

ITINERARY

Fall for Cape May

I. September 21 – 27, 2019

II. September 29 – October 5, 2019



The Saltmarsh Sparrow has a limited range along the east coast of the US, so it is a much-wanted bird for many birders. We'll get some good looks at these colorful local residents on the tour.

Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.

We include here information for those interested in the 2019 Field Guides Fall for Cape May tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

Cape May, New Jersey, is a magical place any time of year, but in the fall it can be the stuff of legend. Here, on a misty morning, you might see scores of Great Blue Herons rise from the marshes in great squawking squadrons. You might stand on the Cape May hawk watch on a day like the one in 2005 when 298 Peregrine Falcons rocketed over the beaches of Cape May Point State Park, leaving awe and a bit of envy in their wake. You might find warbler species in the double digits in the morning, marvel at scores of raptors sprinkled like pepper across the skies in the afternoon, and retire for the evening with the trace of a fishing Black Skimmer's graceful flight etched in your memory. And if you're very lucky, you might awaken in the morning to discover a fabled "fallout," when weather conditions conspire to dump a mother lode of feathered jewels onto the southernmost tip of New Jersey.

Cape May is ideally situated for a study of bird migration. Bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean and on the west by the Delaware Bay, the Cape May peninsula is a natural cul-de-sac and migration trap for an extraordinary number and tremendous variety of southbound migrants. We can expect to see about a dozen species of raptors, likely including big flights of Cooper's and Sharp-shinned hawks, American Kestrels, Merlins, and Peregrine Falcons. Cape May is also legendary for its waterfowl, shorebird, and landbird migrations. A cold front and northwest winds in late September or early October may yield thousands of Tree Swallows as well as scores of Northern Flickers, Eastern Wood-Pewees, Blue Jays, vireos, warblers, and sparrows, all visible within a few hours of leisurely birding. And the area is famous for its vagrants and species otherwise unusual on the Atlantic coast: Eurasian Wigeon, Swainson's Hawk, Marbled Godwit, Western Kingbird, Dickcissel, and Lark and Clay-colored sparrows are among the regulars in this category, and past tours have found Rufous Hummingbird, Say's Phoebe, Wilson's Phalarope, Common Raven, and Northern Wheatear as well.

Ecologically, Cape May is an extension of the New Jersey coastal plain. The dunes in late September and early October are ablaze with goldenrods and asters, and several species of migrant butterflies usually add to the animation along the coastline. Further inland, Wax Myrtle and Red Cedar thickets and woodlots of Red Maple and Sweetgum provide shelter for weary landbird migrants attempting to avoid the eager eyes of the Cooper's and Sharp-shinned hawks and the little terror that is the Merlin.

From the Cape May peninsula itself, we'll travel several miles up the coast to visit the seawatch site in Avalon, the coastal sandspit of Stone Harbor Point, which often holds hundreds or thousands of shorebirds, and saltmarshes around Stone Harbor and on Nummy Island, which should provide good looks at a variety of herons and egrets, plus our best chances at Saltmarsh, Nelson's and Seaside sparrows. During our stay in Cape May, we'll have time to visit (and re-visit) some of the most productive birding locations on America's east coast. Comfortable accommodations, good meals, and easy birding will make our Cape May experience a memory not soon forgotten.



Large numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawks, like this one, migrate through Cape May, allowing birders a wonderful opportunity to learn to separate them from the similar Cooper's Hawks. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: Because of the short duration of this tour and the many wonderful sites we plan to visit, we will be spending relatively long days in the field. But in spite of this, the tour operates at a somewhat relaxed pace. While mornings will tend to be early (expect 6:30 – 7:00 a.m. departures and breakfasts in the field), there will be ample opportunity for breaks for those who choose to take a morning or afternoon off. Because we are based in one location and because most habitats are within a short distance of the hotel, we will spend relatively little time traveling and more time birding. We'll spend a fair bit of time on our feet, but will typically be standing in one place watching a flock or walking slowly along primarily flat ground with good footing. We will certainly make every effort to see as many birds as

possible, but we should also have time to make fairly extensive (and repeated!) study of most of the species we see. If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

About the Birding Areas

Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area (WMA), an extensive area of fields, hedgerows, and forest along the Delaware Bay shore, offers some of the best migration birding in New Jersey. Five large fields, surrounded by woodland and crisscrossed by tracks, offer plenty of resting and feeding places for birds, and plenty of vantage points for birders. On a “wave day,” when large numbers of migrants are moving, it can be superb for migrant passerines including woodpeckers, flycatchers, warblers, vireos, tanagers, orioles, and sparrows. This location offers our best chances for Prairie Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, and Red-headed Woodpecker.



Cape May Point State Park features coastal thickets, marshes, and small ponds, which are often filled with a variety of herons and shorebirds. The constant presence of migrating raptors, especially accipiters and falcons, makes the area a major attraction, even on light flight days. The Cape May Bird Observatory's hawk watch platform—the official counting station at Cape May—is a fine spot from which to watch approaching raptors arriving at the point, and the nearby beachfront provides an excellent vantage of the Atlantic. Forster's and Royal terns commonly feed offshore at this time of year, easterly winds sometimes bring jaegers in close, and Bottlenose Dolphins often gather in huge pods prior to their journey south.

Cox Hall Creek WMA is a 253-acre former golf course with paved paths winding through its old fairways; it is now maintained as grassland and savannah, wooded copses, and a beautiful swamp forest along Cox Hall Creek. Locally, it is one of our best sites for woodpeckers, Eastern Bluebird, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Eastern Towhee, and Chipping Sparrow, and the park's trout-stocked main pond is a magnet for migrating Ospreys.

Lake Lily, adjacent to the Cape May Bird Observatory's Northwood Center, is a small lake good for unusual ducks such as Eurasian Wigeon, while the surrounding shrubbery sometimes harbors an assortment of warblers or sparrows—and sometimes such vagrants as Western Kingbird. The area around the Northwood Center itself is often alive with mixed passerine flocks – led by local Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice, and accompanied by any migrants in the area – and we'll make regular checks there to see what's around.

The South Cape May Meadows Nature Preserve (locally known as “The Meadows”) is an extensive area just north of Cape May Point that can be good for shorebirds (if water levels are low) and/or puddle ducks (if water levels are higher). The property, owned by The Nature Conservancy, has a lengthy beachfront from which we can scan for terns, skimmers, and early scoters; we'll also keep an eye out for Virginia Rails and Soras, both of which sometimes haunt the stands of cattails that blanket the reserve. This is a regular resting spot for the Lesser Black-backed Gull, which is found in small numbers in Cape May.

Stone Harbor is located a few miles north of Cape May and includes vast salt marshes and tidal flats as well as good overlooks of the ocean. This area and nearby **Nummy Island** should provide looks at good numbers of egrets, herons of several species (including Yellow-crowned Night-Heron), and Glossy Ibis as well as Boat-tailed Grackle, Seaside and Saltmarsh sparrows, and Clapper Rail. This is an area to watch for lingering Piping Plovers.

The Coast Guard ponds, two large freshwater ponds north of Cape May, are prime locations for various herons and egrets, Forster's Tern, and assorted waterfowl and shorebirds. Nearby **Two Mile Landing** is another good spot for American Bittern, Clapper Rail, and various shorebirds, and has also turned up a handful of vagrants over the years – including 2018's Lapland Longspur.



*We'll watch for migrating landbirds, including Gray Catbirds and a variety of warblers, thrushes, vireos and others.
Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

Itinerary for Fall for Cape May

Day 1. Arrival in Cape May. *Those participants who are flying into Philadelphia and driving down with us should plan to meet in the baggage claim area of **Terminal B/C**, near the chairs between luggage belts C and D at 2:30 p.m. **If you are planning to drive with us to Cape May, we must have your arrival flight information.***

Once we've checked into our hotel, we'll plan a short afternoon birding jaunt, if the weather and flight arrival times allow. (If you're arriving separately, check for a message with the hotel front desk when you get there.) Following our excursion, we'll head to one of Cape May's many fine restaurants for dinner and discussion of plans for the upcoming week. Night in Cape May.

Days 2-6. Cape May and nearby areas. As the movement of most migrants is strongly influenced by weather conditions (especially wind or rain), our exact schedule during these five days will be flexible so that we can adapt to the conditions of the moment. Different areas will be more or less productive for birding depending on such things as tide, wind direction, and the weather at the time, but during our stay we plan to visit all of the best spots in and near Cape May, many of them more than once.

On one of the days, we will take a two-hour boat tour of the back bay areas of Cape May and nearby Wildwood. From our comfortable boat (maximum of forty passengers), we should get good looks at a variety of shorebirds, herons, and terns as well as Peregrine Falcon and Clapper Rail. After five days, we will have visited the area's best birding spots and observed a representative cross section of Cape May's migrant and resident birds. It should be an exciting week! Nights in Cape May.

Day 7. Departure from Cape May. After a final morning birding in Cape May, we'll head north to the Philadelphia Airport. We'll plan to arrive at around 2:00 p.m. **If you are driving north with us, please do not schedule a flight before 4:00 p.m.**

About Your Guides

Tour I:

Cory Gregory started learning birds on flashcards at the age of three, but it wasn't until the ripe age of ten that things started to get more serious. Since then he has traveled to Central and South America, Australia, and all 50 states to try to get his fill of birding (and it hasn't worked yet!). Cory earned a B.S. in zoology in Michigan, where he also worked for Whitefish Point Bird Observatory for several seasons. He then ventured to Iowa State University, where he earned a M.S. studying Long-billed Curlews in Nebraska. As an avid shorebird ecologist, he has handled more than 2000 shorebirds of more than 30 species. After finishing school, Cory worked for several organizations as a shorebird ecologist and guided on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs of Alaska for the 2014 and 2015 seasons. It was on St. Paul that his dream of stumbling on a first North American record was finally fulfilled. Cory is currently based out of Missouri where, when not on tour, he pursues his interest in birds, butterflies, and dragonflies with abandon. He has co-lead Field Guides groups to Arizona, Cape May, Colorado, Maine, Texas, Newfoundland, Costa Rica, Oaxaca, Colombia, Peru, France, and Australia and has a busy and wide-ranging schedule coming up, adding Oregon to his portfolio of tours. Folks have had a great time traveling with Cory, and we think you will, too!

“Cory Gregory ... is a world-class birder with exceptional sight, hearing, and bird knowledge. His personality is fantastic: very friendly, funny, witty, helpful.” C. B., Maine.

Micah Riegner grew up exploring the Central Arizona Highlands and was fortunate to have parents who took him along on college field courses ranging from the coast of Mexico to the mountains of Costa Rica, where encounters with tinamous, barbets, and jacamars started him birding at a young age. After graduating from high school, he made annual pilgrimages to Amazonia where he worked as a bird guide and participated in expeditions, mostly in Brazil, and he served as a field assistant following mixed-species flocks in Peru. He studied ecology and scientific illustration (some of his bird art has been published in ornithological journals, and he regularly sketches birds in the field) at Prescott College and is currently working toward a master's degree on the foraging ecology of Amazonian woodcreepers. Micah has accompanied a number of Field Guides tours with Bret Whitney, John Coons, and Tom Johnson over the past couple of years and will be co-leading several tours in 2018 and 2019 as he works to complete his master's. He will be joining our schedule full-time beginning in June 2019. Micah is a generous guide with an easy laugh and is eager to join the Field Guides team to share his love of birds and nature. We know you will have a great time traveling with him, too!

“Micah second chaired the tour with grace and humor and consistently demonstrated a quiet competence. He added a lot to the overall experience and spotted a ton of birds!” A.B., Pennsylvania's Warblers & More

Tour II:

Tom Johnson grew up watching birds in central Pennsylvania. Interested in science and the outdoors, he became involved in a variety of field projects, including banding migrant landbirds and conducting point counts for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. He was fortunate to pursue undergraduate studies in biology at Cornell University, where he learned about systematics and migration while surrounded by the amazing ornithologists and birders of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. After college, Tom spent much of his time studying seabirds off the East Coast, conducting line transect surveys from NOAA ships between Nova Scotia and the Bahamas. He is a regional editor for *North American Birds*, a regular contributor to *Birding*, and a member of the ABA Checklist Committee. Now living in Cape May, New Jersey, Tom devotes time to watching bird migration, photography, and searching for vagrants and hybrid birds. He loves helping others pursue their passion for birding and the outdoors, and is pleased to be able to do this while guiding for Field Guides. Tom has a hugely diverse schedule, ranging from Arizona to Australia and Barrow to Brazil, with numerous other destinations in between.

“Tom Johnson [is] everything you would ever want in a birding guide. I have never known anyone who can get the target bird in the scope and ready for viewing faster... He hears the bird, scopes it, and we see it!” G. T., Spring in Cape May

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for your guide's complete tour schedule; just click on the appropriate photo!

Financial Information

FEE: \$2550 from Philadelphia

DEPOSIT: \$250 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: May 24, 2019 (Tour I); June 1, 2019 (Tour II)

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$425

LIMIT: 7

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Christine Boilard. Christine will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Those participants who are flying into Philadelphia and driving down with us should plan to meet at 2:30 p.m. on the first day of the tour, in the baggage claim area of **Terminal B/C**, near the chairs between luggage belts C and D. We will return to Philadelphia by 2:00 p.m. on the final day of the tour; **please do not schedule a departure flight before 4:00 p.m.**

Field Guides is a full-service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$2550 for one person in double occupancy from Cape May. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 6, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through lunch on Day 7, all ground transportation including round-trip transportation from the Philadelphia airport to Cape May, boat trips, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from the tour, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$425. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR LIMITS: Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, one seat in the van or bus will be taken by the guide in training. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$250** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **May 24, 2019 for Tour I; June 1, 2019 for Tour II. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field

Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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