

ITINERARY  
**Spring in Cape May**  
May 12-18, 2019



*Thousands of Red Knots and other shorebirds gather on the beaches of Delaware Bay in spring to feed on the tiny eggs of Horseshoe Crabs, fueling the next leg of their journey to breeding grounds in the far north. Here, a group of Red Knots and Ruddy Turnstones feed in front of larger Laughing Gulls. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2019 Field Guides Spring in 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

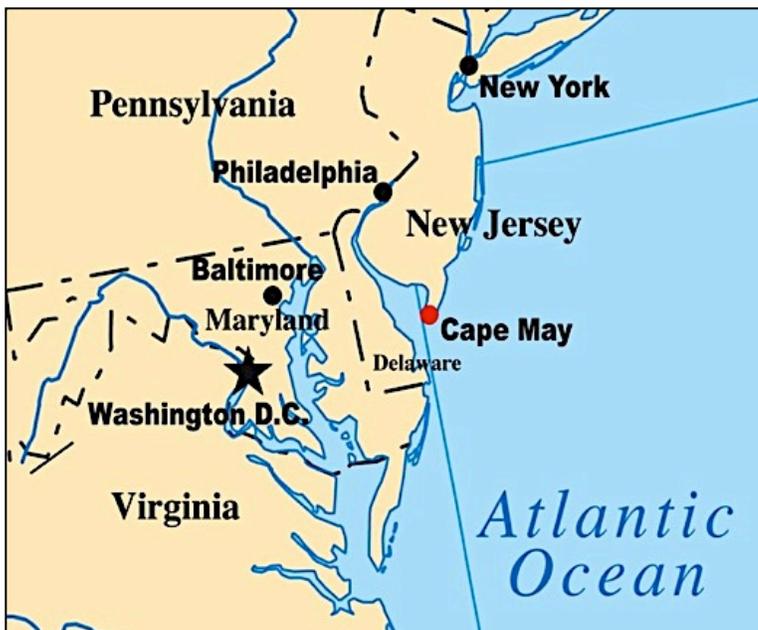
**C**ape May is best known for its fall migration, but springtime on the peninsula beckons with its own fine birding and migration spectacles. Among the highlights is the mass spawning of Horseshoe Crabs, living fossils which breed in the thousands on the beaches of the Delaware Bay, their tiny eggs providing vital sustenance to thousands of shorebirds on their long journeys north. The county's woods echo with the songs of more than 20 species of wood warblers, with local breeders including Pine, Yellow, Black-and-white, Blue-winged, Prothonotary, Worm-eating, Hooded, and Yellow-throated warblers, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Louisiana Waterthrush, and American Redstart. Yellow-breasted Chats, Eastern Kingbirds, Indigo Buntings, Blue Grosbeaks, and Prairie Warblers shout challenges from overgrown fields, and we'll compare Scarlet and Summer tanagers, Baltimore and Orchard orioles, and a variety of flycatchers.

Along the bay and ocean, Marsh Wrens and Seaside and Saltmarsh sparrows chortle from reed stems, while Clapper Rails lurk below, and more than two-dozen species of shorebirds—usually including the endangered and declining Piping Plover, perhaps a few remaining Purple Sandpipers, or maybe even an Old World vagrant like a Curlew Sandpiper—patter on the shores. And we may even get lucky and see some spring vagrants such as Mississippi Kite or Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. From our base in a comfortable beachfront hotel, we should be able to see upwards of 150 species during our week of explorations. During our stay in Cape May, we'll have time to visit (and possibly 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. Come and join Tom in one of his favorite places on Earth (and the area where he grew up birding) for a wonderful springtime adventure!

**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 6:00-6:30 a.m. departures and breakfasts in the field), several days will offer the opportunity for breaks for those who choose to take a morning or afternoon off. 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!) studies 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 one of the guides.

## About the Birding Areas



**The Delaware Bayshore** stretches along the western edge of the Cape May peninsula, edged by a mix of beachfront communities and salt marsh. The area, named as a "wetland of international importance" by the Ramsar Convention, is vital for Horseshoe Crabs—living fossils which congregate by the tens of thousands each May to breed on the bay's narrow beaches. That spawning in turn draws thousands of shorebirds, primarily Ruddy Turnstones, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Sanderlings, and a globally important number of *rufa* Red Knots, along with Laughing Gulls and a variety of opportunistic passerines. The nearby saltmarshes hold Saltmarsh and Seaside sparrows, and Marsh Wrens chortle from reedbeds.

**Belleplaine State Forest**, located in the northern part of Cape May County and the southern part of neighboring Cumberland County, is a vast tract of mature forest and lowland swamp, with a few slow streams and some tannin-filled lakes scattered among

its 21,000 acres. Virtually every woodland species that breeds in the county can be found here, including several southern species with ranges that barely extend into New Jersey. Among the birds we can expect are Summer and Scarlet tanagers, Baltimore and Orchard orioles, Acadian and Great Crested flycatchers, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Wood Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Barred Owl, and 16 species of warblers—among them Worm-eating, Hooded, Prothonotary, Blue-winged, Prairie, Black-and-white, Yellow-throated, Ovenbird, and Louisiana Waterthrush.

**Heislerville WMA** is a 6,900-acre system of impoundments and saltmarsh just over the border into neighboring Cumberland County. The prime attractions here are the shorebirds which rest in the impoundments when high tides cover the nearby mudflats; the WMA has become known as one of the best places in NJ to see vagrant Curlew Sandpipers, though these have been absent or tough to find in the past few years. Other regular species include Black-bellied and Semipalmated plovers, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, Dunlin, Ruddy Turnstone, Short-billed

Dowitcher, and Red Knot. For several years, Double-crested Cormorants and several species of herons have had an active rookery on an island in one of the impoundments, and a pair of Bald Eagles have a nest nearby, too. Conditions permitting, we'll plan to visit a shorebird banding station for an up close look at some of the birds and a discussion of the Delaware Bay's importance to their survival. Sand fleas can be an issue here on windless days, so be sure to bring some insect repellent along when we visit!



*We have the opportunity to experience the spring warbler migration as well, as well as see many local breeding warblers and other birds. Magnolia Warblers, such as this gorgeous male, pass through Cape May on their way to breeding territories in the northern forests. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

**Higbee Beach WMA** is an extensive area of fields, hedgerows, and forest along the Delaware Bay shore. The fields and hedgerows are home to Yellow-breasted Chat, Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Field Sparrow, and Prairie Warbler, while the nearby forested dunes hold Eastern Towhee. Higbee's location, close to the bay and just north of the Cape May peninsula's tip, means it draws migrant birds when they first arrive into New Jersey.

**Cape May Point State Park** features coastal thickets, marshes, and small ponds, which are often filled with a variety of herons and shorebirds. A bustling colony of Purple Martins inhabits five houses at one end of the parking lot, and American Oystercatcher and Piping Plover may nest along the beach. The woods can hold arriving migrants, as well as residents such as Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Fish Crow, and Orchard Oriole. Weather permitting, we will likely have a few picnics here through the week.

**The Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge** (a.k.a. "The Meadows") is an extensive wetland area just east of Cape May Point. Owned by The Nature Conservancy, the property has several large ponds, extensive cattail stands, and a lengthy beachfront from which we can scan for gulls, terns, and skimmers; we'll also keep an eye out for Piping Plover and Least Tern, both of which typically attempt to breed on the beaches here.

**Avalon** and **Stone Harbor** are located a few miles north of Cape May and include vast salt marshes and tidal flats as well as good overlooks of the ocean. These communities and nearby **Nummy Island** should provide looks at good numbers of egrets, herons (Tricolored and Little Blue are good possibilities), and Glossy Ibis as well as Ospreys, Willets, Boat-tailed Grackles, Seaside Sparrows, and Clapper Rails. The beaches here are another place to watch for Piping Plovers.

**Edwin B. Forsythe (formerly Brigantine) National Wildlife Refuge** is one of the real gems of the whole region; its vast assemblage of salt and freshwater marshes, brackish impoundments, and upland forests are accessed by an 8-mile wildlife drive and overlooked by several observation towers. The refuge offers a fine assortment of waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors (including Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle) and rarities and vagrants are always a possibility.

## Itinerary for Spring in Cape May

**Day 1, Sun, 12 May. Arrival in Cape May.** *Those participants who are flying into Philadelphia and driving down with us should plan to meet Tom in **Terminal B/C** of the airport. Please meet near the chairs between luggage belts C & D in the baggage claim area at 2:00 p.m. (schedule flights to arrive no later than 1:30 p.m.).*

***If you are planning to drive with us to Cape May, we must have your arrival flight information.*** 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 arrive.) 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, Mon-Fri, 13-17 May. Cape May and nearby areas.** Our 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 weather, but during our stay we plan to visit all of the best spots in and near Cape May. 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 up close and personal looks at nesting Ospreys.

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, Sat, 18 May. 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

**Tom Johnson** grew up watching birds in central Pennsylvania. Interested in science and the outdoors from a young age, Tom became involved in a variety of field projects throughout his school years, 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 became even more excited to learn about systematics and migration while surrounded by the amazing ornithologists and birders of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Since graduating from college, Tom has spent much of his time studying seabirds off the east coast of North America, conducting line transect surveys from NOAA ships between Nova Scotia and the Bahamas. When he's not otherwise occupied, he loves to devote time to wandering, taking photos, and searching for vagrants and hybrid birds.

Tom has long been interested in sharing his enthusiasm for exploring bird identification, distribution, and migration dynamics; he is a regional editor for *North American Birds* magazine and writes a regular column on identification for *Birding* magazine. Perhaps most of all, he loves sharing his passion for the natural world with others out in the field, and he's excited to have the opportunity to do this while leading for Field Guides.

*"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*

A **second guide** will be added as tour size warrants.

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for Tom's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

## Financial Information

**FEE:** \$2350 from Philadelphia/Cape May

**DEPOSIT:** \$240 per person

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** January 12, 2019

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$410

**LIMIT:** 14

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Mandy Mantzel. Mandy 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 Tom at **2:00 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 \$2350 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 on the first and last days of the tour, 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, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$410. 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 REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$240** 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 **by January 12, 2019. 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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