Lake Umbagog Birding Guide

A two-day birding itinerary for Errol, New Hampshire, Lake Umbagog and the surrounding Great North Woods

BOREAL FOREST	WETLANDS & WATER	HIGH COUNTRY
Northern specialties and spruce-fir habitat	Loons, eagles, waterfowl and marsh habitat	Turbine roads and higher-elevation birding

Presented by Errol Motel

Your home base for exploring the Lake Umbagog region

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Why Bird the Umbagog Region?

Tucked into New Hampshire's Great North Woods along the Maine border, the Lake Umbagog region combines expansive wetlands, boreal forest, quiet back roads, rivers, ponds and miles of undeveloped shoreline. The mix of habitats makes the area especially appealing to birders looking for northern forest specialties as well as loons, raptors, waterfowl and migrating songbirds.

Errol makes a convenient base because Lake Umbagog, Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge, the Magalloway and Androscoggin River corridors, and extensive northern forest are all nearby.

Birds to Have on Your Radar

- Bald Eagle
- Black-backed Woodpecker
- Canada Jay
- Olive-sided Flycatcher
- Palm Warbler
- Spruce Grouse
- Bicknell's Thrush
- Boreal Chickadee
- Common Loon
- Osprey
- Red Crossbill
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher

Wildlife sightings are never guaranteed. Species presence varies by season, habitat, weather and year.

Use this guide as a starting point – Follow the full itinerary, choose a few highlights for a shorter visit, or spread the stops over several days for a more relaxed biding experience.

At a Glance

ARRIVAL DAY	Scout the Androscoggin and Route 16 corridor.
DAY 1 AM	Boreal birding north of Errol; Greenough Pond Road; Magalloway River Trail.
DAY 1 PM	Bird Lake Umbagog and connected wetlands by water or shoreline.
DAY 1 DUSK	Optional wildlife drive around dusk.
DAY 2	Choose a target: boreal forest, turbine roads, another northern forest route, or the water.

Arrive in Errol

Late Afternoon: Settle In

Take an easy scouting drive around the nearby river corridor.

Early Evening: Errol & the Androscoggin

Check the Androscoggin River around Errol for waterfowl, raptors and other activity. Then head North on Route 16 toward the Lake Umbagog area. Wetlands and spruce-fir forest begin close to town, offering an introduction to the habitat you'll explore more thoroughly the next morning. *See eBird Hotspots for multiple Androscoggin River options in and around Errol.*

Day 1 – The Boreal Bird Day

Sunrise: Route 16 North of Errol

Start early. The corridor North of Errol passes through a mixture of wetlands, river habitat and spruce-fir forest. Use established pull-offs, drive cautiously and listen as much as you look. Early morning is often the most productive time for active and vocal birds.

Morning Stop: Greenough Pond Road

Greenough Pond Road passes through strong boreal habitat. Walk quietly and listen for northern forest birds. The broader area also includes pond and wetland habitat, adding opportunities for flycatchers, warblers, sparrows, loons and waterfowl depending on season. About - Greenough Pond Road, Errol, Coos, New Hampshire, United States - eBird Hotspot.

NORTH COUNTRY ROAD NOTE

Some back roads are active logging roads and shared ATV trails. Conditions can change quickly. Never block a road or gate, give working vehicles plenty of room, and don't assume every road is suitable for every vehicle.

Late Morning: Magalloway River Trail

The Magalloway River Trail at Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge passes through spruce-fir forest toward an observation platform overlooking backwaters of the Magalloway River. The mix of forest and wetland habitat gives birders a chance to look for both northern forest species and waterfowl. About - Umbagog NWR--Magalloway River Trail, Wentworths Location, Coos, New Hampshire, United States - eBird Hotspot.

Day 1 Afternoon – Bird Umbagog by Water

Lake Umbagog and its connected rivers, coves, marshes and backwaters provide habitat for a different collection of birds than the surrounding spruce-fir forest. Depending on season and conditions, watch for Common Loons, Bald Eagles, Osprey, Great Blue Herons, waterfowl and marsh birds.

A quiet canoe or kayak can be an excellent way to experience the ecosystem. During nesting season, give shoreline birds and nesting areas plenty of space. Respect protective signs and float lines.

Day 1 Dusk – Bonus Wildlife Drive

Around dusk, consider a slow drive through the Errol area to watch wetlands and roadside openings for wildlife. Moose and other North Country wildlife may be active near dawn and dusk. Drive cautiously: large animals can be difficult to see along dark roads.

Day 2 – Choose Your Birding Target

Use the morning to pursue a species, habitat or experience you missed on Day 1.

Option 1 – Return to Boreal Forest

If Boreal Chickadee, Black-backed Woodpecker or Spruce Grouse escaped you Day 1, return to suitable spruce-fir habitat early in the morning.

Option 2 – Dixville Turbine Road

For higher-elevation birding, consider the turbine access roads south of Dixville Notch. Birding groups have used this area for northern and high-elevation breeding species, including Bicknell's Thrush, Blackpoll Warbler and Fox Sparrow.

DIRECTIONS

Route 26 → Robichaud Brook Rd → (left) Connector Rd → West Branch Clear Stream Road → Dixville Peak Road
About - Dixville Turbines to Rt. 26 via West Branch Clear Stream Rd., Coos, New Hampshire, United States - eBird Hotspot

The elevation is substantially higher than Errol, so weather can be cooler and change quickly. Don't forget the view: The birds may be the reason for the trip, but the view at the top is a highlight of its own. On a clear day, take a few minutes to enjoy the landscape before heading back down.

Option 3 – Mount Kelsey / Turbine Area

Another turbine-area route provides access toward Mount Kelsey and additional higher-elevation habitat.

DIRECTIONS

Route 16 → Dummer Pond Road → Phillips Brook Road → East Branch Road → Mount Kelsey Road
The road is not marked with a street sign at Route 16. Enter the road into your GPS or maps app before leaving Errol and consider downloading the route for offline use due to limited cell service in the area.

As with all remote North Country roads, check current conditions, respect posted restrictions and be prepared for limited or no cell service.

Options 2 and 3 include unpaved roads that are not recommended for standard passenger vehicles. A 4WD or capable symmetrical AWD vehicle may be required. Road conditions can vary with weather and season, so use your judgment and turn around if conditions become unsafe or exceed your vehicle or driving experience. Gates near both turbine areas prevent vehicles from continuing further. Follow all gates, signs and restrictions and do not enter areas that are closed or posted. Foot access for Option 2 may be permitted on a separate trail to the left of the gate. Park only where permitted and without blocking gates or the roadway and follow all posted signs and restrictions.

More Day 2 Options

Option 4 – Mollidgewock Road

Explore another northern forest route in the Umbagog region. Bird by ear as well as by sight, and respect working roads, gates and posted property. About - Mollidgewock Rd., Errol, Coos, New Hampshire, United States - eBird Hotspot.

Option 5 – Mountain Pond Road

Another option for exploring northern forest habitat and searching for boreal species. Road conditions and access can vary, so check current conditions before heading out. About - Umbagog NWR--Mountain Pond Rd., Errol, Coos, New Hampshire, United States - eBird Hotspot.

Option 6 – Return to the Water

If waterbirds were the highlight of Day 1, spend another morning along Lake Umbagog, the Magalloway River or the Androscoggin. Changing light, weather and bird movement can make the same location feel completely different.

Before Heading Home: Roost Trail

Finish with the Roost Trail at Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge. The moderately steep trail ends at an overlook with broad views of the refuge, Umbagog area and mountains of western Maine.

When Should Birders Visit?

May & June – Spring Migration and Breeding Birds

Late spring and early summer can bring strong songbird variety and vocal activity as migrants return and breeding territories become active. This is also an important nesting period, so use extra care around nesting birds and wetland shorelines.

July & August – Summer Birding

The forest becomes quieter as breeding season progresses, but summer is well suited to combining birding with paddling. Early mornings remain especially worthwhile.

September & October – Migration and Fall Color

Fall brings changing bird movement and spectacular North Country scenery. Species and numbers change as migration progresses.

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Winter & Early Spring

Northern finches, Canada Jays, Boreal Chickadees and woodpeckers can make colder-season visits rewarding, while open water may attract waterfowl. Winter road, trail, ice and weather conditions require additional planning.

Birder's Packing List

- Binoculars and, if desired, a spotting scope
- Camera and extra batteries
- Layers for changing temperatures
- Water, snacks and a day pack
- Notebook or birding checklist
- Field guide or birding app
- Waterproof footwear and rain jacket
- Insect repellent in warmer months
- Offline maps

PLAN FOR LIMITED SERVICE AND WEATHER

Cell service can be inconsistent in remote areas of the Great North Woods. Download maps and other information before heading into the field.

Bird Responsibly

Observe birds from a respectful distance. Avoid disturbing nesting birds. Stay on designated trails where required. Respect private property, gates and posted areas. Never block logging roads. Pack out what you bring in. When photographing wildlife, the welfare of the bird should always come before the photograph.

Quick Bird Checklist

Use this as a trip-planning checklist, not a promise of sightings. These species have been documented in the greater Errol / Lake Umbagog region; which birds you encounter will vary by season, habitat, weather and year.

BOREAL & NORTHERN FOREST	HIGHER ELEVATIONS	LAKE, RIVERS & WETLANDS
☐ Canada Jay	☐ Bicknell's Thrush	☐ Common Loon
☐ Boreal Chickadee	☐ Blackpoll Warbler	☐ Bald Eagle
☐ Spruce Grouse	☐ Bay-breasted Warbler	☐ Osprey
☐ Black-backed Woodpecker	☐ Mourning Warbler	☐ Common Merganser
☐ Olive-sided Flycatcher	☐ Canada Jay	☐ Hooded Merganser
☐ Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	☐ Boreal Chickadee	☐ Common Goldeneye
☐ Palm Warbler	☐ Fox Sparrow	☐ American Black Duck
☐ Canada Warbler		☐ Ring-necked Duck
☐ Blackburnian Warbler		☐ Great Blue Heron
☐ Black-throated Blue Warbler		☐ American Bittern
☐ Black-throated Green Warbler		☐ Northern Harrier
☐ Hermit Thrush		☐ Belted Kingfisher
☐ Swainson's Thrush		

Higher-elevation species are associated with suitable habitat in the Dixville turbine area; water and wetland species are associated with Lake Umbagog, the refuge, and nearby river and marsh habitats.

Make Errol Your Birding Base

Errol Motel is located in the village of Errol, close to Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge and the forests, wetlands, rivers and back roads that make this part of northern New Hampshire an interesting birding destination.

Our small, family-owned motel has 11 clean and comfortable guest rooms, including kitchenette and pet-friendly options. After an early morning in the field, return to Errol to relax before your next outing. Errol Restaurants, the general store and LL. Cote are within walking distance.

We welcome birding clubs and groups. If you're planning a group trip to the Umbagog region, contact us to discuss dates and room availability.

ERROL MOTEL	RESERVATIONS
132 Main Street Errol, NH 03579	603-482-3256 errolmotel@gmail.com errol-motel.com

Reservations are made directly by phone or email.

Come for the birds. Stay for the North Country.

Birding Resources & Further Information

For current refuge information, bird sightings, birding ethics, field trips and additional trip-planning resources, these organizations are helpful starting points.

Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Official refuge information, species, trails, activities, maps, rules and wildlife-viewing guidance.
fws.gov/refuge/umbagog

NH Audubon

New Hampshire birding information, conservation resources, programs and statewide birding resources.
nhaudubon.org

Brookline Bird Club

New England birding field trips and trip reports, including trips to the Lake Umbagog and Errol region.
brooklinebirdclub.org

eBird

Recent sightings, species lists, hotspots and seasonal observations submitted by birders.
ebird.org

Birding Northern New Hampshire

A detailed guide to the best birding in Northern Coös County by Robert A. Quinn. All proceeds go to NH Audubon.

https://nh-audubon-nature-store.myshopify.com/products/birding-northern-hew-hampshire

Errol Motel is not affiliated with or endorsed by the organizations listed above. Resources are provided to help visitors plan a birding trip.

PLANNING NOTE

Access, road conditions, trail conditions and land-use rules can change. Check current conditions and obey all gates, signs and posted restrictions before your trip.