



This is
NOVA SCOTIA
Canada's Seacoast

Birders are Migrating to Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia is a wonderful place to go birding, with superb scenery, good travel infrastructure, and discoveries around every curve of the road and cove of the shoreline. But what is it that particularly appeals to visiting birders? The province's birding attractions are linked to spectacles, spaces, and species.

SPECTACLES

Everyone, even non-birders, can appreciate a good natural history spectacle, an important consideration when birders travel with non-addicted family members or friends.

The finest avian display is arguably the southward migration of Arctic-nesting shorebirds through the Bay of Fundy. Millions of diminutive sandpipers refuel in the rich mudflats exposed by the world's highest tides, and when the twice-daily high tides cover the mud, the birds (primarily Semipalmated Sandpipers) usually concentrate in enormous flocks wherever the mud remains uncovered the longest. This migration period extends from mid-July through early October, but the largest flocks, sometimes in excess of half a million birds, typically occur in the second and third weeks of August. Good viewing locations include the Causeway behind the Information Centre in Windsor, Grand Pré beach in Kings County, and the picnic site beside Route #215 at Cheverie, in Hants County. Along the Atlantic coast shorebird flocks are smaller, but contain more species. Good vantage points include the Salt Marsh trail in Cole Harbour near Halifax, and off the south end of Cape Sable Island (linked by a causeway to the mainland).

From June through October the Bay of Fundy is popular with whales and whale-watchers, and the abundance of food that attracts the whales also appeals to seabirds. While the number and variety of whale sightings varies on whale-watching trips out of Brier and Long Islands, there are invariably large numbers of seabirds sighted, making Nova Scotia the easiest, most affordable, and most reliable spot in eastern North America to see thousands of shearwaters

(Greater, Sooty and Manx), storm-petrels (both Wilson's and Leach's), and phalaropes (Red and Red-necked), as well as numerous puffins, razorbills, fulmar, jaegers, and occasionally rarer species such as skua.

Nova Scotia, in common with other areas of Atlantic Canada, does have seabird colonies, and while they are generally smaller than those found in Newfoundland or Quebec, they are less remote and more accessible. Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, Great Cormorants, and Black-legged Kittiwakes reign over the Bird Islands off Big Bras d'Or in Cape Breton, but tolerate thrice-daily visits by Bird Islands Boat Tours, and visitors to famous Peggy's Cove or Lunenburg enjoy half-day boat excursions to nearby Pearl Island to view a small puffin colony there. Gulls and terns nest in dozens of colonies along the length of the province's Atlantic coast, and Canada's largest Roseate Tern colony lies on The Brothers, off the village of Lower West Pubnico in Yarmouth County.

Winter offers its own spectacle, when nearly a thousand Bald Eagles descend on the Annapolis Valley in Kings County, feeding on the largesse of a thriving poultry industry. Sheffield Mills hosts the annual winter Eagle Watch Celebration [<http://www.valleyweb.com/eagle/>], increasingly popular with each passing year.

SPACES

Nova Scotia's scenery is renowned, and with such a backdrop even a quiet day's birding is a pleasure. Two of Canada's finest national parks bracket the province, Kejimikujik in the south and Cape Breton Highlands in the north, both with extensive trail systems, visitor facilities, and informed staff. Elsewhere there are dozens of smaller provincial parks, picnic sites, and beaches. In addition the man-made freshwater marshes at Belleisle, Robert's Island, and Amherst, provide a fine contrast with the natural salt-marshes that still frame so much of Nova Scotia's shoreline.



For more information, go to
www.novascotia.com/travelmedia



Visiting birders, especially those from Europe or urban United States, enjoy the absence of crowds, and the freedom to wander almost anywhere the urge takes them. The joy of watching shorebirds on a nearly-deserted pristine beach, or listening to warblers sing along well-maintained and secure trails, is an experience rare or absent in much of the world.

SPECIES

While there are no species unique (endemic) to Nova Scotia, the province has developed a reputation as a reliable and logistically-friendly base to seek out certain much sought-after birds, including boreal forest specialities (Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadee, Black-backed Woodpecker, White-winged Crossbill), winter birds from the high arctic (Dovekie, Black-headed Gull), seabirds (Manx Shearwater and Great Skua), and regional specialities (Bicknell's Thrush that breeds in the Cape Breton highlands, and the Ipswich race of Savannah Sparrow, that breeds only on offshore Sable Island, home of the famous ponies).

Even without the lure of these special birds, the province is well-situated in all seasons. The surrounding ocean moderates the climate, and the cooler summers mean that northern species like to breed here. Twenty-two species of warbler grace our forests, among our 180+ breeding species. The ocean also moderates the winter, with nearly 200 species sighted each year between December and February. And because Nova Scotia lies at the eastern end of the continent, and half-way between the pole and the equator, many waifs and rarities are found here, comprising more than 30% of the province's impressive total of 455 species. Visits to Nova Scotia's migrant traps in spring and autumn are exciting, with the often-realized anticipation of something unusual about to appear in the next tree or clearing. The most popular migrant traps include Brier Island in Digby County, Cape Sable Island in the southwest, Hartlen Point near Halifax, and Schooner Pond in Cape Breton.

BIRDERS AND THEIR NEEDS

Many birders enjoy visiting a destination that offers a variety of different landscapes and bird species and experiences, in a setting that offers the full range of expected tourism facilities. Most such visitors to Nova Scotia do so independently, in small groups or as a family vacation, although a few professional nature-tour companies offer itineraries.

Whether birders are travelling to Nova Scotia specifically for a birding holiday, or are simply trying to fit in some birding around a business trip or family vacation, they need information.

Nova Scotia's combination of birds, scenery, and tourism facilities makes it an ideal destination for every discerning birder. And if they

are travelling with non-birding friends or family, the non-birders can be distracted by the province's culture, landscapes, shopping, history, and entertainment.

Visit www.novascotia.com for more information.

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