

Prime Birding Locations in the Grand Manan Area.

Written by Brian Dalzell.

Over the years, certain sites on and around Grand Manan Island have proven to be consistently good spots to look for birds. If you have only a short time here, it is suggested you concentrate your efforts on sites 2, 3, 6, 10, 16, 18 and 23. For more complete directions to most of these areas, it is highly recommended that a copy of the latest edition of the *Grand Manan Heritage Trails and Footpaths* be purchased. A numbered map has been provided below.

1. **Net Point – Pettes Cove:** Just a short walk from the ferry terminal, this is a good place to spend an hour while waiting for the ferry to arrive, especially in the fall when late migrants can be found in sunny spots around houses. Residents have numerous bird feeders along the way, many visible from the road. A trail takes you along the shore from Pettes Cove to the Irving Oil depot and back. You can also walk to the Swallowtail Light (3) and back if you have an hour to spare.
2. **Whale Cove and Pond:** This cove in North Head is a favoured spot in early winter for Red-necked Grebes; Northern Shrikes and Rough-legged Hawks are often seen perched along the road. The best way to bird the area is to leave your car at the Anglican Church and walk along the narrow lane to the cove. You can cross the rocky barrier beach with the pond on one side, ocean on the other and walk back along the road if you wish or retrace your steps. Coastal trails can also take you to Hole-in-the-Wall (4) a short hike or Ashburton Head (5) and the Whistle (6), half-day hikes.
3. **Swallowtail Lighthouse and Lighthouse Road:** From the ferry, turn onto the Old Airport Road and then right onto Lighthouse Road, continuing down the staircase and across a footbridge right to the tip of the light. Raptors and migrant passerines are often plentiful along the way, and seabirds, seals and whales are sometimes seen from the lighthouse.
4. **Hole-in-the-Wall:** Old Airport Road takes you to Hole-in-the-Wall Park. The trail to this geological formation starts adjacent to the old east-west airstrip in Park. A day pass is required during the summer and the staff at the kiosk may be able to help with recent sightings. Besides local forest birds, Purple Sandpiper, Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon can be seen from the shore in the proper seasons. Snow Buntings occasionally feed on the old runways in late fall/winter. The Park also offers numerous lookouts for seabirds, whales and seals. During the herring season you may also observe herring being removed from stationary traps called “weirs” which also attracts its share of Herring and Black-backed Gulls.
5. **Ashburton Head:** Accessed from the Whistle Road, this trail runs through an area that was ravaged by spruce budworm in the early 1980s, as well as a forest fire in May 1985. Gray-cheeked Thrush has been found in Eel Brook ravine during the breeding season and the burn is a good spot for Black-backed Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Eastern Bluebird.
6. **The Whistle (Long Eddy Point and Lighthouse):** On the northern tip of the island, accessed via the Whistle Road, this is absolutely the best spot on Grand Manan to watch both land and seabirds from the same vantage point. Migratory landbirds mill about nervously here before taking off for the mainland, and seabirds often gather in the hundreds to feed in the tide rips. Whales and seals are added bonuses, as is the sunset on clear days. Also try walking down the power line from the top of the last hill.
7. **Eel Lake – Little Lake:** A road leads to Eel Lake off the Whistle Road and then a trail takes you around the lake past Little Lake and on to Indian Beach – you really need the trail guide to find it. This is the largest lake on the island and most of the forest birds that nest on Grand Manan can be found at various points along the trail.

8. **Laborie Hill and Marsh:** An old woods road leads from just below the top of the hill (on the left) on the Dark Harbour Road to a beaver dam that forms the marsh. Northern Goshawk nests in the area, and Broad-winged Hawk and Barred Owl can be seen. This is one of the only spots on the island where American Bittern and Wood Duck have nested.
9. **Dark Harbour:** This is one of the best spots to see Black-crowned Night-Heron close-up as they forage along the edge of the pond at dusk. Park along the edge of the cliff and wait for the evening thrush chorus – Gray-cheeked Thrush is a good possibility. Saw-whet Owl is as common along the road as it is anywhere on the island.
10. **Castalia Marsh:** The access to the marsh is off Route 776 in Castalia. More than 40 species of shorebirds have been identified here, making it a must for visiting birders. Set up your scope near the picnic shelters at high tide and spend a leisurely hour or two scanning the flocks. Check the rosebushes for skulking sparrows and the shore and marsh grasses for larks, buntings, pipits, meadowlarks, etc. More than 225 species of birds have been recorded in the area, the most popular birding spot on the island. Shorebird activity has declined markedly in recent years.
11. **Ducks Unlimited Marsh:** Constructed in 1990, the marsh holds obvious promise. The access road (Crabbe Road) is off Bancroft Road which takes you to the airport from Hill Road. Hill Road is accessible from Castalia or Grand Harbour. The airport is good for foraging raptors and birds that prefer open country.
12. **Fishers Pond:** Just to the left of the salmon feed plant along the outer beach in Woodward's Cove near the wharf, the pond and its margins often turn up species such as Green-backed Heron, Virginia Rail, Snowy Egret, Solitary Sandpiper, Long-eared Owl and various waterfowl, despite the cluttered look of the area.
13. **The Thoroughfare:** Two side roads dead-end at the Thoroughfare. From Woodward's Cove, Shore Road leads you to a number of lobster pounds (large wooden fenced structures built in the intertidal zone to hold lobsters) and a view of the ocean between Nantucket Island and the shore which sometimes holds a good variety of ducks, grebes and loons in early winter. From Grand Harbour, the Thoroughfare Road also takes you to lobster pounds and a trail to Ross Island (accessible only three hours before and after low water). The upper part of Grand Harbour holds thousands of Brant in the spring as well as a flock of Greater Scaup and lots of Common Goldeneye.
14. **Grand Harbour:** As its name suggests, this is the largest protected harbour on the island and is fairly shallow, no more than 7-10 m (20-30 feet) at high tide in most places. Vantage points are found on the Thoroughfare and Ingalls Head Roads as well as Route 776 and Ross Island. A scope is needed to view the many waterbirds that use the harbour in the fall through early spring, such as Black Duck, Horned Grebe, Common Loon, Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, Greater Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Eider, Mallard, Canada Goose and Brant.
15. **Ingalls Head – Ox Head:** The alders around the power plant can be a good spot for passerines in the fall, and the road to Ox Head (Brownville Road off Ingalls Head Road) passes through a bog that is a dependable area to find Blackpoll Warbler and Rusty Blackbird on the main island. Ox Head is often good for open country raptors and provides a vantage point to scan the waters for Bufflehead, Red-necked Grebes, Black Ducks, cormorants, terns and scoters. Check the beach for Sanderling and other shorebirds.
16. **White Head Island:** The car ferry from Ingalls Head to the island is free. Walk from the ferry to the fishermen's memorial and back (right from the ferry landing following the road along the shore), watching for passerines in the spring and fall. The roads to Long Point (and lighthouse) and Sandy Cove on the southern side of the island and Pond, Marsh Point Pond and Gull Cove on the north and eastern sides of the island are other good spots. The ferry trip is often rewarding for Razorbills in late summer. In early winter Guillemot, Common Murre, and flocks of Purple

Sandpipers often flush from amongst the emergent ledges along the ferry route. In winter, Langmaid Cove has a great vantage for Harlequin Ducks.

17. **Miller Pond:** Providing access to the interior of the island from Miller Pond Road off Route 776, the pond margins are attractive to warblers and other forest interior species. You can also leave your car and walk to the back of the island on old logging trails to Dwellys Pond (see trail guide).
18. **The Anchorage/Long Pond/Great Pond:** The provincial campground off Route 776 is adjacent to the Grand Manan Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Check out the sewage lagoon for broods of American Wigeon, Long Pond for Ring-necked Duck, and Great Pond for vagrant divers such as Pied-billed Grebe, Ruddy Duck and Hooded Merganser. The marshy area at the outlet of the Great Pond should be checked for marsh birds and Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Check the beach for shorebirds.
19. **Red Point:** In Seal Cove at the end of Red Point Road, the alders attract small landbirds and Harlequin Ducks have been seen just offshore. The boardwalk trail from here to the Anchorage provides many opportunities to observe sea ducks and other waterbirds. Magnetic sand can be found on the beach. A popular spot for grebes, mergansers and scoters.
20. **Wood Island:** An active community until the late 1950s, this island is very seldom birded because it is accessed only by boat. Overgrown yards full of rose bushes should be very attractive to spring and fall migrants. Big Pond apparently harbours nesting American Wigeon.
21. **Kent Island:** Site of the largest nesting colony of Leach's Storm-Petrel in the islands, owned by Bowdoin College of Maine, it is used as a scientific field station. Permission to visit is required and access is only by boat.
22. **Deep Cove and Beach:** The beach attracts roosting gulls and sometimes Sanderlings; and the stagnant pond backed up behind the seawall is a good spot for insect-catching birds in late fall or early spring, and sometimes Solitary Sandpiper. A trail leads inland up Deep Cove Brook to Bradford Cove and also loops south to Bradford Cove Pond and Southwest Head. Boreal Chickadee is as dependable here as anywhere on the main island.
23. **Southwest Head:** At the southern end of the island, Machias Seal Island and the towers at the former Cutler Naval Station on the nearby coast of Maine can be seen from this area. From the lighthouse looking down the cliffs, the occasional loon, cormorants, guillemots and eiders can be seen in the water. Harlequin Ducks are sometimes seen in the early fall. In September and October, Osprey, Northern Harrier and other raptors can be easily seen at eye level as they migrate along the clifftops, as well as various passerines. Guillemots nest on the cliffs east of the light and can be watched feeding underwater.
24. **Machias Seal Island:** This island has the only staffed lighthouse in the Maritimes and its nesting seabird colony, including Puffins, Razorbills, Common and Arctic Terns, is managed by the Canadian Wildlife Service. The numbers of daily visitors is restricted and closely monitored to minimize disturbance to the nesting birds. Sea Watch Tours operate excursions to the island mid June through early August. Take lots of film! Foul weather gear, warm cloths and motion sickness tablets should be carried just in case.

