

**Welcome to the 1st edition Field Guide to the Birds of Mount Desert Island and Hancock County**

By Michael J. Good, MS

This Field Guide is dedicated to Down East Maine's unique natural beauty and highlights outstanding places for bird watching in Hancock County. The diverse landscape echoes the biological diversity of the coastal "Down East & Acadia" region, which offers the most interesting birding in the State of Maine. National Audubon Society, the American Bird Conservancy, and the National Geographic Society have identified several Down East birding locations as "Important Bird Areas in the US". I have spent a lifetime traveling Gulf of Maine's waterways, exploring her islands, and seeking life meaning from the tundra mountain home of Pamola, Kadahdin and the American Pipit. Over 317 species of birds can be found in Maine and our surrounding waters. I recommend that you take your time and slowly seek out these thirty-four places for their bird habitat and your peace of mind.

The Penobscot River watershed, namesake of the Penobscot Indians, is the gateway to Hancock and Washington County from the west. Encompassing 8,500 square miles, it is Maine's largest and most diverse ecosystem with millions of acres of ecologically important wetland, coastal estuary and riverine habitats utilized by vast numbers of year round endemics, Neotropical migrants and wintering waterfowl. Maine's extensive watersheds are fed by 8-10,000 year old heaths, bogs, fens, lakes and ponds gouged out by the Wisconsin glacier, which lasted 80,000 years, retreating 16,000 years ago. Boreal and northern hardwood forests, bogs, fresh-and salt-water marshes, grassy and shrubby fields, streams and lakes, steep rugged headlands, extensive tidal flats, and coastal islands make birding Down East Maine an adventure of a life time.

By removing dams and building fish passages, the Penobscot River Restoration Project will render meaningful the Penobscot Indian Nation's federally recognized sustenance fishery rights and revitalize river-related cultural and spiritual practices while also restoring unimpeded flow to the Ocean. Historically, Down East river systems like the St. Croix, Machias, Pleasant and Narraguagus were important trade routes and offered the most practical access for Wabanakis Indians between the coast and the interior. The river valleys are home to Beaver, Moose, White-tail Deer, Bear, Fisher, Mink, Bobcat and Coyote. For 10,000 years people and birds have survived on Sea-run fish like Atlantic Salmon, River Herring, Sturgeon and American Eel, all dependent on the rich biodiversity of

the Gulf of Maine. On the open ocean, millions of Pelagic birds forage on plankton fed copepods, krill and fish all nourished by billions of gallons/year from Maine's rivers.

During spring bird migration, Down East watersheds are traditional migratory corridors for millions of birds each year and provide uninterrupted northerly access into the Northern Forest, the Boreal Forest of Canada and Tundra. River arteries provide food for fish eating birds, insects for tropical migratory species and also nourish the commercially important fisheries of the Gulf of Maine such as Cod and Haddock.

Avian sightings vary with the seasons. Spring and summer birds are "neotropical migrants" meaning they winter in South & Central America or the West Indies; Twenty species of Warblers, nine Flycatchers and seven Thrush. During the fall and winter months the birding is highly rewarding with many boreal forest and tundra nesting birds retreating south in front of cold arctic air; Gyrfalcon, Snowy Owl, Black Scoter, Long-eared Owl.

Large flocks of Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Goldeneye and Merganser forage in nutrient rich coastal hotspots. Our diurnal tidal range of up to twenty-eight feet exposes vast mudflats for migrating Sandpipers and Plovers. From our coastal harbors and whale watch boats you will find pelagic birds and the largest breeding colonies of Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill and Common Murre. We also have Boreal species, including Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadee, Black-backed Woodpecker, gregarious Gray Jay and prime nesting habitat for American Woodcock. Many raptors nest here including Eagle, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, and all three Accipiter's, American Kestrel, Broad-winged and Red-tailed Hawk.

. Nesting waterfowl include Gadwall, American Black Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Wood Duck, both Teals, Common Eider, and Merganser. Other significant nesting birds include Common Loon, American Bittern, Sora, Virginia Rail, five owls, Marsh Wren and Nelson's Sharp-tailed, Vesper, and other Sparrows.

You also may find Herons, Scoters, Plovers, Upland and other Sandpipers, Wilson's Snipe, Common Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a half dozen other woodpeckers, several Swallows, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing and several irruptive Finches.

Flying thousands of miles from South America along the eastern flyway and across the Atlantic Ocean, Neotropical migrants reach our coastal shores hungry and tired. You can feel their energy as they forage along these watery ways, north toward ancestral breeding grounds or south for the winter. These are the

## First Edition FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF MOUNT DESERT ISLAND AND HANCOCK COUNTY - Jan 2010

mysterious lands of Down East & Acadia Maine, where delicate flute-like songs of Swainson's Thrush mingle with long cascading trills of a Winter Wren or the tropical whistle of an excited Great-crested Flycatcher.

The scenery of Down East Maine is at times surreal and spectacular. Amidst dense forests, breath-taking views emerge from ridge-lines and open expanses of water mirage with islands big and small. The land is hard; a mix of rock, pine needles, serpentine tree roots and wintery streams. Springs are happily bug free, summers are delightfully cool, autumns present a brilliant display of color and winters are pronounced with thick lake ice and a sincere quite seldom experienced. Coastal Maine is awash in rocky fields of wild blueberries and outcroppings green grinning with reindeer lichen. Every turn reveals new habitat and breathtaking vistas and abundant birds. Please join us in appreciating and conserving this significant resource for generations to come.

The eastern side of the Penobscot River in Knox County offers the finest introduction to Hancock, County with three locations you do not want to miss. Enjoy good birding!

**1. Fort Point State Park & Lighthouse** Established in 1836 to aid the growing number of ships navigating the Penobscot, Fort Point State Park occupies a long peninsula with panoramic views of the Penobscot River and Penobscot Bay. On its 120 acres, the park features more than a mile of rocky shore, a tidal sandbar, and diverse habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Here at the narrows the river is still mixing with the salt water where you will find Black Guillemot, Common Eider and even an occasional Northern Gannet during fall migration. Belted Kingfisher, Spotted and Semipalmated Sandpiper and Plover may be seen along the shoreline while Great Blue Heron, American Bittern and the occasional Great Egret may be seen in the wetland habitats. Directions: From Rt. 1 south make a right at Stockton Springs onto West Main St. Go 4 blocks and right on Cape Jellison Rd. Bear to the left to State Park Rd.

**2. The Penobscot Narrows Observatory and Fort Knox.** A one-minute ride on the fastest elevator in northern New England will take you to the top of the tallest public bridge-observatory in the world. This is where the beauty of the Penobscot River and surrounding countryside is immediately apparent as the elevator door slides open to a dizzying view from 420 feet up. The first birds you might see along the mouth of the Penobscot-Bucksport Bay are Osprey and Bald Eagles foraging on the Sea-run fish such as, Alewives and Salmon. As a keystone species, river herring are a required food for Birds, Mammals, Fish and Human. Keep your eyes open for Peregrine Falcon and insect

foraging Tree and Barn Swallow. Directions: From Rt. 1 take a left before the bridge on Rt. 174 .75 miles to **Fort Knox**, Maine's largest historic fort, features stunning military architecture and master granite craftsmanship. Constructed between 1844 and 1864 there are excellent views of Spotted Sandpipers, Kingfishers and Peregrine Falcon. Many species of Warblers, Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos can be found where the forests meet the river. (207) 469-7719. **Town of Bucksport**, The first inhabitants of Bucksport were a 5,000 year old prehistoric culture known as the Red Paint People of Penobscot Indian descent. These first nation people understood the ecological bounty produced by the watersheds of the coastal region. (See Blue Hill Falls and Peabody Museum of Archeology) Historic Bucksport village was a hub for shipbuilding and fishing through the 1800's. Today it is home to Vesper Paper Company. Find time to bird along the Bucksport river-walk to find Great Black-backed and, Laughing Gull, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Bald Eagle, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Yellow-rumped and Parula Warbler. Follow Rt. 175 south to Rt. 166a for a memorable ride through blueberry barrens and unique wetlands on this glacially sculpted peninsula to the **Town of Castine**, home of the Maine Maritime Academy. Be sure to check out the *Hatch Cove Preserve* which encompasses a significant portion of the fields on either side of the Castine Road (Rt. 166). It consists of 10 acres on the east side of the road and 20 acres on the west side bordering the Wadsworth Cove Road. These fields are open to the public at all times. Another place not to miss is the *Rene Henderson Natural Area*. The largest property in Castine owned by the Conservation Trust [ctbcp@prexar.com](mailto:ctbcp@prexar.com), its 90 acres include a small pond (the "ice pond"), wetlands, and on the upland ground, stands of soft- and hardwood trees. Numerous Neotropical migrants move through this area in spring and there is a large number of nesting birds in this multi-use area. Two well-marked trails are the Eagle Trail (pink markers) and the Garden Club Trail (orange markers). The Eagle Trail is roughly U-shaped and follows the boundaries of property.

**3. Craig Brook Fish Hatchery.** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife operates a fish hatchery downstream of the Great Pond Mountain Wildlands and is the entry point into the **Dead River parcel** of Great Pond Mountain Wildlands. Take a left off of Rt. 1. Travel about 1.5 miles on Hatchery Road. 469-6701 Look for Common Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Dowitcher, and occasional Whimbrel as well as numerous raptors, Flycatchers and Warblers at the waters edge of Alamoosook Lake.

**4. Great Pond Mountain Wildlands.** The 4200-ac area at Great Pond Mountain Wildlands varies greatly in its topography, vegetation, and past land use. The

Wildlands are made up of two large but separate parcels around Great Pond Mountain; *Hothole Valley and the Dead River parcel*. You can access its 17 trails and 16-mile logging road system on the left hand side of Rt. 1 about 1/10 mile before the Rt.176 intersection. Here you will find a pullout and parking area marked with a GMPW sign; maps and brochures are available. These protected lands traverse through Hothole valley where you can leisurely explore harvested forests, hilltops, river and pond shoreline and numerous noteworthy wetlands, vernal pools, streams, shrub openings and log landings. You can ride your bike or hike but either way this is a gem for any coastal Maine trip. Two pristine watersheds are included in the Wildlands and flow through very unique geology emptying into the Penobscot Bay. Consisting of Hardwood and Cedar Spruce Seepage Forests and beaver meadows one can find Canada , Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, Palm, Black-throated Green, Nashville and Chestnut-sided Warbler. Whip-poor-will and Common Nighthawk along with Wild Turkey, Spruce and Ruffed Grouse are easily found. Numerous Flycatchers, Thrushes and Vireos are seen throughout the Wildlands. Great Pond Mountain Conservation Trust (207) 469-7190

**5. Holbrook Island Sanctuary.** Upland forests, unique wetland habitats, open fields and an offshore island provide the best birding on the Cape Rosier peninsula. Holbrook Island Sanctuary is managed as a nature and wildlife sanctuary. It has well-maintained hiking trails, picnic tables, and considerable shore frontage, but the real stars are the plants and animals. You should easily see or hear 15 species of Warblers, Alder and Great-crested Flycatcher and many nesting Woodpeckers are common. American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Swamp Sparrow and Common Yellowthroat in the wetlands while Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Canada Goose, Blue-winged Teal, Long-tailed Duck, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter are seen at the oceans edge. Directions: from East Orland take Rt.15 south. Left on Rt. 199 towards Penobscot. Follow Rt. 175 3.5 miles. Left at Grays Corner across the Bagaduce reversing falls. In North Brooksville take a right and a quick left onto Varnumville Road about 1.7 miles take a left on Rt.176. Go 1.2 miles to left on Cape Rosier Road. Look for brown Holbrook Sanctuary sign. Go west 1.3 miles to Indian Bar Road. You made it!

**11. Blue Hill Falls.** The village of Blue Hill Falls is a small community near the more well known Blue Hill. Blue Hill Falls is known for its annual sea run migratory fish and got its name from the rare reversing falls that is created by the tide funneling into a narrow channel. The seawater forms a standing wave, up to three feet in height. Birds are attracted to these unique watersheds because of abundant fish and include Red-breasted and Hooded Mergansers, Bufflehead, Common Loon, Black Guillemot and Common Eiders frequent the falls. Watch

for Warblers and many other Neotropical migrants near and around the falls. This is a good stop on your way to Deer Isle. **Blue Hill Town Pier.** When it was first settled in 1762, Blue Hill's economy was centered on shipbuilding and trading by sea. The Town was incorporated in 1789 and is known for culture with its fine library, Kneisel Hall chamber music, many artists and galleries, and more. The mud flats at low tide are good places to for Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers, the occasional Great Blue Heron or Great Egret and many duck species including Red-breasted and Hooded Mergansers. Look for many Neotropical Migrants along the coastal forests.

**12. Blue Hill Mountain and Old Morse Farm** Blue Hill Mountain is the prominent peak that gives the town of Blue Hill its name. With spectacular views of Mount Desert Island, this is a hill of multiple uses, all of which improve the birding. Much of the hill is maintained for blueberries and open grassland, making it one of the best places to find Field Sparrows, Eastern Towhees, Indigo Buntings, and Brown Thrashers this far north along the coast. Blackburnian and Black-throated Blue warblers are among the dozen regular warblers to be found in the mature forested areas. Golden-crowned Kinglets and Winter Wrens are common in the scrubby, evergreen areas. At the base of the mountain, look for Willow Flycatchers and the occasional Savanna and Lincoln Sparrow. In autumn, migrating raptors like Broad-winged, and Red-tailed Hawk or Gyrfalcon pass along the ridge-line of Blue Hill Mountain. Two steep one-mile trails lead from the Mountain Road in Blue Hill to the 974-ft summit. A loop hike can be created by walking a short connector trail. Easily accessible walks with excellent birding. THE OSGOOD TRAIL is approximately 1 mile to the summit, taking about 35-45 minutes each way. This trail is easy to moderate and mostly wooded with loose rock, exposed roots and some ledges and several sets of stone stairs. Directions: Look for Mountain Road stretching between Routes 15 and 172 just north of Blue Hill Village. Blue Hill Heritage Trust 374-5118 **Kingdom Woods Conservation Area** Visit Fourth Pond, explore this 800-acre preserve, and hike over three miles of trails. Kingdom Woods Conservation Area in Blue Hill consists of over 800 acres, 3 miles of trails and the entire shore of undeveloped Fourth Pond. The property also includes the upper watershed of Carleton Stream, and a variety of freshwater wetland and upland habitats. Bird species include Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Alder and Great-crested Flycatchers, Warblers and Scarlet Tanager. Look for Common Merganser on migration, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Common Loon, Green-winged Teal or Ring-necked Duck on Fourth Pond. There is habitat for Black-backed and Three-toed Woodpeckers and Spruce Grouse. **Fourth Pond** occupies an area of ~ 50 acres and is one of the few undeveloped ponds on the coast of Maine. Directions: Park in a small lot on the Kingdom

Road, 1.5 miles from Rte. 177, to access two loop trails and a connector trail. A third loop trail can be found at a second lot, 0.2 mile further along the Kingdom Road. A small pull-off across the Mines Road provides access to the southern section of the conservation area.

**13. Ellsworth to Amherst.** Following Rt. 181 or Rt. 179 out of Ellsworth provides excellent birding and beautiful vistas along the Union River watershed. Make stops along Graham Lake and numerous small tributaries and wetlands for Canada Jay, Wood Thrush and American Redstart. Stop at the Green Lake Fish Hatchery a large scale, cold water, fish enhancement facility 667-9531. Ovenbird and Magnolia Warbler are plentiful in the mixed conifer forests while Canada Warbler, Northern Waterthrush and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher can be seen around cedar bogs. Access the Union River by canoe about .5 miles north at Tannery Road.

**14. Birdsacre Stanwood Wildlife Sanctuary** Drive south on Rt. 3 towards Mount Desert Island. After you pass the shopping area you will see the sign on the right. You will find many species of Warblers and other Neotropical migrants along many miles of well marked trails. Find Spruce Grouse, Vireos and Flycatchers on 200 acres of mixed forest. For people with disabilities, a wonderful planked trail meanders through a forested wetland. 667-8460 [www.birdsacre.com](http://www.birdsacre.com)

### **15. Mount Desert Island, Maine (MDI)**

**Thompson Island:** In Ellsworth, Route 1 takes a sharp turn northward, heading along the coast toward Canada. Meanwhile, Route 3 diverges and runs due south to *Mount Desert Island*. The 15-minute drive between Ellsworth and MDI is scenic, with salt marshes and ponds that contain Mallards, American Black Duck, and occasionally Hooded Merganser. This section of road is most notable for its lobster pounds, particularly the Trenton Bridge Lobster Pound. It's been run by the same Maine family since 1956 and ships its lobsters worldwide. Not only is it the quintessential Maine lobster pound experience, it is also located at the causeway entrance to Mount Desert Island and the first true Acadia National Park birding experience: **Thompson Island**. Route 3 exits the mainland over a bridge at Mount Desert Narrows. There is a Chamber of Commerce visitor's center on the right and a picnic area entrance on the left. This spot provides excellent access to viewing the channel. The lot may be gated in winter, but visitors may park across the street in the visitor's center lot and walk in. **Acadia National Park** on Mount Desert Island (MDI) was the first National Park east of the Mississippi River. It is a park that was more assembled than created, weaving its way through and around communities and private properties as parcels were donated and purchased over time. Thus, the towns and

villages are as much a part of the Acadia experience as the park itself.

As is typical of the Maine coast, there are more interesting waterfowl in winter. From October to May, Thompson Island is a good place to look for mixed flocks of White-winged and Surf Scoter, Common Goldeneye,

Greater Scaup, Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, and Red-breasted Merganser. Laughing Gull in summer and after July 28 Bonaparte's Gull visits the channel as they typically migrate around northern MDI. On Route 3, just beyond the parking lot, there are a couple places where the ocean approaches the road. Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and Green-winged Teal are sometimes present in these shallows in the spring and fall. Great and Snowy Egret stopover as well. Just beyond, the road splits. Bearing left on Route 3 leads to Bar Harbor. Proceeding straight along routes 102 and 198 leads to the part of the island that natives refer to as the "Quiet Side." Birding on MDI is excellent due to the habitat diversity and 105 watersheds providing some of the best places to see all of the breeding Neotropical migrants. The drive along Route 3 to Bar Harbor is scenic and pleasant. About 4 miles on the left look for Hadley Point Road go straight and dead end at 30.

**Hadley Point Beach** parking lot. This is one of the top winter hotspots for Least, Semipalmated and occasional Western Sandpiper, all three Scoters, occasional Red-throated Loon, Horned and Red-necked Grebe, Common Golden-eye, Bufflehead, Bonaparte Gull and occasional Ruddy Duck. During the spring migration, be on the lookout for Warblers, Flycatchers and other species along that Northern coastal edge of the Hadley Point beach area. Merlin regularly feed on the smaller sandpipers while Peregrine Falcon have been seen foraging over the water for wayward migrants. About 7.5 miles after the split at Thompson Island, Hull's Cove appears on the left. This is the first close encounter with Open Ocean and an opportunity for viewing seabirds. At high tide, Buffleheads, Long-tailed Ducks, Common Goldeneye and Greater Scaup are often present during the winter season. Common Eider is usually abundant.

After Hull's Cove, the Acadia National Park Visitor Center is a half-mile ahead on the right. This is the summer opportunity to get acquainted officially with the park. Look for the visitor center and the first entry to the Park Loop just after you exit into the park. In winter, this part of the loop, as well as the visitor center, is closed.

**16. Indian Point Blagdon Preserve.** Tall red spruce, white cedar, and balsam fir predominate and there is an 8-acre stand of tamarack on wetter ground in the center. The variety and maturity of the foliage supports abundant wildlife, numbering at least 12 species of Warbler and 6 species of Woodpecker, including nesting

Black-Backed Woodpecker. Listen for Blackburnian, Magnolia, Parula Warbler as well as Ovenbird and numerous Hermit Thrushes. Blue-headed Vireo is very common and dazzling to see. There is over a thousand feet of shoreline, which can be good for shorebirds, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Common Loon and Red-breasted Merganser in the ocean. Harbor seals frequent the ledges to the west of the preserve. Where the road splits at the head of MDI follow Rt. 102/198 travel south 1.8 miles to Indian Point Road. Turn right and go about 1.4 miles to find this Nature Conservancy Preserve located on land that escaped the devastating fire of 1947. At the entrance Red Oaks were planted on the day of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination.

**17. Pretty Marsh** is an area of Acadia National Park worth the visit and contains a park picnic area of cathedral-like quality. Tall cedar, spruce, and hemlock trees tower above it, making a pleasant home for nuthatches and woodpeckers. This location is known for White-winged Cross-bill, Swainson's Thrush and Winter Wren. A short walk to the shoreline overlooks Pretty Marsh Harbor. Excellent views of Common Loon, White-winged Scoter, Horned and Red-necked Grebe. Toilet facilities are available.

Just beyond the picnic area, look for the Long Pond Fire Road to the right. Equally good for bicycles and slow vehicles, it winds its way through a mixed forest that should produce a great variety of woodland species like Magnolia Warbler, Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireo's and an occasional Black-backed Woodpecker. Since it is off the beaten track, drive slowly with windows down or stop and listen for songs in early summer, and the chatter of foraging flocks in late summer. The road brushes Long Pond at a popular launch for fisherman and swimming. Long Pond Road is about 4.7 miles long and exits onto the Hodgdon Road on its south end. Returning along the main road to the original entrance creates a loop of 5.7 miles. This is an excellent place to access the more wilderness areas of Acadia National Park.

**18. Bass Harbor Marsh.** Home to Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, many Sandpipers and Plovers mixed with Great and Snowy Egret and the occasional Merlin. This habitat is fragile so hire a local birding guide to see this from a local's perspective. Traveling towards Wonderland on Rt.102A be sure to stop at the **Bass Harbor Head Lighthouse**, the only lighthouse on MDI. Look for Blackburnian and Parula Warbler in the coastal spruce forest and Black Guillemot, Cormorant among the lobster boats and buoys. *Toilet facilities* are present at the far end of the parking lot. **Bass Harbor** is the nearest thing to a quaint fishing village on MDI. It is more sheltered, so Black Guillemot, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Loon, Am. Black Duck, Mallard, and various Gulls drift among the anchored boats in winter. **Swan's Island** is reached

by ferry from Bass Harbor. Though the island is not part of Acadia National Park, some vacationers go here to get away from it all. Venture to Burnt Coat Harbor Light and make frequent stops on the way for mixed flocks of Neotropical migrants. The year-round population of 350 people doubles in the summer. The island's 7,000 acres contains 29 miles of paved road and many more private and woods roads. Coves are sheltered and deep and the hills are mostly spruce covered. Bicycles are often the best way to get around the island for birding and day-tripping. The ferry charges a fee for pedestrians and an additional fee for bikes.

**19. Wonderland** is the first of two trails that shelter nesting Warblers. Given their proximity, Wonderland and Ship Harbor share much in common. Wonderland contains a higher ratio of conifers and open, dry ledges, so boreal species may be more likely here. Blackpoll Warbler can sometimes be found near the shoreline during spring migratory periods. Magnolia and Black and White Warbler are prevalent. From a dense, wet beginning, the trail transitions through white spruce and jack pine to an unusual concentration of blue-tinted white spruce and roses. Open areas are good for American Redstart, Nashville Warbler, Tennessee, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. In a good cone year, look for both Red and White-winged Crossbills in the spruce trees. On offshore ledges, perched Bald Eagle are a common site while Merlin are often seen perched in tree tops and nest in the area. **Ship Harbor** is a longer trail and offers a bit more mature growth and habitat diversity than Wonderland, so there is an improved opportunity for both coniferous and deciduous loving Warblers. Be alert for Crossbills. This loop trail to Wonderland offers some of the most spectacular view's of coastal Maine where Black Guillemot and other diving birds are always seen. There is a summer composting toilet at the trailhead.

**20. Seawall** in Manset is where some of the best birding on Mount Desert Island begins. South of Southwest Harbor, Route 102 makes a circuit loop, starting with a left onto Route 102A to Manset, later returning to Route 102 via Bass Harbor. Route 102A leads to a very rocky beach called Seawall. The ocean view is one of the best places for sea duck watching, especially in winter. Common and occasionally King Eider, Bufflehead, Horned and Red-necked Grebe, Black Guillemot, all three Scoters, Long-tailed Duck, and Red-breasted Merganser are present at various times. Look also for Bonaparte's Gull and numerous Sandpipers at the shores edge. This is a good place for a spotting scope. In the immediate ledge area, stay alert for "Peeps" in fall and Purple Sandpiper in winter. Across the street, there are always ducks and gulls around whenever the beaver pond is not frozen. Just beyond, a picnic area opposite the campground is plowed in winter and is populated with at least three species of Gulls. A great place for migrating Neotropical birds in the spring you will be

amazed by the scenery. Farther along the road, be alert to the boggy area opposite the Wonderland trail. This is the Big Heath, and it offers the best opportunity for boreal birds that are not common on MDI. Palm and Tennessee Warblers nest in early June. Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided Flycatchers are known to nest here, as do Lincoln's Sparrows.

**21. Beech Mountain** is just a pleasant hiking area ten months of the year. In September, if the winds are from the northwest, it's a hot spot for hawk watching and is a popular alternative to Cadillac Mountain. Raptors from far up the coast fly a straight line toward Cadillac, but often skirt the edges upon passing the peak. Beech Mountain is the next major crest on the route south and its smaller size often "focuses" the birds around its cliff face. Other birds such as irruptive Crossbills, Pine Grosbeak, Purple Finch and Dark-eyed Junco sing in the spruce forest. The fire tower is an historic site and worth the hike. Directions: On Route 102 just south of Somesville, take the right turn toward Pretty Marsh at the Fire Station, then a quick left four miles to Beech Mountain. Park on the right upon entering the lot and take the trail at the right-hand (northeast) edge of the lot. Follow it uphill for about a mile over sometimes steep and challenging terrain. It's short enough that reasonably fit birders can carry a spotting scope, portable chair, and picnic, with frequent pauses to admire the view. There will be several small ledges, but stop at the major ledge about 200 feet below the summit on the eastern side.

The Lurvey Spring Road near Echo Lake is another lightly-used road that can be good for birding. Black-throated Blue Warbler nests here and a good assemblage of northern endemics and Warblers. Common Ravens can be found here as well. The road runs through mature woods from Route 102 (just north of Southwest Harbor) toward Seal Cove, it leads to Long Pond Road and later Seal Cove Road. The Western Mountain Road branches off Seal Cove Road to the north and leads to several interesting areas hidden deep in Acadia. These roads also contain mature trees where Bay Breasted and Blackburnian Warbler are found high in the canopy. The dampness of the woodland floor is signaled by the preponderance of fern, moss, and cedar bogs where Yellow-bellied Flycatcher can be found in cedar bogs. Follow the signs to a couple of interesting features: Mill Field and the Reservoir. These are excellent places for Warblers, Thrushes and MDI year round birds and nesting Common Raven. Directions: Just over a mile south of Ikes Point on Route 102, turn west toward Echo Lake Beach, then right onto Lurvey Spring Road toward Seal Cove.

**22. Somes Sound:** Natural fjords bordering the Atlantic are rare. This is the only one in the United States. Glaciers scoured the earth between two peaks and

suppressed the earth beneath. When the glaciers receded, the sea rushed in. Somes Sound is unremarkable in summer, spectacular in fall foliage, and interesting during the winter. All the usual Acadia sea ducks are seen here, and since Somes Sound is more sheltered from ocean breezes, the ducks are sometimes more readily observable. The ocean scenery on this road is lovely. In winter, cascading ice flows encrust the cliffs. In spring breeding season, where Sergeant Drive leaves the shoreline and enters a mature forest, Blackburnian and Pine Warblers inhabit the white pines and oaks. Look for Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, and Chestnut-sided Warbler in the shrubs surrounding the park. In the secondary growth behind, look for Black-throated Green Warbler and Northern Parula. These give way to canopy warblers in the mature trees behind. There is a portable toilet in summer. The park is unmarked but the open gates should be apparent. Directions: On the approach to downtown Northeast Harbor, look for a sign that points to Sergeant Drive along Summit Road. Bear right again on Millbrook Road, leading to Sergeant Drive, which hugs Somes Sound until returning to Rt. 198.

**23. Jordan Pond House**, like Sieur de Monts, features maturing stands of deciduous trees and supports a greater concentration of warblers and other neo-tropical migrants. Leave the crowds behind by following the Jordan Pond Loop Trail. Especially focus on the northern end of Jordan pond for Northern Waterthrush. Merlin and Broad-winged Hawk frequent this area. Climb Penobscot Mountain for unparallel panoramic views of the Jordan Pond watershed. The bridge just below the dam and along Jordan Stream to Seal Harbor is a hotspot for many Neotropical birds foraging on insects during spring migration. Peregrine Falcon nest on Jordan Cliffs making this one of the most dynamic regions in the Park.

**The Bubbles** are two scenic knobs carved out by the Wisconsin Glacier that tower above Jordan Pond. It is one of the park's favorite hiking places. It is dominated by mixed and open foliage, also making it favorable for Warblers, Rose Breasted Grosbeak, Blue-headed Vireo and Prairie Warbler. The **Rockefeller Carriage Roads** around Jordan Pond House and Wildwood Stables once belonged to the summering wealthy. Today, 55 miles of road are available for birding by bike or walking. This is a highly recommended way to see many birds and amazing scenery.

**24. Otter Point** lies just beyond a gate that is closed in winter. In the off-season, it is an excellent spot for irruptive White-winged Crossbills among the cone-bearing trees. The Otter Cliff is panoramic and named for River Otters prevalent in the area. A bell buoy offshore marks the rocks hit by Samuel De Champlain in 1604 and foraging grounds for Common Eider. In winter, Great Cormorant is a good bet, sometimes roosting on the bell in fall and winter. Continue around the bend and

down to **Otter Point**. The woods in this area are full of Golden-crowned Kinglet, Black-capped Chickadee, and Red-breasted Nuthatches. A short path leads to Otter Point and it's worth another scan, especially along the rocks for wintering Purple Sandpipers. Continue around the corner and downhill to the **Fabbri Picnic Area**. This was the site of an early World War I radio communications facility that was, at the time, the most advanced in the world. Scan Otter Cove from this vantage point for water birds. During spring migration this is a particularly excellent spot for Warbler variety including Morning and Blackpoll as well as Black-billed and yellow-billed Cuckoo and Common Raven. Fallouts typically occur here with high numbers of birds possible during spring and fall. The Park Loop Road makes a deep U-turn over a granite causeway. Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and numerous "Peeps" are seen feeding here during diurnal tides flooding the tidal pond. Bufflehead, Laughing Gull, Red-necked Grebe and Black Scoter are possible, on the south side of the road. Continuing back up the hill on the far side of the cove, there are more scenic overlooks and excellent habitat for Spruce Grouse. It is not marked, but Acadia's Blackwoods Campground is in the woods behind the loop road here. Though there are no services in winter, this campground is accessible and is enjoyed by hearty snowmobilers and cross-country skiers looking for Northern Shrike or wandering Owls.

Most of the Park Loop Road is closed and unplowed in the winter, to the benefit of snowmobilers and cross-country skiers and is one way in the summer. However, the most popular 2-mile section from the Entrance Station to Otter Cliffs is open and accessible from a winter entrance. Heading south from Bar Harbor on Rt. 3, bear left at Ocean Drive Dairy Bar through birch and aspen groves, and frozen marshes impounded by beavers. At the T intersection, a left turn leads to Schooner Head Overlook. The trail to seaside is paved but it is often icy in winter but offers glimpses of Black-legged Kittiwake, Northern Gannet and Black Guillemot. A right turn leads to the Entrance Station. There is no entry fee from November through April. The winter exit from the Park Loop Road bears right just before Otter Cliff and returns to Route 3.

**25. Thunder Hole** is one of Acadia's top attractions. At times the surf crashes into the natural grotto with explosive force during an incoming tide. Pacific and Red-throated Loons and occasionally Thick-billed Murre are seen during the winter month. It's a great place to scan for sea ducks. Harbor and Gray Seals as well as Harbor Porpoise and Minke Whales are sometime seen.

**26. Cadillac Mountain** receives the first ray of sunshine in the U.S. each morning. Drive up if only for the view. Expect it to be cool and breezy. The birding is ordinary, except in September when it is one of the two best

places in the park for hawk watching. (The other is Beech Mountain.) During hawk migration, naturalists staff a daily hawk-watch and encourage participation. On a good day – typically a day when northwest breezes follow a cold front – American Kestrel and Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Osprey, Turkey Vulture, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, and Bald Eagle pass by for close study. Interestingly, Eastern Towhee nests below the mountaintop, though they are uncommon outside of southern Maine. Brown Thrasher can be found at Blue Hill Overlook and Dark-eyed Junco, Yellow-rumped, and Black and White Warbler can also be expected around the summit. Look for Snowy Owl and Snow Bunting in the winter.

**27. Sieur de Monts spring** and the surrounding watersheds are some of the best Warbler watching on MDI. The mountain spring alone would be enough to attract birds, but this is also home to the Wild Gardens of Acadia. The garden is divided into 12 sections, each an example of the different habitat types found in Acadia. Mature deciduous trees – mostly Hemlock, Oak, Red Maple, and Beech - predominate around the spring. Red-eyed Vireos are very common, while the most frequently occurring warblers are Yellow, Black-throated Green, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, and Ovenbirds. Also look for Black-and-White, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, and Yellow-rumped Warbler around the parking lot. Philadelphia Vireo, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood Pewee and Alder Flycatcher are found in brushy wetlands of **Great Meadow**. Northern Flicker and Pileated Woodpecker regularly nest here. There are several walking paths available, but the most productive trail exits the parking lot on the north and west side of the Wild Gardens. At the outset, the small trees are handy for American Redstart and Chestnut-sided Warbler and many Swamp Sparrows calling in the distance. As the path leaves the saplings and enters the grove of mature hemlocks, Scarlet Tanager, Great-crested Flycatcher, Hermit Thrush, and Ovenbird are typically found. Beyond the grove, the trail enters Great Meadow wetland and shrub habitat where Nashville Warblers, American Redstart, Swamp Sparrow, Alder Flycatcher and Indigo Bunting nest. Other enjoyable paths lead southward from the parking lot, past the Abbe Museum, where Barred Owl have nested, to a small pond called "The Tarn." Check the pond carefully for Common Merganser or other ducks hidden in the reeds. Black-throated Blue Warblers are sometimes heard singing from the extensive second growth conifers on the mountainside beyond the pond. Directions: from Route 3 south of Bar Harbor or from the Park Loop Road, follow the signs to the spring. Due to the fire of "47", deciduous trees predominate here, unlike the spruce/fir mix that prevails around the island. Follow the Park Loop Road past Bear Brook Pond to breathtaking

vistas overlooking Frenchmen Bay. **The Precipice Trail** is a highlight. Peregrine Falcon has nested here since 1991. Today, several pair nest in the park, but these are easily seen from the road. Rangers and docents are stationed below the peak to point out the locations of the falcons.

In summer or winter, **Sand Beach** is a fun stroll. The "sand" is actually small fragments of ancient seashells deposited by wave action. It is sheltered from prevailing breezes and faces into the sunlight so that sitting in the sand is pleasant even in January. Common Eider, Common Loon, Red-breasted Merganser, Bufflehead, Red-necked and Horned Grebe should be present in winter. Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper and Plover are common in fall.

The **Ocean Trail** from Sand Beach to Otter Cliffs showcases many Warblers, Pileated Woodpecker, and Golden-crowned Kinglet. Common Eider are present year round, though their numbers increase in winter. A scan of the water in winter usually reveals Black Guillemot, Red-breasted Merganser, Horned and Red-necked Grebe. From late summer well into December, Northern Gannet, Black-legged Kittiwake can often be seen in the distance. The rocks along this section of the coast are an excellent place for Purple Sandpiper. Look for Bald Eagle on Old Soaker, the island just off shore feeding on Common Eider or Double-crested Cormorant.

**28. Bar Harbor Town Pier** is always worth a scan. Black Guillemot and Common Loon and 1000's of Common Eiders are always close, accompanied by Long-tailed Duck in winter. In summer, this is also the place to sign up for a whale-watching which provides some of the best pelagic birding in the state. Finback and Humpback Whale is the main quarry for these boats, though the endangered Right Whale is a possibility and the smaller Minke whales are relatively common. Harbor Porpoises are almost a certainty on any trip. Sea birds are drawn to the same food sources as the whales, so expect to encounter Greater and Sooty, Manx and Cory's Shearwaters, Wilson and Leach's Storm-petrels. Thousands of Leach's Storm-petrels nest on nearby islands, but their nocturnal behavior makes sightings an uncommon treat. Northern Fulmar, Northern Gannet, Long-tailed, Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers are always possible, especially later in the season. The Bar Harbor Whale Watch Company has a fleet of boats: 288-2386.

<http://www.barharborwhales.com>

The **Bar Harbor Sand Bar** sometimes shelters thousands of sea ducks in the lee behind Bar Island during high tide, when six feet of water cover the bar. Common Eiders gather, joined by Common Goldeneye, American Black Duck, Mallards, and occasional Greater Scaup. Surf Scoter, Common Loon, Red-breasted Merganser, Long-tailed Duck, and Bufflehead should also be observable. Along the shoreline leading to and

from the Bar, look for Yellow Warbler, Black and White Warbler, Purple Finch and Peregrine Falcon and Merlin cruising down the beach diving for Sandpipers and passerines near or over the water. Before leaving, swing a spotting scope onto the islands for Bald Eagle. To reach the bar from Rt. 3, turn onto West Street. Turn left onto Bridge Street and proceed to the dead end at the bar.

**29. Salsbury Cove**, Stop by Hamilton Pond for close up views of Bald Eagle typically roosting on the tallest White Pines around the pond. A hotspot for fall ducks including Ring-necked, Bufflehead and Wood Duck also Pied-billed Grebe, nesting Alder Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, Cedar Waxwing and ruby-throated Hummingbird.

**31. Taunton Bay**, The mudflats of Taunton Bay and

**32. Hog Bay** contain 3,772 acres and provides food for migrating Bonaparte and Laughing Gull, Sandpipers, Plovers, Dowitcher and Whimbrel passing through the region in July and August by the thousands. Taunton Bay is the northern limit of the breeding range of the Horseshoe Crab and its most defining feature are the extensive subtidal and intertidal mudflats which host a diversity of benthic invertebrates, food for many migrating birds. These watersheds flow through **33. Sullivan Falls** a reversing falls known for Bald Eagles, Warblers along the shore and Harbor Seals frolicking in the fast flowing water. Be sure to eat some fried clams or chowder at the falls restaurant. Directions: Travel along Rt.1 from Ellsworth through the **Town of Hancock**. About 1 mile east you come to a 90 degree turn. Go straight to **Sullivan Falls** or after the curve cross over the Skillings River Bridge and make the first left at West Sullivan onto Taunton Dr. to S. Hog Bay Road. The best viewing of Hog Bay is at the northern end. Scope out thousands of Sandpipers, Black-bellied Plover and Dowitcher during fall migration. At East **Franklin** look for the western entrance to Schoodic Mountain and Schoodic bog off of Haynes Road. Palm Warbler, Alder and Olive-sided Flycatcher.

**34. Schoodic Mountain and Donnell Pond Maine Public Reserve Land** (207) 941-4412 Located less than 30 minutes from downtown Ellsworth, Donnell Pond Public Reserved Land encompasses more than 15,000 acres of lakes, mountains, and forests. The reserved land includes a 1940-acre ecological reserve for wetland specialty birds, five mountains that exceed 900 feet in elevation for migrating species, 35 miles of freshwater shoreline including Tunk Lake and Donnell Pond. Look for Boreal Chickadee, along the stream just northeast of the Schoodic Mt. parking lot. Canada Jay, Northern Shrike and Spruce Grouse are regularly found. Bird the Schoodic Mt. loop, Black or Catharine Mts. which are accessed from Rt. 1 north on Rt. 183 in E. Sullivan. After

## First Edition FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF MOUNT DESERT ISLAND AND HANCOCK COUNTY - Jan 2010

3 miles and crossing the railroad tracks look for a sign on the left for Schoodic Mt. driving 1.7 miles on Donnell Pond Road (bear left and straight) to the parking area. Walking north towards Donnell Pond along the backbone of an esker of considerable length, look for Black-throated Blue Warbler, Ovenbird and Winter Wren calling in early spring. Climb Schoodic Mt. for unsurpassed views of MDI looking for Purple Finch, Warbler fall outs, Pileated Woodpecker and Winter Wren in the valleys. The loop takes you to Donnell Pond where Common Loon, all three Mergansers, Wood Duck and Belted Kingfisher are seen. Black-backed and Three-toed Woodpecker are found throughout the Reserve. Several Maine Public Reserve's can be found in Northern Hancock County. Each one represents a unique birding experience, some with camping.

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### Birding Ethics

It's simple---Please follow the American Birding Association birding guidelines. The birds will thank you!

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