---
Green Frog *Rana clamitans*---
Bull Frog *Rana catesbeianus*---
Red-backed Salamander *Plethodon cinereus*---
Painted Turtle *Chrysemys picta*---
American Toad *Anaxyrus americanus*---

BUTTERFLIES: (4)

Monarch Butterfly *Danaus Plexippus*---
Red Admiral *Vanessa Atalanta*---
White Admiral *Limenitis Camilla*---
Cloudless Sulphur *Phoebis sennae*---

References:

[Birds of Acadia National Park and Mount Desert Island, Maine - Part One: Eastern MDI June 2022, Vol. 50, No. 3 Michael J. Good](#)
[The Birds of Monhegan, Indie Author Books 12 High Street Thomaston Me, May 2023](#)