

Summer in Maine: From Acadia to North Woods July 7 – 14, 2026 | Trip Report by Hugh Simmons



**With guides James Peterson and Hugh Simmons,
and participants Ofer, Cheryl, Julie, Jodi, Jim, Richard, Margaret, Katherine**



Tues., July 7 Arrivals in Portland | Scarborough Marsh | Higgins Beach

Our journey started at the Portland, Maine airport and the Embassy Suites hotel which was in walking distance from the airport. This would be our base of operations for birding the Portland area for the first day and a half of the trip.

After everyone's flights had arrived, we drove about 20 minutes south to walk the Eastern Trail at Scarborough Marsh where we were immediately greeted by a singing Song Sparrow. There were Short-billed Dowitcher, Least Tern, a Little Blue Heron, and Glossy Ibis. Barn Swallows put on quite a show feeding fledglings on branches just a few feet off the trail. Saltmarsh Sparrows popped in and out of the grasses but with a lot of persistence everyone was able to get a look at them. There were also quite a few surprises, like a fly-by Peregrine Falcon and a Tri-color Heron. It was a very productive stop picking up 23 species in all.

It was then on to Higgins Beach where there was a protected area for nesting Piping Plovers. After walking down the beach to the nesting area, we quickly found several adults and older chicks. Turning our gaze to the sea yielded Common Eider, Common Loon and a lot of Common Tern. It was very hard to tear ourselves away from the adorable little plovers, but the a few sprinkles of rain told us it was time to go.

We returned to the hotel to freshen up and then drove to David's Restaurant in Portland for a terrific meal.



Wed., July 8 Portland Area South | Kennebunk Plains Preserve | Wells Reserve | Biddeford Pool

After an early breakfast at the hotel, we drove to Kennebunk Plains Preserve where we would look for grassland species. Our first bird was an Eastern Meadowlark which perched up high, singing and giving us great views. Walking through the grassland and pitch pine glacial plain we also found Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Phoebe, Vesper Sparrow, Field Sparrow and Prairie Warbler. We also found, after much searching for the source of the call, Grasshopper Sparrow.

It was then on to Wells Reserve at Laudholm where we walked the field edges in search of Bobolink. We found Gray Catbird, Coopers Hawk, and Purple Finch, but alas, no Bobolink.

Lunch was at Run of The Mill in Saco Island, Maine where several of our group began trying Lobster Roll.

After lunch we went to the stunning rocky coast of Biddeford Pool and the East Point Audubon Sanctuary. Nine female Common Eider with wind-up-toy chicks in tow floated close to one of the rocky beaches. We spent some time watching them and, while doing so, also found two Red-necked Grebe and a Great Cormorant perched on a distant pole. There were also fly-bys of Bonaparte's Gull, Black Guillemot, and Wilson's Storm Petrel.

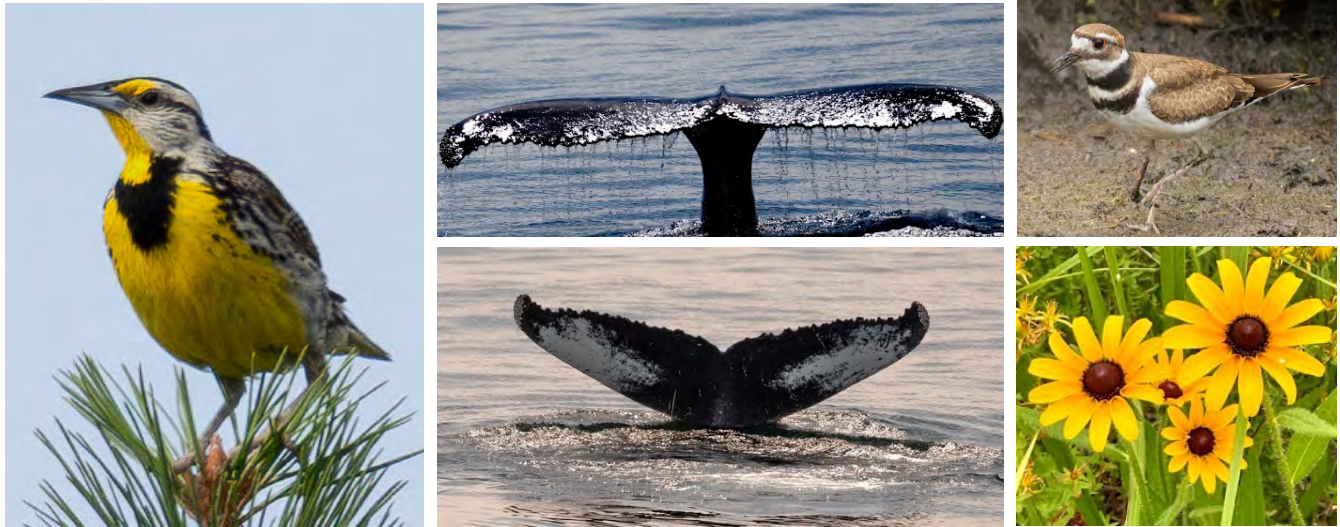
Dinner this evening was at DiMillo's on the Waterfront, a ferry converted into a floating restaurant. We had a fabulous meal seated in comfy chairs and surrounded by period maritime dark wood with harbor views.

Thur., July 9 Travel to Bar Harbor | Coastal Maine Botanical Garden

Today was a travel day so we loaded up the vans at 8:00am and headed north to Bar Harbor. We made a stop along the way to stroll around the beautiful grounds of the Coastal Maine Botanical Garden. Here we had great looks at Black-and-white Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Ovenbird, Northern Yellow Warbler and Pine Warbler. Brown Creeper, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker and Northern Parula were heard. We made a brief stop at Weskeag Marsh where there were American Black Duck, Nelson's Sparrow, and Saltmarsh Sparrow.

It was then on to finish the long drive to Bar Harbor and check into the Atlantic Oceanside Hotel where all of our rooms had great views of the harbor allowing for some balcony birding.

Dinner was at Bar Harbor Lobster Bakes where just about everyone had lobster, from whole lobster to lobster mac and cheese.



Fri., July 10 Gulf of Maine Pelagic Trip | Bar Harbor

We rose early to catch our boat for the Bar Harbor Whale Watch. It wasn't long after sailing out into the bay that we started seeing whales, several Humpback and a Minke put on quite a show. That was very exciting but, of course, we were looking for birds. There were a lot of Wilson's Storm Petrel and also Atlantic Puffin, Black Guillemot, Razorbill and a Northern Gannet.

We returned to the hotel to pick up our box lunches and then drove to the Sieur de Monts Spring and Wild Gardens where we consumed our lunches in the cool shade of the garden's trees. After lunch we walked the garden's paths through areas of different native habitats. New birds we found here were Red-eyed Vireo, Winter Wren and American Redstart.

We returned to the hotel with some free time in the afternoon and some of our group went for a walk-through campus of the College of the Atlantic which was adjacent to our hotel. This was a very productive walk totaling 18 species including: Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Hairy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Chipping Sparrow and Northern Yellow Warbler. Just as we returned to the parking lot a Black-and-white Warbler decided to hang out in some shrubs at eye-level and gave the photographers in the groups some great shots.

Since the Puffin Project Museum was closed due to lack of staff this afternoon, Hugh gave a presentation on the history of the Puffin Project accompanied by photos from his experience visiting Eastern Egg Rock and the young researchers working there.

Dinner tonight was at MacKay's Public House in downtown Bar Harbor.

Sat., July 11 Acadia National Park | Seawall | Bass Harbor

We left our hotel at 5:50 am this morning to get up on Cadillac Mountain just after sunrise. We had a clear, crisp morning and the view from up there was spectacular, looking down on Frenchman Bay to the east, the Gulf of Maine to the south and Acadia National Park to the west. A walk along the paths gave us great looks at singing Eastern Towhee, Common Yellowthroat, and Song Sparrow. There were also a few Cedar Waxwings and a Dark-eyed Junco.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast and then made our way to the southern tip of Acadia and the Wonderland Trail. Walking through the boreal spruce forest we found Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler and Northern Parula. There was also a Hermit Thrush and several Golden-crowned Kinglet. The trail came to the water's edge where there was Common Eider, Black Guillemot, an Osprey, and a Harbor Seal.

We stopped for lunch at the Nor'Easter Pound & Market where we enjoyed lobster rolls, lobster tacos, and fish sandwiches.

Our final walk for the day was at Jordan Pond. We started down a trail on the east side of the pond but spotted a couple of Common Loon closer to the other shore and circled back to the west side to get closer views and photos. We walked along the single-track boardwalk and found a perch to view and photograph the loons. Along the way we also got good views of a new bird, Blackburnian Warbler!



Sun., July 12 Millinocket | Orono Bog | Moose Cruise

This morning, we packed our luggage into the vehicles and said goodbye to Bar Harbor. Our first stop was the Bangor City Forest and Orono Bog. We began our walk taking several trails through the forest. This was our most warbler rich walk so far. We found 10 warbler species including Canada, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Palm, Black-throated Green, Northern Parula, and Ovenbird. A Nashville Warbler was also heard but stayed deep in the heavy foliage. There were also Red-eyed Vireo, Black-capped Chickadee, Hairy Woodpecker, Hermit Thrush and Cedar Waxwing. Exiting the woods we entered the Orono Bog. Here the plants were the stars, White-fringed Orchid, Pitcher Plant, and Tuberous Grasspink to name a few. There were also a Bald Eagle, Turkey Vulture and a distant, perched Common Raven.

It was then time to drive inland to Millinocket where we stopped for lunch at Knife Edge Brewing and sampled their excellent pizzas.

After lunch we checked into our cabins at the New England Outdoor Center (NEOC) at Millinocket Lake. We had a little bit of down time before our evening "Moose Cruise" on Millinocket Lake.

At 5:00pm we boarded our little pontoon boat. The sky was clear and there was little breeze which meant that the lake was smooth and beautifully reflected the shorelines, trees, sky and Mt. Katahdin. It wasn't long before we encountered our first Common Loon. There was a small group of Ring-necked Duck and a Common Merganser with chicks whose playful antics held us rapt for a bit. There was an American Beaver and a beaver lodge and a White-tailed deer browsing at the water's edge. A Common Nighthawk was heard first and then seen briefly. As the sun got low colors intensified and the lake became even smoother with near perfect mirror reflections. The boat became very quiet as everyone was taken by the peace of it all. As we made our way back, we were treated to a Common Loon carrying chicks on its back.



Mon., July 13 Baxter State Park | The Golden Road

We gathered for an early departure and picked up our picnic lunches at the hotel's restaurant. We had a hour and a half drive to the Nesowadnehunk Field Campground area of the Baxter State Park. The distance was not so great but the single track, dirt park road to get to it was slow going. Along that road a few in the first vehicle saw an American Woodcock before it disappeared into the foliage. A stop for a scenic stream with views of Mt. Katahdin also gave us a Spotted Sandpiper. Once there we parked the vehicles and began walking the area roads.

We found 20 species including: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blue-headed Vireo, Hermit Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Least Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ovenbird, American Redstart and Swamp Sparrow. Veery, Lincoln's Sparrow and Winter Wren were only heard.

We then drove back out on the dirt park road, parked in a small pull-off and walked to the Nesowadnehunk Lake Wilderness Campground where we found a couple of picnic table and had our lunch. Barn Swallow that were nesting under the eaves of a nearby building swooped about along with one confirmed Cliff Swallow. A walk around the campground after lunch gave us Northern Flicker, Blue-headed Vireo, and Chipping Sparrow.

On the way back to the lodge we took a detour up the Golden Road to the Abol Bridge and got ice cream at the Abol Bridge Store. We walked out on the bridge with our ice cream for views of Mt. Katahdin. From there, on a tip, we took a short walk down a section of the Appalachian Trail where we found three Wood Duck in a wetland next to the trail. But the real treat turned out to be a family of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker feeding on sap wells in a Birch tree. Their behavior and proximity were captivating, especially for the photographers in the group. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird even joined in making occasional forays to the sap wells.

We stopped at Pockwockamus Rock for a group photo before returning to the lodge for our farewell dinner at the River Driver's restaurant at the NEOC.

Tues., July 14 Departures from Portland

For those of our group who were interested James led an early morning walk around the NEOC lodge property. This proved to be very productive with 12 species seen including Black-throated Blue Warbler, Northern Parula, Great-crested Flycatcher and Winter Wren. But the highlight was definitely a Blackburnian Warbler that hung around and gave great views for a very long time.

Today was our departure day and we had a long drive back to Portland, so we made a birding stop to break up the drive. We left the NEOC lodge at 8:00am and arrived at the Essex Woods Park in Bangor, Maine at 10:00. This 100-acre park in the middle of developed Bangor had woods, fields, marsh, and ponds, and was rich with birdlife. Gray Catbird, Eastern Wood Pewee, and Ovenbird could be heard as we entered the woods. At the bottom of the hill the woods open to some scrub and there were American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, and Song Sparrow. The scrub gave way to an area of wetland and ponds and a Virginia Rail was heard. Searching for the source of the sound for a bit it was finally spotted working the mud near the trail. Then, to everyone's delight, it was joined by a chick! We stayed on the rail and its chick for as long as they were visible and then moved on down the trail to more mud flats, ponds and fields. In the flats were Solitary Sandpiper, Killdeer, and Greater Yellowlegs. In the ponds were Green Heron and Pied-billed Grebe. We could hear a Swamp Sparrow. In the field and adjoining trees were Eastern Warbling Vireo, Lincoln's Sparrow and Black-capped Chickadee. We were eventually faced with the reality of needing to get back on the road and tore ourselves away. 27 species in all!

We returned to the Portland airport and said our fond farewells to a new set good friends.

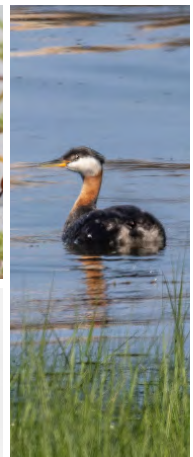
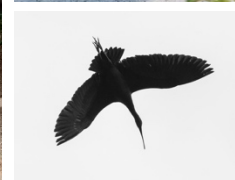
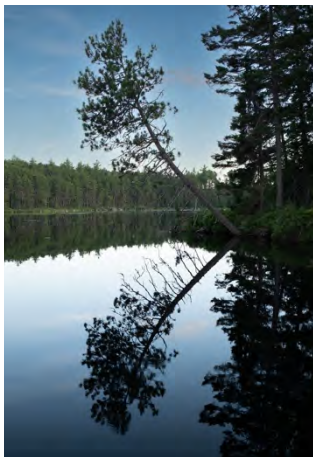


Photo Credits: Group shot (Hugh Simmons, HS), Common Loon (HS), Wood Island Lighthouse (HJ), Black and White Warbler (HS), Piping Plover (HS), Yellow Rumped Warbler (Julie Schmidt, JS), Eastern Towhee (JS), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (HS), Barn Swallow (HS), Golden-crowned Kinglet (HS), Purple Coneflower (HS), Black-throated Green Warbler (JS), Ferns (HS), Eastern Meadowlark (JS), Humpback Whale Tail (Margaret McCrary, MM), Humpback Whale Tail (HS), Killdeer (JS), Yellow Flowers (MM), Millinocket Lake (HS), White Fringed Orchid (HS), Cedar Waxwing (JS), Eastern Chipmunk (HS), Virginia Rail (HS), Canada Warbler (HS), Common Tern (JS), Millinocket Lake (HS), Group shot (HS), Least Tern Chick (Ofer Ben Tov, OBT), Glossy ibis (HS), Red-necked Grebe (JS)