



Field Guides Tour Report

SPRING IN CAPE MAY 2017

May 14, 2017 to May 20, 2017

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



The massive shorebird aggregations along the various coasts of southern New Jersey are a big highlight of this tour. Here, thousands of shorebirds, mostly Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitchers, and Semipalmated Sandpipers, gather in the impoundment at Heislerville. Photo by guide Doug Gochfeld.

Our spring Cape May tour is typically chock full of great birding experiences, and this year it not only met, but often exceeded, our already high expectations. We started racking up the hits before we even got to the hotel, making a couple of stops en route from the airport. One of these stops netted us part of a family of Barred Owls hooting it up at the Rea Farm (The Beanery).

The week started off with west and southwest winds already covering the region, and we spent the early morning at Cape May Point State Park (CMPSP), having a picnic breakfast and enjoying a constant stream of swallows coursing by, headlined by some Bank Swallows and many Cliff Swallows, and dominated by many, many, Barn Swallows. Cape May Point and The Beanery were our principal morning birding stops, and we added a good mix of both migrants and breeders. Remarkably, the most numerous warbler on this first day was Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler. By this point it would be fairly late for even one here most years, let alone for it to be the most common warbler species. After lunch, we went over to the bayshore, to enjoy the first of our shorebird spectacles. We ended up spending a couple of hours at Heislerville Wildlife Management Area (WMA), taking in the spectacle of over 10,000 shorebirds feeding on the mudflats of the vast impoundment, and periodically taking to the sky in synchronized, seemingly choreographed, flight.

Our planned trip to the Ocean City Welcome Center happened to come on the heels of a night with very strong migration through the region, which provided us with a bounty of migrants in addition to our primary goal, which was to drink in the Yellow-crowned Night Heron colony in the beautiful morning light while we ate breakfast. We got to watch migrant songbirds moving through the trees of this isolated patch of habitat in the vast saltmarsh as they continued their northbound migration, and we ended up with 12 species of warbler while standing in one place, as well as Eastern Wood-Pewee, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and several Baltimore Orioles. This morning was one of the highlights for many of us, and with good reason!

After we were able to pry ourselves away from the breakfast, displaying Yellow-crowned Night Herons, and migrants, we made our way over to Belleplain State Forest, the richest location for forest-breeding songbirds in Cape May County. A nice morning there featured Hooded, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, and Pine Warblers, as well as a Broad-winged Hawk near a nest. We then motored over towards the Delaware Bayshore for the shorebird spectacle, but not before making very important stops at Wawa (for sandwiches), and Beaver Swamp WMA (for Sandhill Cranes and Gull-billed Terns). Cooks Beach was our first bay shore stop, and in addition to the great shorebirds feeding on Horseshoe Crabs here, we also got our first scope views of a singing Seaside Sparrow. Reeds Beach held even closer shorebirds, including Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers, and Sanderlings, as well as actively mating Horseshoe Crabs, and a few Diamondback Terrapin turtles. Several of the shorebirds were

sporting colored flags on their legs, including an orange one that was put on a Red Knot on the wintering grounds in Argentina! Our afternoon was spent looking for migrants around Cape May Point again, and after our dinner at the Mad Batter we headed over to the Meadows to take in a wonderful Common Nighthawk show.

Day four started out with breakfast at CMPSP again, and we followed that up with a nice foray to Higbee Beach WMA and then the Stevens Street side of the Beanery for a hawkwatch.

The main event of the morning, though, was our boat trip into the back bays of Cape May County (Jarvis Sound). The boat journey aboard Captain Bob Lubberman's boat named "The Osprey" was about as fine a trip as you could expect. We had good views of some breeding plumaged shorebirds, encountered singing Seaside Sparrows and calling Clapper Rails, saw hordes of Diamondback Terrapins, and had repeatedly amazing views of Ospreys at various stages of nesting. A big highlight on this trip in the spring is the good number of Whimbrels that we see, and this year was no exception, but there was bonus shorebird in their midst: a Bar-tailed Godwit! This vagrant Godwit from Europe had first been seen the previous week, but had been very tricky to track down, with well less than half the boat trips seeing it. We lucked into seeing it very close to the boat before it flew a bit farther out in the marsh where it then foraged for long enough for us all to get scope views of it (we were tickled pink that we were able to use a telescope aboard a boat, an unusual occurrence to be sure!!).

On our next-to-last full day, we headed north, going into Atlantic County, and visiting Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (Brigantine). We had a great spin around the wildlife drive, seeing hordes of shorebirds, dominated by Dunlin and Semipalmated Sandpipers, but also including standouts such as seven Stilt Sandpipers (rare in the region in spring, and always a treat to see in breeding plumage), and a whopping count of over 60 White-rumped Sandpipers. After a few efforts, we finally got good views of Saltmarsh Sparrow, and we saw a bunch of Clapper Rails running around on the low tide mudflats, and quite a few Gull-billed Terns. Other species of interest here were Wood Duck, Caspian Tern, Brant, and Black Skimmers aplenty.

We then headed back south, and had a brief stop at Stevens Street near the Beanery, where we picked up our first Mississippi Kite of the tour. We were very happy to pick up this species, but little did we know, this individual wouldn't be nearly the last Mississippi Kite we would see.

Our final full day began with us taking in the dawn chorus at Belleplain as the sun rose over our picnic breakfast. After we finished eating, we were treated to cripplingly good views of an Acadian Flycatcher throwing its head back as its body exploded in song, followed quickly by a singing Ovenbird that perched for good looks for all. After enjoying good looks at other local specialty breeders, such as Hooded Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, and Wood Thrush, as well as a surprise Ground Skink, we headed out and over to Weatherby Road. in the adjacent Peaslee WMA.

Weatherby Road gave us great views of Blue-winged Warbler, Summer Tanager, and Scarlet Tanager in quick succession, and we retired to the south for lunch just outside the Cape May County Zoo. While eating, we enjoyed a pair of adult Hairy Woodpeckers actively attending a nest with chicks, and when we were done we tracked down a pair of gorgeous adult Red-headed Woodpeckers, and this was punctuated by a Mississippi Kite flying overhead heading south!

We went down to Cape Island, and did another sky watch, this time being rewarded with several Mississippi Kites, including some in a very instructive direct comparison to Broad-winged Hawks sharing the same thermals. After a brief respite, we went up the peninsula to get into some coastal dune and beach habitat that we hadn't spent much time in. The big highlight here was a pair of Piping Plovers courting, with the male (named "Bob Barker" by the local plover biologists) doing a fancy high stepping display to impress its mate. We also got our closest looks at Lesser Black-backed Gulls, saw Least Terns displaying and mating, and had both Black and Surf Scoters. On the way back down to Cape May, we poked our heads into The Wetlands Institute, where there was an in-your-face Tricolored Heron putting on a show.

We spent our final morning in the dunes of legendary Cape May Point, enjoying a modest but noticeable flight of migrant songbirds, and picking up some waterbirds flying by as well. We had singles of Bobolink and Dickcissel, a handful of Blackpoll Warblers and Eastern Kingbirds, several large flocks of Cedar Waxwings, a nice male Rose-breasted Grosbeak which dropped out of the sky and landed next to us, and a Red Fox trotting down the beach. By the time we left, Mississippi Kites were all over the place, and we had likely counted into the double digits of the species, a fitting exclamation point to a splendid week in Cape May!

We were both delighted with the week, from the beautiful breeding birds, to the awe-inspiring shorebird spectacles, but the real pleasure was getting to spend a week birding in Cape May with this fine group of people. Also, a huge thanks to Ruth at Field Guides HQ for putting it all together and making sure that everything ran like a dream. Thank you all for making it such a successful and memorable trip, and we hope to see afield in the future!

-Doug and 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)

BRANT (ATLANTIC) (*Branta bernicla hrota*) – We saw a couple of hundred on a ballfield while we were driving through Ocean City, and then in the distance at the welcome center, and then we were able to get a better, closer, study of a flock of four individuals in one of the impoundments at Brigantine.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Yup.

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – A few of these invasive introduced swans live on bodies of water around Cape May Point, and we saw one on its nest on Lake Lily.

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*)

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – These breed locally in small numbers, and we connected with a couple of pairs around Cape Island, including an pair that were walking around the edge of the parking lot at CMPSP.

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK (*Anas rubripes*) – We had some decent views of these, including a few in flight, in Ocean City.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Present in appropriate habitat throughout.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – One of several surprise waterfowl species that we encountered, a drake was present upon our arrival at the Meadows to look for Nighthawks.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – In the odd waterbird flock at Heislerville. The Scaup was with a bunch of Ruddy Ducks and a Horned Grebe, all of which are atypical for this time of year.

SURF SCOTER (*Melanitta perspicillata*) – A raft of ten or more on the ocean off of Avalon.

BLACK SCOTER (*Melanitta americana*) – Our first were on the ocean off of Avalon, and then we had a female-type floating around from jetty to jetty off of Coral Avenue on our final morning.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – A lingering bird in female-type plumage was in the same impoundment at Heislerville which also held the odd duck flock, and two more were in Jarvis Sound, seen from the Osprey boat. These were all likely young birds, which will linger in the region this summer instead of trying to fly north and breed.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Our first encounter with these stifftails was the flock at Heislerville, and we ran into the species again as we were making the rounds at Brigantine.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*) – Heard calling from the parking lot at CMPSP, and eventually seen very well there, as it perched up in a tree. We also had one flying down the beach away from us at Coral Ave. on our final morning.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – We had these on days 3 and 4 of the tour, while transiting between birding locations.

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – A couple (including one in beautiful breeding plumage) flew over us while we were at the Ocean City Welcome Center, then we had one at fairly close range from the Osprey boat, before again seeing one on the final morning from Coral Ave.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

HORNED GREBE (*Podiceps auritus*) – A huge surprise was this adult in full breeding regalia, a real treat to see at this latitude. It is exceptionally rare for the species to linger here this late into the spring but, luckily for us, this one didn't get that memo.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NORTHERN GANNET (*Morus bassanus*) – A few seen fairly well from CMPSP just after our first picnic breakfast there were our best views. We also encountered them the next day from 2nd Avenue Jetty, and then on the final morning from Coral Ave.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Common throughout, with a few flocks still migrating northward.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – We had a couple of these flying around off shore off of Beach Avenue just after we departed from the Mad Batter.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – An oddly uncommon bird on this tour, as it isn't known to nest in Cape May County. That said, we ran into it five days in a row, including a mix of flyovers around Cape Island and perched birds around Brigantine. The strangest sighting was when one flushed from the forested stream at Belleplain.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Common.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – Common.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – An adult did a circuit over Cape May Point on the last morning while we were up on the Coral Avenue viewing platform.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – Brief views from the Osprey boat and at Brigantine, but then some really excellent views at the Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – We had these in just a few places during the week, with the first sighting being of a flyby from the platform at the Meadows, while on a Nighthawk watch.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Encountered in a few places, with the highest number being at the Yellow-crowned Night Heron colony in Ocean City.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – We only saw these on one day, but boy oh boy did we see them on that day. What a cool experience seeing these at the colony in Ocean City was! We even got to see adults displaying, and others turning over their bright blue eggs!

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Encountered every day of the tour, though mostly seen as flyovers. Bayberry Drive was our first spot on the tour, and afforded us with perhaps our best views of these long-legged, long-necked, long-billed waders.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Encountered every full day of the tour.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Every day.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Phenomenally abundant as breeders in Cape May County, especially in the back bays. The breeding density of this species that we see from the Osprey boat is perhaps second to nowhere in the region.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

MISSISSIPPI KITE (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) – This spring saw an incredible explosion of these birds in Cape May Point, centered right around our visit. We started by seeing one bird in the distance when we stopped at the Stevens Street side of the Beanery on the way back from Brigantine, and we would have been happy with this sighting of this rarity which is seen less-than-annually on the tour. However, there were even more around the

next day: We had one fly over us at the woods at the Cape May Zoo, and then we saw up to 6 from Stevens Street in the afternoon, including in direct comparison with Broad-winged Hawks, circling high above us. Then on the final morning, we saw even more, probably into the double digits, with 6 or 7 in view at a time, including some real nice views. This year was a real treat when it came to Mississippi Kite.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – We saw these over the marsh at the end of Stipsons Island Road, where the species still breeds. Then the next day we saw one coursing over the marsh at the Ocean City Welcome Center. A couple of days later we had a distant bird from Stevens St., and finally we had yet another distant bird from Coral Ave. on the final morning.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Janet and others spotted one on day 3.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Seen on most days. This species is doing very well in the region nowadays, after the population cratered out in the 1970s due to the widespread use of DDT.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) – We saw one of these on territory at Belleplain, and then we saw several on the days we were Kite-watching at Stevens St. and at Coral Ave. Most of these were young birds, and many were in obvious wing molt.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Every day of the tour.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

CLAPPER RAIL (*Rallus crepitans*) – A great out-in-the-open view of one in the salt marsh below the Ocean City Welcome Center, which many folks got great scope views of. As if this one great view wasn't enough, we seemed to be swimming in them as we circled the impoundments at Brigantine on the fairly low tide.

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Antigone canadensis*) – A big surprise addition to the trip list were two Sandhill Cranes that were discovered at Beaver Swamp during the first couple of days of our tour, and that we were able to track down the next day while we were in the area. This is a rare species in Cape May County, and there are no breeding records for the county, so seeing two on the ground together at this time of year is quite unusual.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*) – A common sight of the the coast of Cape May County, we encountered these on most days of the tour, just about always on or near beach. We saw a couple at Avalon on territory, and then another bird standing over a fluffy young in the saltmarsh at Jarvis Sound.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Seen on five days, usually in small numbers associated with the large aggregations of shorebirds that we ran into (Heislerville, Delaware Bay, Brigantine, Jarvis Sound, Ocean City).

SEMPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – They were at all of our shorebird spots, but they were present in truly astounding numbers at Heislerville, with perhaps as many as 2,000 present there.

PIPING PLOVER (*Charadrius melodus*) – A great experience watching a mated pair on the beach at Avalon. We even got to see "Bob Barker", as the local Piping Plover biologists have named this one, doing a fancy high step to impress his lady friend. It's always a treat to see Piping Plovers, and it's extra special to see a bonded pair given how much of a decline the species has undergone in New Jersey.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Conspicuous at CMPSP and at Heislerville.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*) – We ran into a glut of them on our boat trip through Jarvis Sound. This long-distance migrant is always a great sight to see, and the mid-Atlantic region is perhaps the best place to see them in the spring in the eastern US.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT (EUROPEAN) (*Limosa lapponica lapponica*) – WHOA!! What an unexpected addition to the tour avifauna. This bird was found a few days before the tour began, but was very squirrely and difficult to pin down. We were fortunate enough to initially see it at very close range. After it shifted to a different spot in the marsh, Captain Bob was able to maneuver us into position to get good scope views. This was the European subspecies *L.l.lapponica*, rather than the East Asian subspecies that regularly shows up in very small numbers in the Pacific Northwest.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – These striking-looking, omnivorous, shorebirds were in most of the shorebird habitats we went visited, from the freshwater impoundments, to sandy beaches, to tidal salt flats.

RED KNOT (*Calidris canutus*) – One of the highlights of the Cape May spring tour, and the main reason that we choose this particular time window, is the mass aggregation of Red Knots that times its arrival to Delaware Bay with the widespread spawning of Horseshoe Crabs. The feast afforded by the large scale deposit of Horseshoe Crab eggs along the Delaware Bay once every year is a buffet for several species of shorebirds and gulls, but Red Knots are without a doubt the most iconic of those. We even saw a Knot that had been originally banded in Argentina, bringing home the importance of migratory stopover habitat like Delaware Bay, as that bird goes from southern Argentina to the high Arctic every spring, with very few hospitable places to stop along the way.

STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*) – A nice surprise was seven of these scarce-in-spring shorebirds at Brigantine. They're rare enough that they were a write-in on our checklists!

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – We ran into good numbers of these feeding on beaches on both the Delaware Bay shore as well as on the beach at Avalon.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – Obscenely abundant at both Heislerville and Brigantine. It's always great to see these when they're adorned in their full breeding regalia, rather than the dull brown that they sport through the fall and winter, when they are familiar sights on coastal beaches in the US.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Seen every full day of the tour, though always in small numbers. Best views were at Heislerville and Brigantine.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER (*Calidris fuscicollis*) – We all enjoyed one through the scope at Heislerville, but then that view was rendered almost obsolete when we encountered a very high count of at least 62 (!!) at Brigantine a couple of days later. These are one of the longest distance migrants on the Western Hemisphere, going from wintering grounds in far southern South America to the very high Arctic to breed.

SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – The most common of the "peeps" during this tour, we encountered large numbers at both Heislerville and Brigantine, and smaller numbers elsewhere. These do take part in the Horseshoe Crab buffet as well, despite the fact that sandy beaches aren't the habitat that many associate them with.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – Thousands were at Heislerville, and we also saw large numbers in Jarvis Sound from the Osprey, and good numbers at Brigantine.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – We encountered these in several places, with the highest numbers being from the Osprey while in the back bay.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*) – A late migrant working a puddle at the Beanery on our first afternoon in Cape May.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Encountered at a couple of small ponds, such as at the Beanery, and also at Brigantine.

WILLET (EASTERN) (*Tringa semipalmata semipalmata*) – Our common local breeding Willet, we saw plenty of these in appropriate saltmarsh habitats.

WILLET (WESTERN) (*Tringa semipalmata inornata*) – A big surprise on the Osprey boat, Western Willets are not uncommon at some places along the coast in the fall and winter, but are exceptionally rare in the spring here. This bird was in non-breeding plumage, likely indicating that it was an immature entering its first summer, and wouldn't try to go north (and west!) and breed this year. This is still currently considered a subspecies of Willet, but it seems to be only a matter of time before Willet is split into multiple species.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – Beanery pond, Wetlands Institute, and some scattered around Brigantine and the like.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Abundant. The back bays of New Jersey host the largest nesting colonies of this species in the world.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – A few lingering youngsters here and there, these are in the region in huge numbers in the winter, but pull out in March and April and all the adults are gone by the time May comes around.

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) – Very common.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – We had a couple of youngsters on the beach at Cape May City during our Pelican diversion, and then had another couple even closer on the beach at Avalon a few days later. Our first encounter with this species gave Linda her 600th ABA bird!

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*) – A common sight on the tour, and a breeder in Cape May.

LEAST TERN (*Sterna antillarum*) – We encountered these several times before finally getting an eyeful of them on the beach at Avalon, where we even got to experience a couple animatedly courting each other.

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – We encountered a pair of these low density breeders at Beaver Swamp, and then ran into higher numbers at Brigantine later in the week.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – One perched on a bit of mud viewed from the gull pond tower at Brigantine.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – Our best views were probably on the Osprey Boat, though our most instructive views may have been the one perched on the dock with Forster's Terns at Bunker Pond in CMPSP.

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – The most common sterna we encounter throughout.

BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) – Good-sized flocks at both Heislerville and Brigantine.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Present. **[I]**

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Common.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus americanus*) – Pretty good views at the Beanery on our first full day, and then we sadly came across a recently deceased individual alongside the road heading towards Belleplain the next day.

Strigidae (Owls)

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (*Megascops asio*) – We found a nice reddish-morph bird on a day roost at the Beanery, and after some calling, it briefly popped out of its hole to glare at us before clambering back inside.

BARRED OWL (*Strix varia*) – Our second birding stop on the way from Philly to Cape May was to track down a family of these at the Beanery, and we were highly successful, seeing a young bird, and seeing and hearing one of its parents nearby as well!

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*) – We had a phenomenal experience with these on our evening at the Meadows, where we had up to six individuals, two of which flew right overhead.

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW (*Antrostomus carolinensis*) – We bizarrely had one of these flying around the parking garage of our hotel at dawn on day 3. This was almost certainly a newly arrived migrant that was still trying to find an appropriate place to roost.

Apodidae (Swifts)

CHIMNEY SWIFT (*Chaetura pelagica*) – Encountered every day of the tour, with the highest numbers seen in Cape May City from the Acme parking lot after our dinner at Oyster Bay.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – There were several fleeting sightings by some people on a few of the days, but a male coming in to the hummingbird feeder at the Northwood Center was obliging enough for all to see.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – A few folks had a brief flyby at Lily Lake in Cape May Point on our first full day of birding.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) – Great views of a pair at the woods adjacent to the Cape May County Zoo. At times they even utilized the zip-line course.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – Common, and we even ran across a nest during lunch near the Cape May Zoo.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – Heard more than seen, but some views at Higbee and at the Beanery.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – We saw one of these fairly well at Belleplain, but then we found a nest with chicks calling from inside the cavity right near where we were lunching near the Cape May County Zoo, and we saw the adults make several shuttle runs bringing food into the nest.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – Seen at least once on most days, but mostly as a flyby, and often while we were driving.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – A surprise Merlin flew over us while we were Kite-watching at Stevens St. on our final full day.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – Seen on at least three occasions, but the most satisfying view was of the individual hunting shorebirds at Brigantine.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER (*Contopus cooperi*) – A distant bird perched up on a tree top at Cox Hall Creek WMA was a nice surprise.

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus virens*) – Some good views, and frequent listens, of this species in appropriate woodland habitats throughout.

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax virens*) – Really great views at Belleplain State Forest on our final morning there. This very vocal bird afforded full frame scope views.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – Nesting atop the light fixture under the roof of the entrance booth at Belleplain.

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – The most widespread breeding flycatcher that we encounter on this tour, we heard many and saw a good number too.

EASTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – Encountered every day except for the first afternoon. On our final morning, we saw a bunch migrating past our vantage point on the dune crossover at Coral Ave.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*) – Best views were at Belleplain.

RED-EYED VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*) – One of the most common vocalizations in deciduous woodland in the summer here, we encountered many of these, and even got some pretty good views of these canopy dwellers.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Common.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Common.

FISH CROW (*Corvus ossifragus*) – Common.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – We ran into this sparse local breeder a bunch of times during the week, notably around Cape May Point during most of our birding outings there.

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) – We got to enjoy the big nesting colony at CMPSP at point blank range several times during the week.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – A fairly widespread breeder in appropriate habitats in the region, and we encountered them every full day of birding.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – Our first sightings of these were at the Beanery on our very first afternoon, and then we had a bunch of them the next morning at CMPSP and elsewhere, brought over to the peninsula by the strong westerly component in the wind. We saw them a couple of additional times, including on the final morning at Coral Ave.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – The most common and widespread hirundine during our travels.

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – It was a treat to run into a slew of these on our first morning at CMPSP, and we saw them at Lake Lily that day as well. This is a scarce bird in Cape May in the spring, and really needs some strong west winds to bring them to the peninsula, so the number we had during that day was fairly exceptional.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

CAROLINA CHICKADEE (*Poecile carolinensis*) – This is the go-to chickadee in south Jersey.

TUFTED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus bicolor*) – Some good views of many of these in multiple types of wooded habitats.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*) – Very frequently heard, especially on our walks through Cape May Point, where it was also seen a few times.

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*) – Heard only in appropriate habitat on at least four days, and perhaps seen by some during our stop at Stipsons Island Road. [∗]

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – One of the most conspicuous songsters in the area, we even got some good views of these loud-but-skulky wrens.

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – Common in wooded habitats, where we frequently encountered their wheezy calls, and we got excellent views of a couple at the Beanery early on.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH/BICKNELL'S THRUSH (*Catharus minimus/bicknelli*) – We had bad views of this *Catharus* thrush on back-to-back days in Cape May Point, but it only called a couple of times, and we couldn't be sure which of these species it was.

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – We heard its beautiful song on a number of occasions at Belleplain, and we finally got good views of it foraging on the ground during our final visit there.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Abundant, nests and all.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Very common, and well seen on multiple occasions.

BROWN THRASHER (*Toxostoma rufum*) – Seen well by the first van as we were leaving Brigantine. This is the time of the year when the species is nesting and they adults are very cagey.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Common.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Yup. [I]

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombicilla cedrorum*) – We ran into them on four of the five full days, including as some heard only flyovers. Then we had several large flocks, adding up to around a couple of hundred flying by on the final morning at Coral Ave.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Belleplain is the best place for these on the tour and we eventually got a singing bird teed up in a tree to sit still long enough for scope views.

WORM-EATING WARBLER (*Helminthos vermivorum*) – A really nice experience with one of these at Belleplain, where we got to see it foraging on both sides of the road that we were standing on.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – We got views of a couple of these during our warbler madness at Ocean City Welcome Center.

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) – Nice views of a singing male along Weatherby Road.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – Seen well on at least four days.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*) – We had great views in a couple of different locations at the Beanery, including a pair being very active around a nest. We also had good views of one at Belleplain on our final trip there, after hearing it there on our first visit.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Common, as both a breeder and a migrant. We even saw one foraging on the ground near Lake Lily at one point.

HOODED WARBLER (*Setophaga citrina*) – A good experience with one of these charismatic and boldly marked songsters on our second visit to Belleplain, after a more frustrating encounter in our first trip.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – We encountered this showy warbler, which is a common migrant, and patchy local breeder, on several days.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – We had the great fortune of bumping into one of these at the Ocean City Welcome Center as it paused briefly on its migration. Despite it being named after the place, and being somewhat numerous there the fall, Cape May Warbler is a very low density spring migrant through Cape May.

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – We ran into several of these in our first few days looking for migrant warblers, including a few at the Ocean City Welcome Center.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – We ran into some of these showy migrants during the middle three days of the tour.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER (*Setophaga castanea*) – We had one briefly that only a couple of people got on in Cape May Point on Tuesday, but then on Wednesday we had an incredible experience with a singing male next to the parking lot at Cox Hall Creek in the afternoon. This bird was moving very slowly, and was staying mostly out in the open, behaviors which are not the norm for this species in migration. We then saw another one shortly thereafter, which was also fairly cooperative.

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – Common coastal breeder.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) – We had a female or young male at the productive vegetated lot on the west side of Lake Lily in Cape May Point on Thursday.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – Heard commonly, especially during the first half of the week, and eventually seen well by most or all.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – We saw this on two days, with the most memorable being a whisper-singing male in Cape May Point.

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus*) – Belleplain, where it breeds.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE) (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – A surprise development was that there were still a bunch of these remaining at the beginning of the week. This warbler is usually scarce in Cape May once the calendar turns to May, so this pulse was a couple of weeks late.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Setophaga dominica*) – We got some real good looks at these singing in the treetops at Belleplain on both of our visits to the state forest.

PRAIRIE WARBLER (*Setophaga discolor*) – We had a migrant at the Ocean City Welcome Center, and then we had breeders at Higbee the next day.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – We got stunningly good below-eye level scope views of one of these migrants during our morning sojourn at the Ocean City Welcome Center.

CANADA WARBLER (*Cardellina canadensis*) – A really nice surprise was a male Canada Warbler next to the parking lot at Cox Hall Creek. This bird distracted us from our search for the Bay-breasted Warbler that was singing just a few trees away. What a productive afternoon!

WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*) – Tom and Kim heard one of these chattering away on the third day of the tour.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (*Icteria virens*) – We had these on the breeding grounds at Higbee, and one was even incorporating a Pileated Woodpecker vocalization into its repertoire!

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

SALTmarsh SPARROW (*Ammodramus caudatus*) – This is a species that is in tremendous peril as sea water level rises, and they have become exceptionally scarce as breeders in Cape May County just within the last few years. We saw a few at Brigantine, where they seem to still be doing just fine.

SEASIDE SPARROW (*Ammodramus maritimus*) – We had great scope views of a singing male perched up in the saltmarsh at Cooks Beach, and then we saw singing males on each of the next two days, in Jarvis Sound and then at Brigantine.

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – Heard singing in several places, and seen here and there as well. Their song is much longer than the song of the similarly trilling Pine Warbler, and it was instructive to hear both species in close proximity to one another at Belleplain.

FIELD SPARROW (*Spizella pusilla*) – Real nice scope views of a couple of singing males at Higbee.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – Fairly common in appropriate habitat, the highest density which we ran into was probably at Brigantine.

EASTERN TOWHEE (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) – After hearing some at CMPSP and some other locations, we finally caught up visually to one at Brigantine, as he posed on a branch and sang his heart out.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) – Some of the group saw one at CMPSP one morning, but then we all caught up with a few birds, including a pair with an interloping male, on Weatherby Road.

SCARLET TANAGER (*Piranga olivacea*) – Excellent views of a retina-shattering male as it belted out its distinctive "chick-burr" calls along Weatherby Road

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Widespread and common.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – A female at the Ocean City welcome Center gave great views, and then we had adult males along the road at Higbee, and then again on the final morning at Coral Ave. when one dropped out of the sky right into a nearby bush.

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Passerina caerulea*) – Our best views were at Higbee, where one foraged on the ground in front of us at close range.

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – Hearteningly abundant songsters in Cape May. In addition to hearing them frequently, we got some excellent views of these as well.

DICKCISSEL (*Spiza americana*) – A calling flyover during one of our picnic breakfasts at CMPSP was our first brief encounter. The one that flew over the dune crossing at St. Peter's on our final morning was more satisfying though, as we got to hear it well, and even see the bird fairly close as it careened over.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

BOBOLINK (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) – A flyover "bink"-ing as it bounded to the east over St. Pete's on our final morning.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Widespread and abundant as breeders in the county.

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – One of the most common and widespread species on the tour.

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*) – This species is a saltmarsh specialist throughout most of its range in eastern North America (Florida is the notable exception). We encountered it when in appropriate habitat, including in Jarvis Sound, and in Ocean City.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – We did run into a few of these common nest parasites here and there.

ORCHARD ORIOLE (*Icterus spurius*) – Higbee had a couple, and then we had an immature male defending a territory in suboptimal Orchard Oriole habitat at Weatherby Rd. as well.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (*Icterus galbula*) – We ran into this quite a few times, including perched in Cape May Point, and as an active migrant at the Ocean City Welcome Center.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – Fairly common throughout. [I]

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – A few scattered around, mostly flying over. We did get reasonable looks at a nice male low over the platform at Coral Ave. on the final morning.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Present. [I]

MAMMALS

SILVER-HAIRED BAT (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) – A big surprise, Kim spotted this one as it flew over us and landed on the side of a tree at Cox Hall Creek. We were able to get excellent full-frame scope views of it, and it ended up roosting at that spot for the rest of daylight. The migratory Silver-haired Bat is on the list of species of special concern in New Jersey, so this was an extremely fortunate sighting!

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – Numerous throughout.

PLAIN EASTERN CHIPMUNK (*Tamias striatus*) – On this tour, we only encounter these in Belleplain, where we saw a couple on our second visit to the forest, on our final full day of birding.

WOODCHUCK (*Marmota monax*) – We saw one of these along the shoulder of the Garden State Parkway in Atlantic County on the way back from Brigantine. Despite being fairly widespread through the region, it is somewhat scarce on the Cape May peninsula.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Numerous and widespread.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – We had one swimming through the east pool at the Meadows while we were on the observation platform for our Nighthawk vigil.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – These were off shore of Beach Avenue near the hotel throughout the week, though we got our best views on the final morning at Coral Avenue.

RED FOX (*Vulpes vulpes*) – We had one of these at Cape May Point State Park early on in the tour, and then another galloping down the beach off Cape May Point during our last morning at Coral Avenue.

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – We saw one of these in the road while we were viewing the Acadian Flycatcher at Belleplain.

Herps

COMMON FIVE-LINED SKINK (*Plestiodon fasciatus*) – Seen running up a tree by Donna and Michael while we were having lunch adjacent to the Cape May County Zoo.

GROUND SKINK (LITTLE BROWN SKINK) (*Scincella lateralis*) – Another species of special concern in New Jersey (along with Silver-haired Bat), this is the very northern edge of this skink's range. We had great views of one running around and posing on the roof of one of the bathroom buildings at the Belleplain campground.

RED-EARED SLIDER (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) – On the south shore of Lake Lily on a couple of our visits there.

DIAMONDBACK TERRAPIN (*Malaclemys terrapin*) – A few of these poking their heads out of the water off of Reeds Beach, and then a bundle of them on our boat trip through Jarvis Sound aboard the Osprey.

FOWLER'S TOAD (*Anaxyrus fowleri*) – A great study of one of these along a trail at Belleplain.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 169 bird taxa and 9 mammal taxa