

Mammals Around the New York Area and the Northeast

I've lived in New York City since 2018, and I've not always considered this part of North America to be a big wildlife-watching destination. But looking back over the years, I realize I have made several modest trips on weekends and long weekends and found some interesting mammals and other wildlife locally. My sightings over the years have included Beluga, Minke and Humpback Whales in Quebec; Marten and Moose in New Hampshire and Vermont; and beavers, porcupines, muskrats, elk, dolphins and more around New York.

I imagine there are other folks like me who are more beginner-level mammal watchers and eager to explore this part of the country, so I compiled several of these sightings in one place.

February 2022, Montauk Point, NY

There's a short 1.5 mile trail to a seal haul out area at Montauk Point State Park at the eastern tip of Long Island, where **Harbor Seals** can be seen sitting on rocks and swimming around. Apparently, up to four species can be seen in this area, but I've only seen Harbor Seals here. There are a couple blinds and a nice viewing area.



August 2021, Cape May, NJ

Lured by the possibilities of Sperm Whales and Hammerhead Sharks, I joined a 24-hour offshore trip run by Cape May Whale Watch & Research Center that took us some 80 miles offshore. We ended up seeing **Pilot Whales** (pictured below), **Common and Bottlenose Dolphins** and the crew briefly spotted a **Fin Whale** that I missed. I'm inquiring to see if the naturalists were able to determine what species of pilot whale was seen on this trip.



April 2021, Bashakill Wildlife Management Area, NY

A nice freshwater wetland, Bashakill seems to be more known as a bird-watching spot. But I saw at least five **Muskrats** while walking a trail along the water, and found a **North American Beaver** here in the late afternoon/evening.



April 2021, Minnewaska State Park, NY

While returning from a hike at the Sam's Point area of Minnewaska State Park (a lovely place for hiking with a nice waterfall and some cool ledges), I stumbled upon a **North American Porcupine** drinking from a puddle on the side of the road (Mt. Meenagha Road just east of Highway 52.) I spent a fair bit of time comfortably watching it before it slowly made its way up the hillside.



July 2020, White Mountains, NH

I decided to explore the White Mountains in New Hampshire. I camped for two nights at the Lafayette Place campground at Franconia Notch State Park. The first morning I was there, I did the Franconia Ridge Loop hike. While hiking along the ridge above a treeline, I found an **American Marten** (along with the endemic Bicknell's Thrush, which was singing from the top of a shrub.) iNaturalist data seems to indicate several people have seen Martens along the ridgeline.



I also spent some time driving in the evenings along the roads around the towns of Gorham and Errol, which I thought might be good for **Moose**, but no luck. I did, however, find one in the evening at Moose Bog in Vermont.



I also found a **Snowshoe Hare** while driving around some back roads near Umbagog Lake in New Hampshire.



May 2020, Central Pennsylvania

I camped out for a few nights at Bald Eagle State Park and drove around and explored a series of parks north of there for a couple days, including Moshannon, Sproul and Susquehannock State Forest.

At Sinnemahoning State Park, I found **Elk**, which have apparently been spreading after being reintroduced to the state a century ago. This one was radio collared.



At Susquehannock State Forest, I found a **North American Porcupine** munching on some grass by the side of the road. I watched it for a bit before it climbed up into a tree.



August 2019, Tadoussac, Quebec

In August 2019, I spent some time in Acadia National Park in Maine. I went on a whale-watching trip out of Bar Harbor, which ended up being completely shrouded in fog, so we didn't see any mammals outside of some **Harbor Seals** (though we did see puffins, guillemots, and other birds.)

I then drove on further to Quebec City, and spent the next day driving up the St. Lawrence River and went on a whale-watching trip out of the town of Tadoussac, which ended up being incredible. The water seemed to be teeming with whales: we saw about 10 different **Minke Whales**, some extremely close to the boat, a group of three **Humpback Whales**, and the naturalist called out a **Blue Whale** and **Fin Whale** in the distance, though I wasn't able to catch either for sure. There were a number of **Gray Seals** close to the boat as well.



(Above Left: Gray Seal, Right: Minke Whale appears near the boat – too close to focus properly.)



(Humpback Whales)

I was disappointed, however, not to see Beluga Whales from the boat – the water was choppy and apparently this makes it harder to see their white backs. But as I was driving further along the road, I noticed a shining white speck in the water from the cliff side, which turned out to be a **Beluga Whale** swimming east in the river.

I sped along to a place called Cap de Bon-Desir, where there's a little rocky outcropping where people can gather along the coastline and watch the Belugas.



I got to calmly watch several swim by, some which went right by kayakers in the water.

