

## Nova Scotia, Canada

May 2018

Jean Hugé

### May 24, 2018: Arrival in Halifax

We arrived in Halifax in the morning, coming from Brussels via Paris and Toronto. We spent the night at an airport motel in Halifax.

### May 25, 2018: Chéticamp & Cape Breton Highlands National Park

We left Halifax in the morning in the pouring rain, and headed to Chéticamp, on the west coast of Nova Scotia, as this would be our starting base to visit Cape Breton Highlands National Park, which I had visited in 2011. En route, we stopped in Windsor at Howard Dill's Farm, home to the world's greatest pumpkins (!), and got views of **American Robin** and **Ring-necked Pheasant**. Another stop near Walton along Minas Basin yielded **American Wigeons** and our first **Belted Kingfishers** of the trip. **Black Scoters** were swimming in the bay <https://observation.org/observation/157790203/>. At a stop near the Shubenacadie river mouth we got good views of **Greater Yellowlegs** (<https://observation.org/observation/157790215/>). We had lunch in rainy Truro. We saw the trip's first **Bald Eagle** high over the Canso Causeway which links mainland Nova Scotia to the Cape Breton peninsula, while a **Common Tern** was feeding nearby. At the beach of Port Hood Station Provincial Park, we saw about thirty **Tree Swallows**, a few **Sand Martins**, a **Song Sparrow** and two **Least Sandpipers** (<https://observation.org/observation/157790261/>).

Further along the road, the small harbour at Chéticamp beach yielded two **American Wigeons**, and a **Northern Harrier** which quickly disappeared above a hillcrest. We stayed at the beautiful 'Boat House' (15283 Cabot Trail Appartement A, Chéticamp, Nova Scotia B0E 1H0, Canada) along Chéticamp Harbour, with views over the water and Chéticamp Island. The harbour area was teeming with **Iceland Gulls** and **Glaucous Gulls**, and two **Common Loons** were swimming around. We then headed towards Cape Breton Highlands National Park for an evening drive. We were soon rewarded by great views of a lone male **Eastern Moose** (<https://observation.org/observation/157787228/>) with an ocean view backdrop. Watching out to sea, we spotted a few **Northern Gannets** and **Common Eiders**. **Dark-eyed Juncos** were also present. When dusk set in, we heard a **Great Horned Owl** calling (<https://observation.org/observation/157787232/>), and saw a **Myrtle Warbler** in the car headlights.



*Iceland Gull, Chéticamp Harbour (pic by Peter Van den Bossche)*

**May 26, 2018: Chéticamp, Cape Breton Highlands National Park, Cabot Trail & Bras d'Or Lake**

After a stop in Chéticamp's fishing harbour to get good views of the many tens of **Iceland Gulls**, **Glaucous Gulls** and **Common Terns**, we headed back towards Cape Breton Highlands National Park. We hiked the scenic 9.2 km Skyline Trail. In the woodlands, we saw **Dark-eyed Juncos** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**. We also saw **White-throated Sparrows**, **Savannah** and **Lincoln Sparrows**. The hike also yielded three species of woodpeckers: **Hairy Woodpecker**, **Downy Woodpecker** and **Northern Flicker**. **Myrtle Warblers** and **Black-and-White Warbler** were present too. Out at sea, we spotted **Common Murre**, two **Black Guillemots** and a distant **Common Bottlenose Dolphin**, as well as many **Common Eiders**, **Northern Gannets** and two **Red-breasted Mergansers**. **Snowshoe Hare** were common and confident along the track, and we spotted one female **Eastern Moose** browsing in the distance. Heading back to the car, we spotted **Common Goldeneye** on French Lake, and had great views of a grazing bull **Eastern Moose** along the main road.



*Eastern Moose, Cape Breton Highlands National Park*

We then left the national park and drove along the scenic Cabot Trail all the way to Ingonish. Having enjoyed sunny weather during our hike, we had many heavy rain showers later in the morning and at noon. A **Ruffed Grouse** flew over the road near Ingonish, and this was a lifer for us! Along Ingonish North Bay, we spotted **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Common Eider**, **Double-crested Cormorant**, **Greater Black-backed Gull**, **Iceland Gulls** and **Glaucous Gulls**, as well as a large group of **Harbour Seals**.



*Double-crested Cormorants, North Bay Ingonish (pic by Peter Van den Bossche)*

In the early evening, we arrived at Bras d'Or Lake and the weather cleared. We stayed at the 'Bear on the Lake' guesthouse (<https://bearonthelake.com/>), where we had great views of **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** feeding on the feeders. Two **Bald Eagles** flew by, and **Common Mergansers** and **Common Loons** were present on the lake, while **American Robins** were common on the hotel grounds.



*Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Bear on the Lake Guesthouse, Bras d'Or Lake (pic by Peter Van den Bossche)*

#### **May 27, 2018: Bras d'Or Lake & Antigonish Landing**

We started birding under a clear blue sky in the morning, slowly driving and often stopping along the 32 km road between the 'Bear on the Lake' guesthouse and the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site, along the banks of Bras d'Or lake. Birdlife was varied and plentiful. We spotted a lone **Northern Raven** and two **Bald Eagles** (<https://observation.org/observation/157787941/>) close to the hotel. We also spotted **American Robin**, **Myrtle Warbler**, **Yellow Warbler** and **Magnolia Warbler**. **Common Loon**, **Mallards**, **American Wigeons** and **Hooded Mergansers** swam on the lake, while we saw two more **Bald Eagles** heading north, and spotted many noisy **Red-winged Blackbirds** in the reedy areas.

Leaving Cape Breton Highland in early afternoon, we headed to Antigonish Landing <https://www.alltrails.com/trail/canada/nova-scotia/antigonish-landing-trail>, a short trail along an estuary, fringed by marshy meadows and woodland, part of which is a wildlife sanctuary. Although the trail was busy with locals walking their dogs, birdlife was plentiful and the weather was great. We saw three **Bald Eagles** in total, including one on its nest <https://observation.org/observation/157790114/>. Two **White-tailed Deer** were grazing close by, and a **Muskrat** was swimming close to the trail. Four **Spotted Sandpipers** were nervously flying around, while at least 15 **Buffleheads** could be seen quite far on the river mouth. There were many warblers around, which often showed well in ideal light conditions: **Myrtle Warbler**, **Yellow Warbler**, **Common Yellowthroat**, **American Redstart**, **Blackpoll Warbler**, **Northern Parula**. A few **Barn Swallows** and a lone **Cave Swallow** were also present. We also saw **Blue-winged Teal**, **American Black Duck** and **Gadwall**, while the woods held a few **Downy Woodpeckers**, **American Robins** and **Song Sparrows**. After that very enjoyable walk, we headed to Port Mouton, south of Halifax, where we would spend the next few days. En route, we spotted **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and a few **Ring-necked Ducks**.



*Ring-necked Ducks (left) and Blackpoll Warbler (right), Antigonish Landing*



*Bald Eagle, Antigonish Landing*





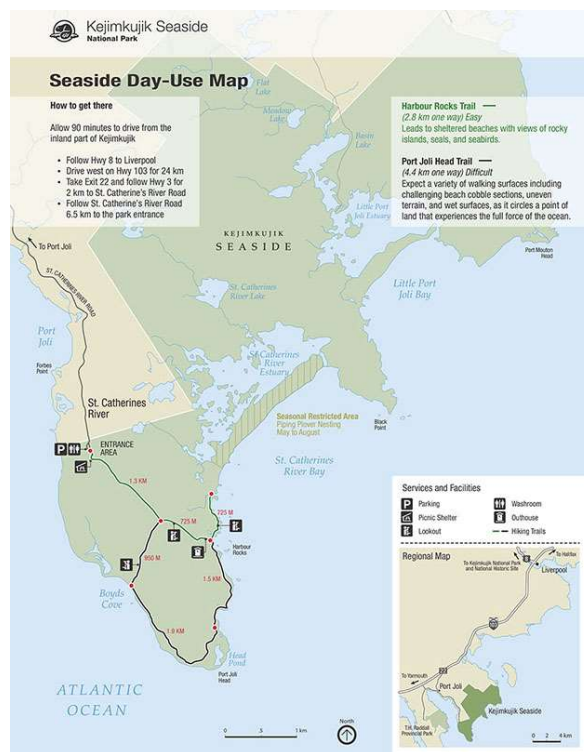
*Common Yellowthroat (left) & Yellow Warbler (right), Antigonish Landing (pics by Peter Van den Bossche)*

### May 28, 2018: Stuarts Lake, Port Mouton

We spent most of the day in central Halifax for work. At night, we heard **Barred Owl** calling a few times, along the shores of Lake Stuart in Port Mouton (<https://observation.org/observation/157763810/>). We were staying in our friends' beautiful lakeside house (thanks Tarah & Daniel!), close to Kejimikujik National Park Seaside.

### May 29, 2018: Kejimikujik National Park Seaside

We spent most of the day in Kejimikujik National Park Seaside (formerly known as Kejimikujik National Park Seaside Adjunct), a beautiful, protected stretch of coastline teeming with wildlife (<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ns/kejimikujik/visit/seaside-bord-de-mer>). We started off with a mid-morning hike, combining the Harbour Rock and the Port Joli trails (see map below).

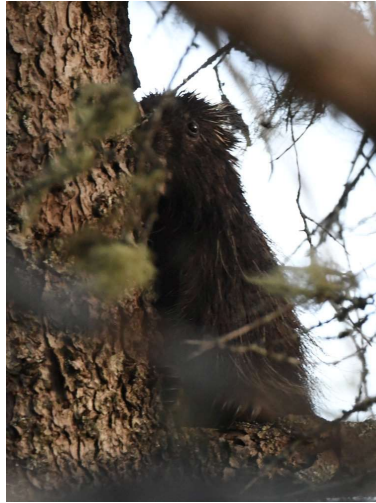


The area consists of woodland, shrubland, open areas, sandy coves and granite outcrops, and most of the hike is done on a peninsula, which made for a very enjoyable morning. **Savannah Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Black-capped Chickadee, Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow** and Common Yellowthroat were all seen along the walk. On 'Harbour Rocks', **Grey Seals, Harbour Seals** and **Double-crested Cormorants** were resting, **Osprey** and **Belted Kingfisher** were also roaming that area. A few **Northern Ravens** flew over, and **Common Loon** were resting and feeding at sea. **Northern Flickers** were common, we also spotted two **Snowshoe Hares** and a lone **Natterjack Toad** (my first one in North America). All along the trail, we had seen fresh bear prints and scat, which convinced us to hike the trail again at dusk.

This proved to be a great idea. The evening hike was even more rewarding than the morning hike. We had the park entirely to ourselves, and even before starting the hike, on the access road to the park, we spotted an approachable **North American Porcupine** (lifer!), which later climbed a tree. Starting off on the hike, we soon spotted **Eiders** and a lone male **Harlequin Duck**, as well as a large group of **seals** at Harbour Rocks. **Willetts, Pectoral Sandpipers** and two **Black Guillemots** could be seen well, when we suddenly saw a panicky **White-tailed Deer** running in the open area. A few seconds later, a **Black Bear** appeared, just about 30 meters from the trail. This was the highlight of the day. A male **Merlin** flying over just before sunset, and eerily calling **Common Loons** made the evening complete. We celebrated with local beers on a rock overseeing the trail.



*Black Bear, Kejimikujik National Park Seaside (pic by Peter van den Bossche)*



*North American Porcupine, Kejimikujik National Park Seaside (pic by Peter van den Bossche)*

### **May 30, 2018: Stuarts Lake, Port Mouton**

We spent most of the day in the wooded Lake Stuart area in Port Mouton, birding, reading and canoeing. In the woods, **Northern Parula**, **Red-eyed Vireo**, **Swainson's Thrush**, **Yellow Warbler**, **Red-breasted Nuthatch** and **Myrtle Warbler** were present. We also spotted two **Snowshoe Hares**, a few **American Red Squirrels** and **Eastern Chipmunks**. Along the lakeshore, we saw a **Lincoln's Sparrow**. **Turkey Vultures** were regularly flying over and soaring on thermals in the afternoon. **Great Blue Herons** and **Ring-billed Gulls** regularly flew over the lake. We spotted one **Arctic Tern**, and one **Common Loon** on the lake. At night, two **Barred Owls** were calling close by.



*Canoe-birding on Stuarts Lake, Port Mouton (pic by Wouter Acke)*



*Turkey Vulture, Stuarts Lake, Port Mouton*

### **May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018: Lake Stuart, Port Mouton**

Our last morning at Stuarts Lake yielded **Common Merganser**, **American Goldfinch**, **Myrtle Warbler**, and four **Great Blue Herons** flying over. At Mahone Bay, where we had lunch, we had good views of an **Osprey** <https://observation.org/observation/157787040/> and a few **Mourning Doves**. After that, we headed to Halifax for our last evening in Nova Scotia.

### **Friday June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018**

Departure from Halifax, to Brussels via Toronto and Paris.

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### **Species list** (90 species)

*American Crow*  
*American Herring Gull*  
*Arctic Tern*  
*American Black Duck*  
*Bald Eagle*  
*Bank Swallow*  
*American Redstart*  
*Barn Swallow*  
*American Goldfinch*  
*American Wigeon*  
*American Robin*  
*Barred Owl*  
*Belted Kingfisher*  
*Black Guillemot*  
*Black Scoter*  
*Black-and-White Warbler*  
*Black-capped Chickadee*  
*Blackpoll Warbler*  
*Blue Jay*  
*Blue-winged Teal*



*Bonaparte's Gull*  
*Broad-winged Hawk*  
*Bufflehead*  
*Canada Goose*  
*Cave Swallow*  
*Chimney Swift*  
*Common Grackle*  
*Common Loon*  
*Common Merganser*  
*Common Murre*  
*Common Raven*  
*Common Tern*  
*Common Yellowthroat*  
*Dark-eyed Junco*  
*Double-crested Cormorant*  
*Downy Woodpecker*  
*Eider*  
*European Starling*  
*Gadwall*  
*Glaucous Gull*  
*Great Blue Heron*  
*Great Cormorant*  
*Great Horned Owl*  
*Greater Black-backed Gull*  
*Greater Yellowlegs*  
*Hairy Woodpecker*  
*Harlequin Duck*  
*Hermit Thrush*  
*Hooded Merganser*  
*House Sparrow*  
*Iceland Gull*  
*Least Sandpiper*  
*Lincoln's Sparrow*  
*Magnolia Warbler*  
*Mallard*  
*Merlin*  
*Mourning Dove*  
*Myrtle Warbler*  
*Northern Flicker*  
*Northern Gannet*  
*Northern Harrier*  
*Northern Parula*  
*Northern Rough-winged Swallow*  
*Osprey*  
*Pectoral Sandpiper*  
*Red-breasted Merganser*  
*Red-breasted Nuthatch*  
*Red-eyed Vireo*

*Red-shouldered Hawk*  
*Red-tailed Hawk*  
*Red-winged Blackbird*  
*Ring-billed Gull*  
*Ring-necked Duck*  
*Ring-necked Pheasant*  
*Rock Dove*  
*Ruby-crowned Kinglet*  
*Ruby-throated Hummingbird*  
*Ruffed Grouse*  
*Rusty Blackbird*  
*Savannah Sparrow*  
*Sharp-shinned Hawk*  
*Song Sparrow*  
*Spotted Sandpiper*  
*Swainson's Thrush*  
*Tree Swallow*  
*Turkey Vulture*  
*White-throated Sparrow*  
*Willet*  
*Yellow Warbler*