



Field Guides Tour Report

Spring in Cape May 2016

May 15, 2016 to May 21, 2016
Tom Johnson & Doug Gochfeld

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).



The vast saltmarshes of Cape May are home to Clapper Rails, shorebirds, and many herons. Photo by guide Doug Gochfeld.

This week-long excursion to the birdiest parts of the Jersey Shore allowed us to take in a wide spectrum of spring birding here. From breeding warblers singing in the flowering trees of Belleplain State Forest to the spectacle of thousands of migrating shorebirds and their coexistence with Horseshoe Crabs, we found new wonders and fantastic colors around every corner.

This running of our spring tour took advantage of an unusually strong spring warbler migration here, and we were able to enjoy awesome views of Blackburnian, Cape May, and Bay-breasted Warblers in addition to more expected breeders like Worm-eating, Black-and-white, and Yellow-throated Warblers. The male Bay-breasted Warbler feeding in the trees with the nesting Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in Wildwood stands out as a particular highlight.

In Cape May, there's always something out of the ordinary to be found, and we struck it rich with rarities on this trip, finding such unexpected species as Mississippi Kite, Wilson's Phalarope, Iceland Gull, and even a Curlew Sandpiper!

Doug and I had a great time birding (and dining!) with you - hopefully this annotated trip list will revive the memories of our great May week together. We hope to see you out in the field again soon!

Good birding,

Tom

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Common and widespread.

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – Far too common around the freshwater wetlands of Cape May Point.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – These dabbling ducks were nesting in the Meadows this year.

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK (*Anas rubripes*) – Excellent views in several locations in the oceanside saltmarshes.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Common and widespread.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – A few lingered until the tour in the Cape May Meadows, raising local hopes that they might linger and breed.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*) – We had the interesting opportunity to compare this small duck to Blue-winged Teal at the Meadows.

BLACK SCOTER (*Melanitta americana*) – A late female was on the sand at Reeds Beach with the horseshoe crabs and shorebirds.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – A male and his harem were seen on several of our trips down Seagrove Ave. in Cape May Point, sometimes walking out in the street next to us!

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – Good views from the Osprey boat trip in Jarvis Sound.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NORTHERN GANNET (*Morus bassanus*) – An adult perched on the jetty near our hotel on the final day! It is unusual to see adults in late May, and extremely rare to see one perched here.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Quite common - we got to see a raucous colony in dead trees at Heislerville. [N]

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Uncommon at this season (surprisingly, the species doesn't breed in Cape May!), but we saw a few immatures out in the salt marshes.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Common and widespread. Nesting at a colony at Heislerville. [N]

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – Common, including at the colony in Heislerville. [N]

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – These long-necked, striking waders were in the marshes near North Wildwood.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – One of these locally uncommon herons was at a horse farm along Sunset Boulevard

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – These small herons showed nicely in the Meadows and along the road at Nummy Island.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – A common breeder. Several were on nests in the colony at Heislerville. [N]

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – The fabulous views that we had of birds attending nests in Ocean City and Wildwood will be difficult to forget. [N]

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Hundreds were in flocks along the edges of the marshes.

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – One of these "Pink-faced Ibis" was bathing and resting with Glossy Ibis at a small pond by a car dealership in Cape May Courthouse. This species is rare but regular in Cape May in spring.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Common.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Common.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Everywhere! These raptors are doing particularly well in this section of the Jersey Shore. [N]

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

MISSISSIPPI KITE (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) – Two subadults with banded tails (birds that hatched last year) soared above us during our walk at the Beanery. This species is rare in Cape May but appears each year in spring, and was just documented nesting in New Jersey for the first time ever (after our tour, in summer 2016).

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – A few coursed low over the Cumberland County saltmarshes near Heislerville.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – This is the only Accipiter that breeds here. We saw these lanky raptors on a few occasions around the Cape.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – A few adults circled over Cape May and Heislerville on occasion, often raising the ire of nearby Laughing Gulls.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) – A molting immature soared over the Beanery in West Cape May on the same day we saw the Mississippi Kites there.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Common; seen almost every day of the tour.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

CLAPPER RAIL (*Rallus crepitans*) – We heard these large, secretive rails on several occasions. The views of the close bird that came out of the marsh at Corsons Inlet were pretty memorable!

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*) – Common on sandy beaches and along the edges of salt marshes.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – These long-distance arctic migrants were common on flats during our boat trip through the back bays on the Osprey. In flight, we were able to admire their black "wingpits" and plaintive whistles.

SEMPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – This is the common "single-ringed" plover that we encountered on the trip.

PIPING PLOVER (*Charadrius melodus*) – Though this pale beach plover has declined substantially in southern New Jersey in recent years, we were able to find a few running around at Stone Harbor Point. We got some sand in our shoes, but Doug had a few of these rare shorebirds staked out on the beach when we arrived.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Common along grassy margins and fields throughout Cape May County.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – These teetering sandpipers were walking along the edges of the ponds at the Meadows and also along the channels running through the salt marsh on the Osprey boat trip.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – One flew by calling during one of our visits to the Delaware Bay shore.

WILLET (EASTERN) (*Tringa semipalmata semipalmata*) – This soon-to-be-split subspecies of Willet is a common breeder in most patches of saltmarsh in southern New Jersey. We heard them and saw their black-and-white wing patterns at many of our stops during the week. A paper published by Jessica Oswald et al. that demonstrates substantial differences in DNA (as well as plumage, structure, and voice) will likely lead to the AOU splitting Willet into two full species next year. [N]

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – Just a few of these slim waders were at Heislerville during our first visit.

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*) – We enjoyed great views of these large, long-billed shorebirds during the Osprey boat trip and also around Nummy Island. Shortly after the tour, they probably took off over land and flew over Lake Ontario on their way to the tundra of the far north.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – These common, arctic-breeding shorebirds were in full show on the beaches of the Delaware Bay. We enjoyed watching them feeding on horseshoe crab eggs in droves alongside Red Knots, Sanderlings, Laughing Gulls, and other birds.

RED KNOT (*Calidris canutus*) – Thousands of these fine shorebirds were packed in at Reeds Beach and a few other nearby beaches on the Delaware Bay. Nearly the entire population of the rufa subspecies of Red Knot moves through this area in late May; these birds depend on horseshoe crab eggs to sustain the next leg of their northbound migration so that they arrive on the high arctic breeding grounds with enough energy to breed and raise young.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*) – We had been scanning distant flocks of Dunlin for a while at Heislerville when Scott Whittle alerted me by phone that he was watching this Curlew Sandpiper basically at his feet at the other end of the large impoundment. We joined Scott and had a fantastic time as this beautiful reddish Eurasian vagrant fed right in front of us - often it was the closest individual bird to the group. Stunning!

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – Slightly bulkier than the "peeps", these sandpipers were scurrying around with the knots and turnstones along Delaware Bay. Others were running back and forth, chasing the waves, on the Atlantic-side beaches.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – Many thousands (perhaps 10,000+) were packed in at the Heislerville impoundments in Cumberland County, an important stopover site for this species and other shorebirds too. The black bellies, reddish upperparts, and long, droopy bills really stand out in spring!

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Our smallest shorebird, these peeps were very common at many shore and wetland sites, often favoring slightly drier flats than closely related Semipalmated Sandpipers. David Mizrahi, shorebird researcher with New Jersey Audubon, even showed us one in the hand after he banded and measured it as part of ongoing migration research.

SEMPIPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – Very common - Delaware Bay is an important stopover site for these peeps as they fly from northeastern South America back north to their arctic breeding grounds.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – Over 2,000 were "tu-tu-tu-tu"ing their way around the impoundments at Heislerville, and we found them at many other sites along the way including mudflats in the Wildwood back bays as seen from the Osprey boat trip. Dowitcher identification is often difficult - not so in Cape May in spring, where Long-billed is quite a rarity (not expected in an average spring season).

WILSON'S PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – Doug did well to pick out this bright female for us as we scanned the impoundment at Heislerville. This species is a nice rarity in New Jersey, and we were lucky to view such a nicely colored bird.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – A yearling with a bum wing was flying around Cape May Point on a few occasions. We even had it lope past us as we enjoyed our breakfast picnic one morning.

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Abundant! One of the world's largest colonies is in the marsh near Stone Harbor. We were never out of sight or earshot of this species during the daylight hours. [N]

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – A few were on the beaches in South Cape May and in the masses of birds feeding at Reeds Beach.

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) – This is the paler-backed of the two large gulls that are common in Cape May. [N]

ICELAND GULL (*Larus glaucoideus*) – A scraggly but very white immature bird had been hanging around Cape May since early spring, and we saw it one morning as it flew past Second Avenue Jetty near our hotel.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – The tour kicked off with some nice studies of these Eurasian invaders on the beach near our hotel. The species has become rather regular in Eastern North America just in the past 20 years, coincident with the onset of nesting in Iceland and then Greenland.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*) – This is the largest gull we have here on Planet Earth! It is a striking and conspicuous resident here at Cape May. [N]

LEAST TERN (*Sternula antillarum*) – These tiny but loud terns were flying around the beaches of Cape May; seen every day. [N]

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – Just before we left our Shell Bay stakeout, a pair of these terns flew by Doug's van. We bailed out of the vehicles and were able to watch these long-winged, peculiar terns hunting over the saltmarsh for several minutes at distance.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – We found plenty of these gray-bodied terns mixed with Forster's Terns along the oceanfront between Cape May Point and Stone Harbor. [N]

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – These bright, silvery terns accompanied us both on the beaches and in the marshes of the back bays. Very common. [N]

BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) – Though we had to wait until tour's end, the birds on the small island at Heislerville put on a good show for us, patrolling back and forth over the shorebird-covered mudflats and channels. [N]

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Common around towns. [I]

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Quite common.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus americanus*) – We heard several and eventually saw one briefly at Belleplain State Forest.

Apodidae (Swifts)

CHIMNEY SWIFT (*Chaetura pelagica*) – These "flying cigars" were zooming overhead at many stops during the tour. They frequently accompanied the flocks of martins in the mornings at Cape May Point State Park.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – Our only resident hummingbird in New Jersey - these tiny birds showed nicely for us on several occasions.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Our only encounter was an unseen bird that we heard rattling in the distance.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – A common mid-sized woodpecker of the broadleaf forest of Cape May - seen most days, including several times around Belleplain.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – This is the common small woodpecker of the forests of Cape May. May can be a tough time to find woodpeckers here (they get quiet when nesting), but we turned up a few.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – We heard the harsh keek calls of one from the forest at Belleplain. May is a challenging time of year to find this species in Cape May.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – The nest that we found at Cox Hall Creek Wildlife Management Area provided a great chance for us to admire the gleaming yellow wings and tail of this handsome woodpecker. [N]

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – We had two flybys from these small, compact terrors as they chased shorebirds. This is a bit late for the species to move through the area, so it was a nice write-in for our checklist.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – Though we visited a few nesting areas for this recovering species, our only views came at considerable distance.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus virens*) – This is a common breeder in the forest at Belleplain.

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax virens*) – After we heard the sharp "peep" calls of this *Empidonax*, we tromped into the forest near the campground at Belleplain and found an individual working on a scraggly nest. [N]

WILLOW FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax traillii*) – In Cape May, this species nests in shrubby areas interspersed within salt marshes. We stopped at Corson's Inlet and had great views of one singing bird ("FITZ-BEW!" within a few minutes.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – A pair of these tail-dipping flycatchers had just recently fledged their young at the entrance to the Belleplain campground; we found them still in the area.

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – These yellow-bellied, rusty-winged *Myiarchus* flycatchers put in appearances on each day of the tour.

EASTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – This tyrant is a common feature of shrubby fields around Cape May - we saw them often!

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*) – Good views of this "chick-of-the-village" at Belleplain State Forest.

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (*Vireo flavifrons*) – One of these bespectacled migrants was at the edge of the forest at Cox Hall Creek WMA in Villas.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO (*Vireo solitarius*) – This species usually migrates through Cape May in a window earlier than our tour dates, so it was a nice surprise to find one during one of our very productive walks for migrants in Cape May Point. Its slate-blue head and lemony flanks combined with the white spectacles and wingbars to form a very classy look!

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*) – A migrant was singing in the parking lot at Higbee Beach. Though common along rivers and lakes in the interior part of the region, the species is fairly uncommon in coastal Cape May.

RED-EYED VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*) – A common breeder in Belleplain and nearby forests.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – This striking corvid was fairly common during our tour, putting in some really good appearances along forest edges.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – These large, caw-ing crows are less conspicuous than their smaller cousins at this season, but we found some calling birds on a few occasions.

FISH CROW (*Corvus ossifragus*) – We heard the nasal "uh-uh!" calls of this small crow at many locations around Cape May on this tour, including at some locations where the large Boat-tailed Grackles were nearby and appeared to have almost the same bulk as the crows!

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – These brown swallows swooped around the ponds and parking area at Cape May Point State Park.

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) – A common colonial breeder at several locations in Cape May. Our morning picnics at Cape May Point State Park gave us a great opportunity to watch these large, loud swallows at close range. [N]

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Common; this white-bodied swallow was seen each day of the tour.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – A few migrants flew past us during our walks at Cape May Point.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Abundant. [N]

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

CAROLINA CHICKADEE (*Poecile carolinensis*) – This cavity nester was a common sight at Higbee Beach and in Belleplain State Forest.

TUFTED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus bicolor*) – This crested songbird was rather common and conspicuous in many forested spots, including Cox Hall Creek WMA and Belleplain.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*) – Though this is a tough season to find nuthatches because they are quiet, we had a few in Belleplain on our first visit there.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*) – This bubbly singer was common throughout the peninsula.

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*) – We found one singing its chattery song at Heislerville on our last full day.

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – Very common, though often challenging to see. We heard the two part chorus of singing males and growling females on many occasions.

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – A common and conspicuous breeder here. We often found them flicking their long, thin tails up high above us in oak trees.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – A loudly calling male flew in and perched above us at Cox Hall Creek WMA during our walk along one of the reclaimed fairways at this former golf course.

VEERY (*Catharus fuscescens*) – One was singing from a tangly part of the forest at Cox Hall Creek WMA, but we weren't able to see it.

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – Great scope views of a singing male in the campground at Belleplain State Forest. We really got the full show as this spotted bird sang its two overlapping songs from a high pine branch. [N]

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Abundant.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – These slim, gray mimids were singing just about everywhere.

BROWN THRASHER (*Toxostoma rufum*) – These large, foxy mimids were singing their repetitive, sweet songs at a few places around Belleplain State Forest. One showed off nicely on the ground near the campground bathrooms.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Very common here.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Common, especially in towns. [I]

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – These crested beauties were hawking insects at many water-adjacent locations along our tour route.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Loud "chee-cherr, chee-cherr, chee-cherr..." songs led us to these striking, surprised-looking wood-warblers at Belleplain State Forest. Doug even found one of their domed leaf nests on the ground in the campground there. [N]

WORM-EATING WARBLER (*Helminthophila vermivora*) – Dry trills sent us searching for these stripe-headed, olive wood-warblers at Belleplain State Forest. One in particular showed well in the scope as it sang, and we could even see its tail vibrating quickly as it trilled.

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia motacilla*) – One chipped loudly as it passed by us along a stream at Belleplain, but it didn't reappear for a close view.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – A few migrants chipped and showed for us at Lily Lake in Cape May Point.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – These striped nuthatch-warblers appeared as both migrants and breeders for us around Cape May Point and also in Belleplain.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*) – Breeders posed for us at the Beanery and also at the Sunset Bridge in Belleplain. The pair of these golden swamp-warblers nesting by the bridge put in a few VERY memorable appearances.

MOURNING WARBLER (*Geothlypis philadelphia*) – One singing male came out for us along the edge of a dirt road through Belleplain State Forest. The species is a rare migrant through Cape May in spring, so we were rather lucky to find this one.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Common in edge habitat and shrubby fields.

HOODED WARBLER (*Setophaga citrina*) – We heard these boldly patterned warblers singing loudly from the woods at Belleplain, but they stayed hidden away from the roads and paths during our visits. [I]

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – These long-tailed beauties were common in many forested habitats that we visited throughout Cape May. Seen every day.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – At least 2 showed off for us along the edge of Lily Lake in Cape May Point. Despite the name, the species is quite scarce in this area during the spring migration, so we were lucky to be able to study the fine-tipped bills and tidy streaks of these boreal beauties.

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – The rising trills of these colorful gems greeted us on many occasions in Cape May Point, where the species has started to breed just in the last few years. We also saw quite a few migrants in mixed flocks of songbirds throughout the tour route.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – This northern forest breeder put in a great showing on this tour - we found migrant males singing all over the place, including many during our strolls around the streets of Cape May Point.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER (*Setophaga castanea*) – Another scarce spring warbler in Cape May! We saw our first ones near Lily Lake, but the real star was the male that popped up in the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron colony in Wildwood and posed in the open right above our heads. WOW!

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (*Setophaga fusca*) – A few migrant flame-throats appeared between the high oaks of the Belleplain campground (remember the one that interrupted breakfast preparations and then taunted us from 100' up that huge tree?) and then much more kindly down low in the trees in Cape May Point on our final afternoon.

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – Common and widespread.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – We encountered several of these striking black-and-white migrants. During their stay in Cape May in spring, we reliably find them in oaks - this tour was no exception!

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – One migrant was singing its buzzy "lazy" song in the forest at Cox Hall Creek WMA during our walk there.

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus*) – Breeders were trilling from the campground and Sunset Bridge areas at Belleplain State Forest.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Setophaga dominica*) – One of our most striking breeding warblers! Ours were the long-billed, yellow-lored dominica subspecies, seen well in the forest at Belleplain.

PRAIRIE WARBLER (*Setophaga discolor*) – A few tail-wagging males sang their ascending staircase songs for us at Higbee Beach WMA and Belleplain SF.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – One migrant put in an appearance in the Higbee oaks on our second full day of the tour.

CANADA WARBLER (*Cardellina canadensis*) – This navy and yellow warbler with the spectacles showed poorly in deep shadow in a thicketed lot near Lily Lake in Cape May Point on our final afternoon.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (*Icteria virens*) – The songflight of a male along the dirt track at Higbee Beach was a great highlight of an otherwise quiet visit to this migrant trap.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

SEASIDE SPARROW (*Ammodramus maritimus*) – Songsters perched up in the marsh for us at Thompsons Beach and Heislerville.

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – Common, especially in the north near Belleplain.

FIELD SPARROW (*Spizella pusilla*) – Singing, clown-faced males perched up for us at Higbee Beach and Cape May Point State Park.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – Common throughout the peninsula.

EASTERN TOWHEE (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) – These large sparrows sang from the forest at Belleplain State Forest.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) – We had to walk a fair ways down a side track at Belleplain State Forest before we found a male perched up and singing in the vicinity of a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Red overload!

SCARLET TANAGER (*Piranga olivacea*) – A territorial male sang for us in Belleplain, and a migrant showed off near the Cape May Bird Observatory at Lily Lake.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Abundant.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – A migrant male sang for us from up high in an oak at Belleplain State Forest.

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Passerina caerulea*) – A few of these stocky-billed cardinalids appeared in front of us at Higbee Beach. They twitched their tails and we managed to see the rusty wing patches on the deep blue male.

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – Common and widespread along forest edges.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

BOBOLINK (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) – A few popped up and then tucked right back in to a field at Higbee Beach - close to the aforementioned Blue Grosbeaks.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Common and widespread.

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – All over.

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*) – Quite a few patrolled the edges of salt marsh habitat both on the Atlantic coast and over on the shore of the Delaware Bay.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Everywhere - males and females were moving around and perching in the treetops, keeping an eye out for potential victims (all other small songbirds!).

ORCHARD ORIOLE (*Icterus spurius*) – We saw these small, jabbering orioles at many places around the peninsula. Great views came at Cape May Point and Heislerville.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (*Icterus galbula*) – A male sang lustily from a tall oak along Weatherby Road at the northern edge of Cape May County.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – Common; we heard and saw these streaky, introduced birds at many sites during the week. [I]

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – Common!

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Common around towns and farms. [IN]

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – This is the only bunny we have in Cape May.

PLAIN EASTERN CHIPMUNK (*Tamias striatus*) – One ran along the roadside at Belleplain - a write-in mammal! The species is quite uncommon farther south in the county.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Widespread.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – Many were swimming around in the freshwater marshes at Cape May Point.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – Quite common in the nearshore waters around Cape May Point.

HUMPBACK WHALE (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) – This was one of the mega-awesome moments of the tour. Doug and I spotted a few whales blowing just offshore from our hotel, and most of us walked over to the promenade for scope views of a pectoral fin-waving whale just lounging around at the water's surface.

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – A few showed near Belleplain on our final day.

Herps

AMERICAN BULLFROG (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) – We heard the deep bass tones of these big frogs on several occasions.

GREEN FROG (*Lithobates clamitans*) – This was the banjo twang that we frequently heard coming from freshwater marshes.

SOUTHERN GRAY TREEFROG (*Hyla chrysoscelis*) – The yelping calls of this frog were a common sound up at Belleplain State Forest and also at Higbee Beach.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 155 bird taxa and 7 mammal taxa