

NEW ENGLAND BIRDING TOUR

Mountains to Coast!

VERMONT, NEW HAMPSHIRE, and MAINE

June 30-July 9, 2022

A birding tour organized by *Seven Ponds Nature Center & New England Bird Tours*

Enjoy the rugged, diverse, and idyllic habitats of New England, from alpine mountaintops to boreal forests and bogs to rocky Atlantic coastline.



Join us for a tour to picturesque New England with Seven Ponds Nature Center and Dr. David Hof of *New England Bird Tours*. We'll begin our tour in Burlington, Vermont, where we'll start our search for 25 breeding wood warblers along with many other breeding songbirds. From the shores of spectacular Lake Champlain to marshes, grassland, and lush forest, to the rolling countryside near the Canadian border and the beautiful Green Mountains, Vermont will not disappoint! We will make special efforts to seek out the region's primary specialist bird: Bicknell's Thrush, a mountaintop dweller. In both Vermont and New Hampshire we'll focus on birds of the boreal forest, including Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Canada Jay, and Boreal Chickadee. In Maine we'll explore the amazing rocky and rugged coastline of the northern Atlantic. From Rockland, Maine we'll take a boat to famed Seal Island NWR to witness the huge nesting seabird colony that includes Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, Black Guillemots, Arctic Terns, Great Cormorants, and Common Eiders. Before finishing our tour we'll spend time in Scarborough Marsh in search of Nelson's and Saltmarsh sparrows, among other marsh specialists, and expansive Kennebunk Plains for grassland specialists. Our trip will conclude in Portland, Maine.

Overall, participants can expect to see around 180 species on the tour, including 25 warbler species, 4 alcid species, 6 tern species, 9 flycatcher species, 4 vireo species, 4 wren species, 7 thrush species, 14 sparrow species, plus an array of raptors, owls, seabirds, marsh birds, waterfowl, and shorebirds.

TOUR ITINERARY

Our daily activities will be flexible based on species we've seen to date and recent bird reports, but the following outline provides a preliminary plan of how we will spend our days. Plans are subject to change if something due to weather conditions and/or road and park closures. Note: the birds mentioned are not intended to be an exhaustive list – just a sampling of what may be found at each location.

Day 1 (Thursday, June 30): Plan to arrive in Burlington, Vermont by mid-afternoon, and take the complimentary shuttle to our hotel. We'll have a short meeting for introductions and tour logistics before heading off to dinner. *Night in Burlington, VT.*

Day 2 (Friday, July 1): We'll start off the morning in the Burlington area to kick off our Vermont birding. We'll visit Mississquoi National Wildlife Refuge, situated near the top of Vermont's lovely Lake Champlain, and home to breeding Black Terns among other species. We'll explore the remote rolling countryside near the Canadian border, an excellent area for Grasshopper, Vesper, and Field sparrows, Mourning Warblers, Eastern Meadowlarks, and displaying Bobolinks.



We'll then ascend into the northern-most portion of Vermont's Green Mountains, where we'll get settled into our lodging and nourish ourselves with a slope-side barbecue at the legendary ski mountain, Jay Peak. Post-dinner we'll set out on a tram ride to Jay Peak's summit, taking in the sunset and the breathtaking views of Vermont's Green Mountain landscape. This gives us our first opportunity to see the secretive mountaintop specialist Bicknell's Thrush, and to be serenaded by their ethereal dusk chorus, along with Swainson's Thrush and others. This will also provide our first visit to higher elevation habitat featuring breeding Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, and Blackpoll Warblers singing their ventriloquial songs. *Night at Jay Peak Resort, VT.*

Day 3 (Saturday, July 2): We descend west from the mountains into the heart of the region known as the Northeast Kingdom, named for its remarkable and distinct beauty. Our morning birding destination is Moose Bog and the surrounding area, an excellent starting place for our boreal bonanza. This is the first of three days that we concentrate on finding the focal boreal specialists with many other great species thrown into the mix.

The boreal specialists include the residents – Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Canada Jay, and Boreal Chickadee, and several northerly breeding migrants such as Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, Lincoln's Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, and a gamut of warblers – Northern Waterthrush, Tennessee, Nashville, Magnolia, Cape May, Palm, Bay-breasted, Wilson's, Canada, and Mourning Warblers. Some of these specialties can be challenging to find, and this portion of the tour provides ample time and flexibility to search for these species.



The region also hosts a plethora of other species such as Broad-winged Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blue-headed Vireo, Winter Wren, Wood Thrush, Veery, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, and Black-throated Green warblers, and often Red and White-winged crossbills.

In the afternoon, we bid farewell to the delightful state of Vermont as we cross the Connecticut River and head into the next splendid state of the tour – New Hampshire. *Night in Pittsburg, NH.*

Day 4 (Sunday, July 3): We'll spend the day birding in the area around the Connecticut Lakes, the headwaters of the Connecticut River at the very northern tip of New Hampshire. These pristine lakes lie amongst rolling mountains and lush forest, and the region emanates a feeling of remoteness and total tranquility. This area is superb for boreal specialists, and we'll continue to take them in, as well as the many other amazing species in the North Country. In particular, this can be a great place to find some of the more challenging boreal migrants such as Philadelphia Vireo, Tennessee, Bay-breasted, Cape May, and Wilson's warblers, and Lincoln's Sparrow.

We'll take some down time at our lodging before driving up to Dixville Peak, our second mission for Bicknell's Thrush. This site sometimes hosts breeding "Red" Fox Sparrows. After dark, there will be an optional outing in search of Northern Saw-whet Owls. *Night in Pittsburg, NH.*

Day 5 (Monday, July 4): This is our final day looking for any boreal specialists or other species we may not have found so far on the tour, and we'll have the flexibility to focus on any remaining target species. We'll head west to Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge, straddling the New Hampshire/Maine border, and featuring the expansive Lake Umbagog, lovely black spruce bogs, pristine rivers, and an array of forest types. This is a prime area for boreal species, and can be especially good for Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Cape May, Bay-breasted, and Mourning warblers. The refuge also features an abundance of Common Loons, Common Goldeneyes, and Bald Eagles, as well as an abundance of moose. *Night in Pittsburg, NH.*



Day 6 (Tuesday, July 5): We'll do some final morning birding around Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge before crossing into our final great New England state of the tour – Maine. We'll drive through a stunning mountain pass where we'll stop at Grafton Notch State Park (excellent for Philadelphia Vireo). We then start our journey to the coast of Maine, stopping for breeding Black Terns and Sandhill Cranes en route. We'll explore areas near our lodging in Belfast such as Belfast Harbor, Moose Point State Park, Sears Island, and other areas. Belfast is a small, quaint coastal Maine town, and we'll enjoy two nights here. We'll top off the day with our first chance to enjoy Maine's famous lobster and seafood. This evening, we'll offer an optional nocturnal birding outing in search of nightjars: Eastern Whip-poor-will and Chuck-will's-widow. *Night in Belfast, ME.*

Day 7 (Wednesday, July 6): We'll spend the morning exploring Maine's rocky coastline, seeking birds such as loons, grebes, scoters, eiders, guillemots, and shorebirds, along with various songbirds.

This afternoon we'll meet up with our captain, and get on board a private charter to Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, about 20 miles offshore. Seal Island is home to an impressive seabird colony containing nesting Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, Black Guillemots, Arctic Terns, Great Cormorants, and Common Eiders. The Island has also been the summer home of a Red-billed Tropicbird for over 15 years, and if he has returned for another year we should have a great chance to see him. En route we're also likely to see Common Murre, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Northern Gannet, and scoters. Other possibilities while at sea include Red-throated Loon, Parasitic Jaeger, and Manx, Sooty, and Great shearwaters, as well as Gray Seal, Harbor Seal, and Harbor Porpoise. *Night near Belfast, ME.*



Day 8 (Thursday, July 7): We'll head down the coast to Popham Beach State Park to look for nesting Piping Plovers, Roseate and Least terns, early-arriving shorebirds, and potential seabirds not encountered on our boat trip. We'll also visit nearby grasslands to look for Upland Sandpiper and other species. After an early lunch we'll venture out to sea again, this time to Eastern Egg Rock, home to a thriving colony of Roseate and Arctic Terns, Atlantic Puffins, and Black Guillemots. We'll end the day in the delightful town of Freeport, and will have a chance to indulge in some shopping at several outlet stores, including the LL Bean flagship store. *Night near Freeport, ME.*



Day 9 (Friday, July 8): We kick off the final morning of birding at Scarborough Marsh, home to the lovely “sharp-tailed” sparrows – Nelson’s and Saltmarsh sparrows and their hybrids. This area can also be good for Gadwall, Little Blue Heron, Glossy Ibis, and sometimes Tricolored Heron and Little Egret. We’ll make our way to the beautiful nearby beaches hosting federally endangered Piping Plovers, as well as American Oystercatchers, Least Terns, and possibly Roseate Terns.

Additionally, we’ll take a jaunt in the Kennebunk Plains, a large expanse of grasslands, if we need another chance for Upland Sandpiper and Grasshopper Sparrow. Other stops will include the area around Biddeford Pool, a good place for terns, “Eastern”

Willet, and an excellent opportunity for shorebirds and waterfowl not yet encountered on the tour. We’ll make a final stop at the picturesque lighthouse at the rocky point of Cape Elizabeth, where we have the possibility of adding seabird species to our trip list. *Night in Portland, ME.*

Day 10 (Saturday, July 9): Plan your departure from Portland for any time today. Breakfast at the hotel. Take the complimentary hotel shuttle to Portland International Jetport. Hotel checkout is 12:00 PM.

TOUR LEADERS

Dr. David Hof of *New England Bird Tours* is an expert birder, ornithologist, teacher, and bird guide native to New England. He grew up in New Hampshire, and left to attend college at the University of Arizona in Tucson, where he began to develop his love for birding and ornithology. He then spent the next five years working as a field technician, birding, and traveling across North America – from Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, to Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, California, Washington, British Columbia, Newfoundland, and many places in between. His work and travels also took him to Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Panama, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina. He soon came to realize that there was no place he loved more than New England. He now makes his home in the heart of Vermont’s Green Mountains, and considers New England to be the most beautiful place on Earth and his favorite place to go birding.



Through his field research and birding, Dr. Hof has developed an intimate knowledge of New England’s birds, and the places to find the specialties throughout Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. As an ornithologist, he specializes in songbird behavior and ecology, and in particular the songs and communication of warblers. He conducts most of his field research on Black-throated Blue Warblers and other warbler species in Vermont.

Dave also has a passion for teaching, and there’s nothing he enjoys more than sharing his love for birds and New England with others. He teaches courses in Ornithology and Animal Behavior, and especially likes giving public talks and leading nature walks and bird tours. Dave has an animated and warm personality, and his enthusiasm and excitement makes him a delightful tour leader.

Daryl Bernard is a long-time birder and amateur naturalist who loves being outdoors and embraces every opportunity to share nature with others. He enjoys organizing trips and tours, and strives to ensure that every participant has a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Daryl has organized and led numerous birding field tours throughout North America, many local birding trips in Michigan, and bird walks for Seven Ponds as well as birding festivals. Daryl is the Executive Director at Seven Ponds Nature Center in southeast Michigan, and regularly presents birding programs at Audubon clubs, libraries, and birding festivals.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Lodging for this tour will be in multiple locations as we move through Vermont (two nights), New Hampshire (three nights), and Maine (four nights). Due to the remoteness of many of our destinations, lodging options will vary from modern chain hotels to quaint basic motels.

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

We will travel in a single 15-passenger van. Keeping the group together in one van allows everybody to get on the same birds while on the road, and helps develop group camaraderie. Since we will be packing up often during the tour, we ask that you travel as lightly as is practical. This will help maximize space in the van.

MEALS

All meals are included in this tour, from dinner on Day 1 (arrival day) to breakfast on Day 10. Some breakfasts will be provided by our hotels, continental-style, while others will be provided by the trip leader. We will keep the van stocked with various snacks to tide you over between meals. Lunches will be mostly in the field, picnic-style. For dinner each evening we will enjoy a different restaurant near our destination town. As with the lodging, due to the remote nature of many of our destinations, restaurant options will be limited at times.

FEE and REGISTRATION INFORMATION

- Tour Fee: \$3,100 per person in double occupancy from Burlington, Vermont
- Deposit: \$300 (due with online registration)
- Final Payment Due: June 1, 2022
- Group size is limited to **8 individuals** and early registration is encouraged

WHAT THE TOUR FEE INCLUDES:

- guide service for eight full days of birding – David will be with us every step of the way
- lodging for nine nights
- airport-hotel shuttles
- all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 10
- local ground transportation in a single, 15-passenger van
- boat trip to/from Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge via private charter
- boat trip to/from Easter Egg Rock
- all park entrance fees, parking fees, tolls, etc.
- pre-trip information and a post-trip mailing with an annotated list of all birds observed by the group
- eBird checklist sharing (for participants who use eBird)

WHAT THE TOUR FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- your airfare **to** Burlington, Vermont and **from** Portland, Maine
- personal snacks, additional drinks, and alcoholic beverages
- laundry
- other items of a personal nature
- gratuity for local birding guide services (optional)

ONLINE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN ON TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2022 at 9:00 AM

Registration for this tour will take place online at www.sevenponds.org with a \$300 deposit due at the time of registration. At the Seven Ponds home page, go to Programs then Seven Ponds Field Tours and select the New England Birding Field Tour registration button. You should receive an email confirmation upon successfully completing your online registration. Registered participants will be mailed a registration form to return.

For more information, contact Daryl Bernard at (810) 796-3200 or (989) 513-5195 (cell)
or via e-mail at dbernard@sevenponds.org.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS:

Bicknell's Thrush

Boreal Chickadee

Black-backed Woodpecker

Razorbill

Saltmarsh Sparrow



This Red-billed Tropicbird was first reported at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge in 2005. Troppy, as he is affectionately known, has subsequently been observed every summer since then, generally arriving on the island by late May and staying until mid-August. The bird usually emerges from its burrow around mid-afternoon, then circles around the island for a short time before heading out to sea for some fishing. These photos were provided courtesy of David and Tammy McQuade, who enjoyed nearly 40 minutes with Troppy in 2021. Our boat trip to Seal Island will be timed to put us in position to see this amazing bird. Hopefully it will return for 2022 and will be present during our trip. Regardless, the boat trip to Seal Island NWR will not disappoint!