

# Quebec

## Family holidays for a WP birder

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### Introduction

Par respect et gratitude pour nos amis Québécois, je commence ce rapport en français... A côté de la nature, des rivières et lacs sauvages, de oiseaux, des baleines, votre accueil restera le meilleur souvenir de ces vacances dans votre belle province !

And after having thanked the people of Quebec for their warm welcome, I already shift to English, so most of the birders considering this destination can read these few tips included in this report.

In summer 2018 thus, I was back to Canada after some 30 years, when I studied 4 months during an exchange program at Queens University, Kingston, Ontario. I did some birdwatching at that time, but kept no specific list or report, same thing for my numerous trips to USA afterwards. This time we left Europe for the first time on family holidays, direction Montreal. The intention was to stay in Quebec province, with a nice program combining visits, bicycle, canoe, rafting, whale's observation, and, for me, some occasional birding... It resulted as a real plus for my holidays: (re)discovering non Western Palearctic species in North America was extremely enjoyable.

### Travel and accommodation:

- Flight: we booked a direct flight from Brussels to Montreal with Canadian Airways, at about 700 EUR pp cancelation insurance included: not the cheapest, but the easiest.
- Car: we booked a Passat type car with Thrifty: I would not recommend them. It was rather expensive (the others even more), and we were not satisfied by the Jetta we got : bad smell, belt lock caps missing, slowly leaking tire, and an icon was regularly turned on on the dashboard, apparently for a minor engine control problem.
- Hotels: we had a combination of Airbnb and hostels. We would mostly recommend Chambre Bon Désir or Bas de Soie at Les Grandes Bergeronnes : we appreciated the nice rooms and kitchen/dining room shared with the other guests. Lydia, owner of the place, was a very welcoming hostess.

### Tips and guides and photos:

- I used again [www.cloudbirders.com](http://www.cloudbirders.com) (special thanks to the Belgian team!), showing early 2018 only 7 reports for Québec, last one dating some 10 years before... Not a very popular birding destination! It was

not at all my main purpose either, so I can understand that. On top of that, August isn't the best period of the year: birds hardly sing anymore, they have lost their nuptial plumage, and return migration did not really start. Anyway, these reports were extremely useful, particularly the one of Peter Vercrujse, July 2001, also a Western Palearctic birder on family holiday.

- I downloaded the free app "maps.me", great for offline precise maps, a bit fantasist for the timing of a journey by car between 2 points. I added beforehand numerous marks on the downloaded maps, at the coordinates of interesting spots.
- And during this family holidays, I did not take the time to photograph birds!

### **Program and species highlights :**

Contrarily to my reports after our yearly BBQ trips (Belgian Birders Quartet 😊), I will not follow a chronological order here, but just list some of the good spots I could visit during these 3 weeks family holidays.

#### **Les Rapides de Lachine, Montreal**



Great place to visit, not only for birds: this natural parc offers great views on the rapids of river Saint-Laurent, and is a nice destination as such. We visited the place once with the family, and I came back regularly alone, before breakfast, as it was only 10 minutes away by car from our rented apartment. Local birders are often presents, and a certain Jean-Claude was particularly kind and helpful about waterfowl.

I had there Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron, Double-Crested Cormorant, Red-Winged Blackbird, Common Merganser, a group of Yellow Warblers, Common Tern, Caspian Tern, Belted Kingfisher, American Wigeon, Eastern Kingbird, Baltimore Oriole, Spotted Sandpiper, Osprey.

Most common are of course Canada Goose, Ringed-billed Gull, American Robin... On trees of nearby parks I had Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Cardinal, Cedar Waxwing, American Crow... And from the terrace of our apartment: Red-breasted Nuthatch and Black-Capped Chickadee!

#### **Petit train du Nord, from Mont-Laurier to Saint-Jérôme by bicycle**

I warmly recommend this 4-days bicycle trail, running North to South in Laurentides for 200 km in splendid landscapes. Via the website <https://ptittraindunord.com/en/> you can rent your bicycles, book the transport to the departure point, be directed to accommodation packages, etc.

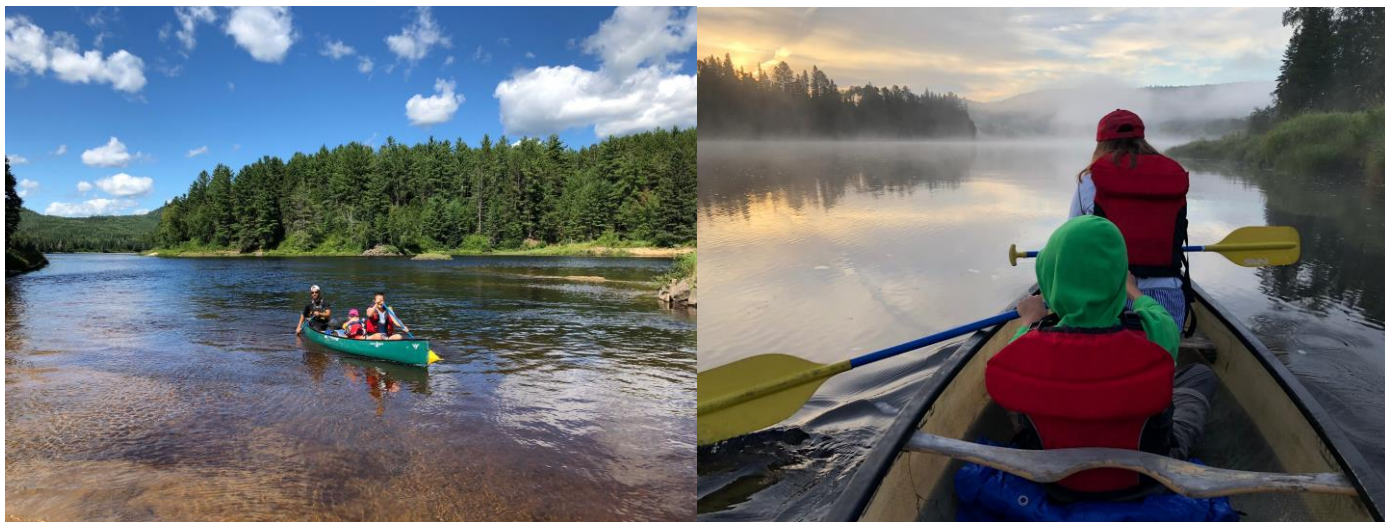
Birds were also good, not very abundant, but really nice.

Before our first bicycle trip night, at the nice Auberge Chez Ignace in Nominique, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were buzzing around a nectar feeder hanging in the neighbours' garden: the children and I watched them, amazed by their little size, their specific flight, and the flashing ruby throat when the bird was facing us. The next day I had a very productive walk before breakfast, mostly at grain and fat feeders in gardens a bit further down the road. There I had American Goldfinch, House Finch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-Capped Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, Common Grackle (the only one of the trip)...

Along the bicycle track, Blue Jays and Ravens were regular. I saw one Hairy Woodpecker and some Northern Flickers. Two Merlins were chasing each other in flight. An amazing sight for me was a foraging flock (I could nearly say: a herd) of 30 to 40 huge Wild Turkeys. On shallow little lakes I had twice much better views of the Belted Kingfisher.

In a lake before our next stop, close to Mont-Tremblant, we swam not so far away from a Common Loon, very nice feeling... And the next morning, I had again a nice pre-breakfast birding session close to the Auberge du Voyageur, with Grey Catbird, many Blue Jays, beautiful American Robins, Black-and-white Warbler, and other Warblers that I forgot to note unfortunately. Chipping Sparrows were abundant at our next stop, Auberge de la Gare near Sainte-Adèle. On the last bicycle day, I saw the only 2 Mourning Doves of the trip.

### Mattawin river, Mauricie



During these 4 days of canoeing and rafting, I saw surprisingly very few birds, so even though nature was very wild and the activities were great, I wouldn't recommend the area for birding... We had one splashing-tail beaver, though, diving on a very early and misty morning canoe ride. No bears, no mouse...

### Cap Tourmente

This is a great birding place, and I would have spent much more time here for birding if it had not been a family holiday. Even in this frame, though, walking around a couple of hours is pleasant for everybody, and I saw good birds, including at a grain feeder, which was interesting even for the children! We had: Blue Jay, American Goldfinch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Eastern Bluebird on a nearby wire and American Redstart. At the ponds before the entrance, we had Pied-billed Grebe, Wood Duck, Mallard of course, and again Double-Crested Cormorant, Belted Kingfisher...

### Baie Saint-Paul and La Malbaie

Baie Saint-Paul combines a nice stop during the journey towards Tadoussac, with walks and birding possibility. 15 Snow Geese on the opposite bank offered a beautiful view; besides the usual Ringed-billed Gulls, I noticed larger



Herring Gulls and much larger Greater Black-backed Gulls.

A little bit further North, at La Malbaie, I had more Herring Gulls and Greater Black-backed Gulls, but more interestingly 2 Bald Eagles sitting on rocks, far away on the beach.

### Les Grandes Bergeronnes and surroundings.

I scouted twice a nature trail, after having parked the car at 420 Rue de la Mer, just after the bridge. Beside the attacks of mosquitoes, the pre-breakfast birding was good: some difficult Warblers, Pine Siskin, Red-eyed Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, one identified Chesnut-sided Warbler, Song and Chipping Sparrows. Near the bridge of Rue Principale, during an end of afternoon, but still in full sun, I had 4 Common Nighthawks, a curious sight. Cliff-Swallows were numerous in the area.

The Maison des Dunes, North of Tadoussac, is another interesting place for passerines; Dark-eyed Junco and Golden-Crowned Kinglet were added to the list.

We went twice to Cap de Bon Désir, before dark: it is a great place for whales, but also for sea birds, like Gannet, Kittiwake, Common Loon, White-winged Scoter, American Black Duck, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Common Eider, Razor Bills, including an adult feeding a young...

Near the small airport of Les Grandes Bergeronnes, Bonaparte's Gulls were numerous on the beach, and one Least Flycatcher showed well in the bushes of the cliff.

Further North, Pointe de la Croix, in front of Les Escoumins, is a beautiful place, including for birds. Waders could be observed very closely: Greater Yellowlegs and Lesser Yellowlegs side by side, Semipalmated Sandpiper and a very tame lonely Least Sandpiper.

Still further North, the Centre d'interprétation des marais salés was not really worthwhile, at least in this season.

The region of Tadoussac is renowned for its whales, of course. On the peninsula near the village, packed with other observers, we saw our first Minke Whales. From the rocks south of Les Escoumins (park at the end of Rue de la Réserve, great walk and belvedere) or from Cap Bon Désir, we saw them much closer, really impressive. From the south shore of Les Escoumins, we saw the belugas as well. We also took a classical zodiac tour from Les Grandes Bergeronnes with Essipit Cruises. We were lucky with the weather, sunny and very calm sea, and it turned to be a real whales festival: Humpback Whales were diving regularly, showing their famous tail; Fin Whales were there as well, the second biggest animal on Earth after the Blue Whale; white Belugas at a distance, and very close Minke Whales. This was undoubtedly a most exciting and fascinating moment of our holidays.



1	Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Plongeon huard
2	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	Grèbe à bec bigarré
3	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	Fou de Bassan
4	Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	Cormoran à aigrettes
5	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Grand Héron
6	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Grande Aigrette
7	Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>	Héron vert
8	Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Bihoreau gris
9	Snow Goose	<i>Chen caerulescens</i>	Oie des neiges
10	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Bernache du Canada
11	Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>	Canard branchu
12	American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	Canard d'Amérique
13	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Canard colvert
14	American Black Duck	<i>Anas rubripes</i>	Canard noir
15	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Eider à duvet
16	White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	Macreuse brune
17	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Grand Harle
18	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Urubu à tête rouge
19	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Balbusard pêcheur
20	Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Pygargue à tête blanche
21	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Buse à queue rousse
22	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Faucon émerillon
23	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Faucon pèlerin
24	Wild Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	Dindon sauvage
25	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	Pluvier kildir
26	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	Grand Chevalier
27	Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Petit Chevalier
28	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularia</i>	Chevalier grivelé
29	Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	Bécasseau semipalmé
30	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	Bécasseau minuscule
31	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Goéland à bec cerclé
32	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Goéland marin
33	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Goéland argenté
34	Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Larus philadelphia</i>	Mouette de Bonaparte
35	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Mouette tridactyle
36	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>	Sterne caspienne
37	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Sterne pierregarin
38	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	Pingouin Torda
39	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Pigeon biset
40	Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Tourterelle triste
41	Common Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	Engoulevent d'Amérique
42	Chimney Swift	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	Martinet ramoneur
43	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	<i>Archilochus colubris</i>	Colibri à gorge rubis
44	Belted Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>	Martin-pêcheur d'Amérique
45	Downy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>	Pic mineur
46	Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides villosus</i>	Pic chevelu
47	Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	Pic flamboyant
48	Eastern Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus virens</i>	Pioui de l'Est
49	Least Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax minimus</i>	Moucherolle tchébec
50	Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	Tyran tritri

51	Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	Hirondelle bicolore
52	Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Hirondelle de rivage
53	Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	Hirondelle à front blanc
54	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Hirondelle rustique
55	Golden-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus satrapa</i>	Roitelet à couronne dorée
56	Cedar Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	Jaseur d'Amérique
57	Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Troglodyte mignon
58	Gray Catbird	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	Moqueur chat
59	Eastern Bluebird	<i>Sialia sialis</i>	Merlebleu de l'Est
60	Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	Grive à dos olive
61	American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	Merle d'Amérique
62	Boreal Chickadee	<i>Poecile hudsonica</i>	Mésange à tête brune
63	Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>	Sittelle à poitrine rousse
64	White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	Sittelle à poitrine blanche
65	Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	Geai bleu
66	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	Corneille d'Amérique
67	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Grand Corbeau
68	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Étourneau sansonnet
69	Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	Viréo aux yeux rouges
70	Northern Parula	<i>Parula americana</i>	Paruline à collier
71	Yellow Warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>	Paruline jaune
72	Chestnut-sided Warbler	<i>Dendroica pensylvanica</i>	Paruline à flancs marron
73	Blackburnian Warbler	<i>Dendroica fusca</i>	Paruline à gorge orangée
74	Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	Paruline noir et blanc
75	American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	Paruline flamboyante
76	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	Paruline masquée
77	Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>	Bruant familier
78	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	Bruant chanteur
79	Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	Junco ardoisé
80	Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	Cardinal rouge
81	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	Cardinal à poitrine rose
82	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	Carouge à épaulettes
83	Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	Quiscale bronzé
84	Baltimore Oriole	<i>Icterus galbula</i>	Oriole de Baltimore
85	House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	Roselin familier
86	Pine Siskin	<i>Carduelis pinus</i>	Tarin des pins
87	American Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis tristis</i>	Chardonneret jaune
88	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Moineau domestique