

# MAINE BIRDING TRAIL

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# Summer Lessons

The **Maine Innkeepers Association** will host a breakout session on the Maine Birding Trail and other trail connections on Tuesday afternoon, November 9<sup>th</sup>, during its annual convention at the **Cliff House** in York. The Maine Office of Tourism's Phil Savignano and I look forward to sharing success stories with the attendees.

The Maine Birding Trail project was created to entice birders to visit Maine and stay at our inns. The summer results are encouraging. Although the *Best Nests* program began only this year, visitation to the *Best Nests* web page is increasing nicely. It has moved up to #7 on the list of most-visited pages on the Maine Birding Trail web site. During the third quarter, birders planning their trips to Maine sought the following information (in order): 1) **Maine Birding Trail Brochure** download, 2) **Puffins**, 3) **Boreal birds** – Maine's unusual northern forest birds, 4) **Rare Bird Alert** sightings, 5) Tours, 6) the **Maine Birding Trail Guide Book**, and 7) **Best Nest** accommodations. *Best Nests* moved ahead of **Whales and Pelagic Bird-watching**, which was #8.



Of those seeking information about Maine's eight tourism regions, the **Downeast/Acadia** region attracted the most page views. The **Midcoast** and **Portland** regions were in a virtual tie, about 50 site visits behind. **The Maine Beaches**, the **Maine Highlands**, and **The Maine Lakes & Mountains** were grouped closely another 40 visits behind the leaders. Predictably, **Aroostook County** attracted fewer visitors, but still did quite respectably –staying about 15 visitors ahead of the **Kennebec Valley** region, which attracted the fewest hits. Visitors clicking through to the *Best Nest* pages followed a similar pattern.

**Downeast/Acadia** received the highest number of visits, followed by **Midcoast** and **The Maine Beaches**. **Portland** and **The Maine Highlands** were in a dead heat slightly behind The Maine Beaches, followed by **The Maine Lakes & Mountains**, **Kennebec Valley**, and **Aroostook County**.

While it's no surprise that the Downeast/Acadia region does well overall, some of the traffic clicking through to individual inns is interesting. Two of the inns generating the most traffic are on the quiet side

of Mount Desert Island. **Bass Harbor Cottages** and **Ann's Point Inn** generated interest well above average. **Inn On The Harbor** in Stonington did better than some inns located in more heavily visited areas. The **Hampton Inn** in Rockland had a surprising amount of traffic.

New inns were added over the summer and the early results are encouraging. Although listed on the site for only August and September, the **Pride Motel** in Scarborough, **Captain Lord Mansion** in Kennebunkport, and **Twilight Motel** in Ellsworth generated traffic comparable to many inns that were listed for all three months.

Early in the Maine Birding Trail project, I partnered with several inns to experiment with packaging tours in rural areas. For the last three years, I've done a Baxter State Park touring package with the **Big Moose Inn** in Millinocket. (Elderhostel/Exploritas also staged a Baxter tour from the Big Moose this summer.) I've organized tours in the Moosehead Lake area, partnering with the **Evergreen Lodge** in Shirley. It's no surprise, then, that these inns continue to get strong click-through traffic. In fact, the Big Moose Inn does even better than the puffin and whale-watch tours. Last year, I launched the first tour deep in the Maine woods in partnership with **Historic Pittston Farm**. It resulted in one of those experiences tourists can only get in Maine: a moose stepped out into a path to watch the same bear we were watching.

Over the next two months, I'll be seeking a handful of other well-suited, well-sited inns in areas of the state that do not currently have *Best Nest* accommodations. I also expect to begin working with individual inns on developing additional web content and promotional material to better take advantage of the Maine Birding Trail. While I work on this portion of the initiative, the monthly newsletters may become more sporadic, as I will be doing more one-to-one communication with some inns.

