

Sea & Sage Audubon UNB Monthly Boat Trip/Bird Count from aboard the Newport Sea Base Pontoon Boat

Date: 8/20/14

Trip Leader: Nancy Kenyon

Tide: outgoing

Skipper: Rich Santoni

All of our group contributed to the count: Sally Menzel, Deana Collins, Darrell Wilson, Sharon Harrow, Chuck Nichols, Mark Kincheloe, Chris Johnson, Toni & Javier Monzón, Ann Burk, Mike Straub, and Nancy Kenyon.

Comments: According to the tide charts, today's tide was kind of a middling one this morning, and our boat trip began as the tide was just beginning to go out. However, there were very few mud flats along the way and our usual spots where we've seen large congregations of shorebirds on small mudflats during previous trips, produced few. We did see our "usual" flock of Black-bellied Plovers on top of the first island, standing amidst the ice plant. We always pay close attention to this spot because the gray-colored plovers present quite a problem for us, having to count their heads between the small clumps of grayish ice plant. The usual Great Blue Heron, egrets and shorebirds along the shore or under the scraggly shrub on the island were missing this morning. We spotted several Double-crested Cormorants perched on the floats which admonished boaters not to go further and also saw two fake owls put out to somehow discourage other birds from landing there. There were no ducks in evidence anywhere. 1 large dragonfly flew past and several large mullets jumped out of the water. The lighting was subdued due to the cloudy sky, so we faced no glaring sun, and the air was mildly warm. It was perfect birding weather! Further up the channel we saw 2 Ridgway's (formerly Clapper) Rails, one of which was in the water for a few moments before scurrying back into the cord grass to hide. As we turned around for the trip home, we saw a large number of shorebirds gathered together in a mixed flock, a long single line right up against the edge of the cord grass at the water's edge. Evidently, they were waiting for the tide to change because most were just standing, waiting, not moving around or feeding. It was beautiful out there on the water. I spent a lot of time watching the clouds, the ripples on the water, the Snowy Egret "dancing" in the shallows, a "cloud" of Western Sandpipers zipping by, an Osprey sitting in the shallows with the shorebirds, fish jumping, and a low-flying Northern Harrier cruising along the shore. It was a wonderful way to spend the morning.

Grebes		123	Marbled Godwit
2	Pied-billed Grebe	273	Western Sandpiper
1	Western Grebe	12	Least Sandpiper
Cormorants & Pelicans		40	Long-billed Dowitcher
7	Double-crested Cormorant	Gulls	
2	Brown Pelican	2	Heermann's Gull (on the return trip)
Hérons & Egrets		1	Ring-billed Gull
3	Great Blue Heron	9	Western Gull
2	Great Egret	Terns	
5	Snowy Egret	2	Caspian Tern
Diurnal Birds of Prey		5	Forster's Tern
1	Turkey Vulture	Skimmers	
2	Osprey	8	Black Skimmer
1	Northern Harrier	Pigeons & Doves	
1	Red-tailed Hawk	30	Rock Pigeon
Rails		1	Mourning Dove
2	Ridgway's (Clapper) Rail	Kingfisher	
Plovers		2	Belted Kingfisher
54	Black-bellied Plover	Crows & Ravens	
6	Semipalmated Plover	8	American Crow
1	Killdeer	Swallows	
Sandpipers		11	Barn Swallow
2	Greater Yellowlegs (calling)	Finches	
175	Willet	6	House Finch
2	Whimbrel		
1	Long-billed Curlew		