



Field Guides Tour Report

CAPE MAY MEGAN'S WAY I 2013

Sep 29, 2013 to Oct 5, 2013
Megan Edwards Crewe

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE.

Migration birding in Cape May is all about the weather and, somewhat unfortunately for those on our first tour, we had sunny blue skies and mild southwest breezes for much of the week. That's comfortable for the birders and helpful to the migrating birds, but NOT so great if you're trying to enjoy the spectacle of migration! With settled weather and gentle breezes, birds don't get pushed to the coast, or they carry on flying right past Cape May Point if they do. However, despite the lack of significant visible migration, we certainly weren't left birdless. After all, even a tough day's birding in Cape May is better than a good day in most other places!

We had many nice encounters. A staggeringly unwary American Bittern prowled the edges of ponds on two different days, successfully hunting frogs in the open. A male Eurasian Wigeon foraged with a big gang of American Wigeons, his rusty head glowing in the morning sun. A female American Avocet probed delicately among a loafing gang of Laughing Gulls, while a quartet of Stilt Sandpipers fed more frenetically in the foreground. A Clapper Rail took a vigorous, splashing bath, then spent long minutes preening itself on a muddy bank. A half-dozen Piping Plovers pattered beside a sandy puddle, or snoozed in nearby footprints.

An American Golden-Plover pattered on a muddy pond edge. A Parasitic Jaeger, probably feeling more than a bit "off" rested on a sandy beach, allowing close approach. A Peregrine Falcon repeatedly dive-bombed a Common Nighthawk. A Western Sandpiper, sporting bright rusty lines on its scapular feathers, mingled with a big group of Semipalmated Sandpipers (and one Ruddy Turnstone) on a stony jetty. Hundreds of Black Skimmers rose and fell over the beaches of Cape May. An American Pipit strode along the edge of an airport runway, passing a handful of resting Horned Larks. And who will soon forget that wonderful late afternoon at Cape May Point, when eight species of warblers, both kinglets, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker shared space in the "Magic Tree"?

Thanks to all of you for coping with the occasionally quiet mornings and the sometimes humid afternoons. It was great fun sharing my "backyard" with you all! I hope to see you again on another adventure somewhere, some day.

-- Megan



*If you had to pick a bird that symbolized the trip, Northern Flicker would be a likely candidate: they were everywhere!
(Photo by participant Nancy Newman)*

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

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

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Dozens, looking fat and happy, floated on ponds at Cape May Point State Park (SP) and the Meadows. Though many wild geese arrive in Cape May for the winter, the birds we saw were all feral offspring of birds introduced to the area in the last century.

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – Dozens floated on Bunker Pond, including a few showing the rather aggressive nature of the species -- steaming after other waterfowl with wings raised threateningly. We saw many others on the main impoundments at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). [I]

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) – A gang of seven males and a lone female floated near the far end of Bunker Pond one morning, and a pair did the same among the lily pads on one of the ponds along the entrance road at Forsythe NWR.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – A handful, still largely in eclipse plumage, floated among the Mallards on Bunker Pond.

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Anas penelope*)

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*) – Particularly common on Lighthouse Pond at Cape May Point SP.

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK (*Anas rubripes*) – Particularly common at Forsythe NWR, which was created specifically to support local populations of this species. We saw a few others (possibly hybrids) with the Mallards at Cape May Point SP and The Meadows.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – Small numbers dabbled along the edges of Bunker Pond, allowing good comparison with some nearby Green-winged Teal. As with most of their cousins, they were still in eclipse plumage.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – Nearly two dozen paddled on Bunker Pond, often gathering in slow-moving wheels -- and giving us plenty of practice separating eclipse males from females!

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – A few, still in their pale eclipse plumage, floated among the other dabbling ducks at Cape May Point SP. Their long necks -- and long tails -- make them relatively easy to pick out on shape alone.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*) – Dozens paddled in the ponds at Cape May Point SP and The Meadows. In flight, they're small enough that some folks initially thought they were shorebirds!

BLACK SCOTER (*Melanitta americana*) – A female floated just past the jetty at the Coral Avenue dune crossover.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – A male snoozed in the middle of Lake Lily one morning; this species regularly overwinters in the region.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Common throughout, from the handful of youngsters diving for dinner in Bunker Pond to the dozens seen drying their wings on pilings and jetties as we motored past on The Osprey (our back bay boat) to the occasional wavering line of migrants winging past overhead.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

AMERICAN BITTERN (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – Wow! It's not often you get to watch one of these normally shy herons stalking prey along the edge of a pond -- great spotting, David! And we got to watch it catch not one, but TWO frogs, which struggled gamely for a while before being swallowed whole -- rather a grim way to go. We saw the same bird (or another unwary one) on Lighthouse Pond the next day.

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*)

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – A couple of youngsters hunted on Bunker and Lighthouse ponds, and a few wary adults gathered on Nummy Island.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – A few from The Osprey on our back bay boat trip, with a handful of others hunting the marshes on Nummy Island and one at The Meadows. This species is typically getting pretty thin on the ground by the time of our tour.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – A quintet at Forsythe, including one youngster patiently stalking fiddler crabs -- and shaking them until their pincers fell off before it swallowed them. We saw other youngsters at Cape May Point SP, and a few adults on Nummy Island.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Small numbers probed the muddy edges of Bunker Pond and the main impoundment at The Meadows.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Far less common than the next species, with a couple over "The Magic Tree" giving us good comparisons with their longer-winged, longer-tailed cousins late one afternoon.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Dozens, including many carrying fish snacks, in the skies over Cape May.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – Most common at Forsythe NWR, where we spotted a half dozen or so hunting low over the marshes -- including one that sailed right past us. We saw others over Bunker Pond and over the back bay marshes on our boat trip. Most of the birds we saw were rusty-bellied youngsters.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – One of the week's most common raptors, with birds sprinkled in the skies most days. Though persistent south winds meant that numbers were lower than usual, we still had plenty of practice separating this species from the next.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Also common throughout. Their larger size, more projecting head, rounder tail tip and broad white terminal tail band helps to separate them from the previous species -- as does their habit of flying with a straighter leading wing edge.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Surprisingly few seen during the week: a first year bird soared over The Meadows one afternoon, and a few of the group spotted an adult over Bunker Pond while I made lunch on our last full day.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) – A handful soared in a mixed kettle over Cape May Point SP one morning, and some of the group spotted others circling with another kettle over the Cape May Bird Observatory's Northwood Center.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

CLAPPER RAIL (*Rallus longirostris*) – One took a vigorous bath (and had a rather vigorous preen following that bath) along a muddy channel near Two Mile Landing -- great spotting, David!

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A big mob of winter plumaged birds rested at one end of a little islet, and one adult in still stunning breeding plumage snoozed among the roosting terns at Forsythe NWR.

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica*) – One trotting around on a muddy islet at The Meadows was a surprise; this species isn't particularly common on "Cape Island". We had nice views of its slimmer bill and finely gold spotted back as it hunted.

SEMPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Seen especially well at Forsythe NWR, where small numbers pattered around on the muddy edges of the channels with Semipalmated Sandpipers. We saw others at Stone Harbor and The Meadows.

PIPING PLOVER (*Charadrius melodus*) – A half dozen huddled in vehicle tracks or pattered along the edge of a big puddle in the sand at Stone

Harbor Point one afternoon. Too bad they kept getting chased hither and yon by passing pickup trucks and clueless beach goers!

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – A few gathered on the muddy edges of Bunker Pond most days, and we saw at least one group of seven winging past on their way south, calling all the way.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*) – Bob spotted our first two as they stood on a stone jetty off the Cape May beach our first afternoon. We saw many others on our back bay boat trip, including three dozen or so checking out a sandy beach at the Coast Guard base and another mob lounging on the stone jetty there.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*) – A female bathing and preening (while sandwiched between two Glossy Ibis) on Bunker Pond was a surprise. This species isn't common in New Jersey.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – One flew along the edge of Lake Lily, and we spotted a second on our back bay boat trip, along the stone jetty extending out of the Cape May harbor. Most Spotted Sandpipers have left the state by the time of our tour.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*) – One teetered along the edge of Lake Lily on several days, and another worked the edge of a pond at Cape May Point SP.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Quite common, including a few in good comparison with the next species along the edge of Bunker Pond.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – Seen particularly well at Cape May Point SP, where a group snoozed among a roosting group of Laughing Gulls. We saw others at Forsythe NWR, and in the back bays on our boat trip.

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*) – We spotted a few lingering birds from The Osprey on our back bay boat trip; most have departed by the time of our tours.

MARbled GODWIT (*Limosa fedoa*)

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – One youngster peered over the rocks on a jetty along the Stone Harbor beach, part of a mixed flock of shorebirds.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – Scores pattered along the tidelines of the county's beaches, racing up and down in front of the waves. This species overwinters by the thousands in Cape May county.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – Seen particularly well at Forsythe NWR, where dozens picked at the muddy channel edges along the wildlife drive.

WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*) – Fine views of one youngster, still sporting its rusty scapular patches, among a group of Semipalmated Sandpipers on a jetty at Stone Harbor.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Good views of a busy flock at The Meadows, showing well the darker brown backs and pale legs that help to distinguish the species. We saw others along the edge of Bunker Pond.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – A few of these darker backed shorebirds mingled with the Sanderlings at Stone Harbor, and others probed the mud at Forsythe NWR. This is another common overwintering species in Cape May county.

STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*) – A quartet hunted beside the Laughing Gull roost on Bunker Pond, probing the mud while up to their bellies in water. Their white eyebrows and slightly drooped bills are distinctive.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – Our best views probably came from The Osprey, when we found a couple resting along the edge of one of the back bay channels. We saw others at Forsythe NWR and with a big Greater Yellowlegs flock near Two Mile Landing.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Abundant throughout, with a gratifying number of youngsters sprinkled among most of the flocks we saw.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – A small number of these winter visitors were scattered among various gull roosts.

HERRING GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – Very common, with some great comparisons between youngsters of this species and Great Black-backed Gull.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – An adult with the big mob of loafing Great Black-backed Gulls on the beach at Cape May Point SP was easy to pick out, thanks to its charcoal gray back, longer primaries, streaky head and smaller size. We saw another along the strand at Stone Harbor.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*) – Very common, particularly on the beach at Cape May Point SP, where masses of them loafed most days. Believe it or not, the high count for this species at the turn of the last century was only 4!

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – Unusually common this year, with good views of a few hunting along a channel at Forsythe NWR and several dozen scattered around Cape May. This is the world's largest tern.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – A couple of youngsters snoozed among a big gull and tern flock loafing on the beach at Cape May Point SP.

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – Very common around Cape May Point and at Forsythe NWR, where dozens threw themselves into the channels right beside the wildlife drive. The black eye patches of winter-plumaged birds are distinctive.

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Small numbers -- typically adults with begging youngsters in tow -- flew along the tide line at Cape May Point SP and Stone Harbor.

BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) – Four or five hundred swirled over Cape May's beaches most mornings, and we saw dozens knifing through the waters just offshore or on Bunker Pond.

Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)

PARASITIC JAEGER (*Stercorarius parasiticus*)

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [H]

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*) – One getting dive-bombed in broad daylight by a passing Peregrine Falcon was unexpected. Unperturbed, it continued on its way.

Apodidae (Swifts)

CHIMNEY SWIFT (*Chaetura pelagica*) – A single bird fluttered among a mass of Tree Swallows over the dunes at Cape May Point State Park one morning. Most swifts have already migrated south by the time of our tour.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Daily, with those hunting over Bunker and Lighthouse ponds giving us particularly good views as they hovered or perched on poles.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – Particularly common at Cox Hall Creek WMA -- where they were among the few common things on our rather quiet afternoon's walk around the property -- with a handful of others at Higbee's.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – Small numbers throughout, with especially nice views of one feeding in the Siberian Elm outside CMBO's Northwood Center. That long white stripe on the wing is distinctive.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – After hearing them calling at Higbee's on several visits, we finally caught sight of one feeding in a sassafras tree near the parking lot there. We saw others at Cox Hall Creek WMA.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – Easily the most common woodpecker of the trip, with dozens bounding past -- yellow underwings flashing -- virtually everywhere we went.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Small numbers over Cape May Point SP and Lake Lily on several days.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*)

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – It may seem hard to believe (given the fact that this species was nearly wiped out in the past century by overuse of DDT), but this was probably the most common species of falcon on the tour! We had nice looks at dozens, including one dive-bombing a Common Nighthawk at Forsythe NWR, a trio soaring over CMBO's Northwood Center one afternoon and one slashing back and forth over one of the former fairways at Cox Hall Creek WMA.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – A small wave of these late season flycatchers arrived in Cape May on the last few days of the tour; those hunting along the field edges at Higbee's allowed nice scope study.

Vireonidae (Vireos)

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*) – Still reasonably common at Higbee's (where they breed during the summer), with more brown-eyed youngsters than white-eyed adults seen.

RED-EYED VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*) – Regular throughout, including a few flicking through some taller trees near the start of the "blue trail" at Cape May Point SP (with our first Cape May Warbler) and others in the fringe of trees around Lake Lily.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Including multiple noisy birds seen (and heard) flashing over the fields at Higbee's.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

FISH CROW (*Corvus ossifragus*) – The regular gang around Cape May Point SP were particularly obliging, letting us hear their distinctively nasal "car car" calls.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – This was the first of our "last morning pickups", seen at the Cape May airport. At one point, we had eight squatting on the tarmac at the intersection of two runways.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Hundreds and hundreds tornadoed over Cape May Point SP on several days, periodically descending for a drink or a rummage for berries in the bayberry bushes.

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

CAROLINA CHICKADEE (*Poecile carolinensis*) – Several pairs along the hedgerows and field edges at Higbee's, with others at Cox Hall Creek WMA. They often had small cadres of migrant warblers and kinglets in tow.

TUFTED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus bicolor*) – A big family group boiled through the trees over the parking lot at Cox Hall Creek WMA, investigating each nook and cranny. Other, smaller groups, flicked through the hedgerows at Higbee's.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*) – One calling bird bounced through the oaks over the Cox Hall Creek WMA parking lot, in the company of a big group of Tufted Titmice.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*) – Some of the group spotted one flicking through the first field at Higbee Beach WMA.

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – Far more commonly heard than seen, though we did have good views of one along the edge of the parking lot at Higbee Beach WMA.

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Polioptila caerulea*) – One flicked through sumac bushes along the edge of Bunker Pond, in company with a bunch of Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus satrapa*) – Increasing in number as the week went by, with good numbers in the junipers around CMBO's Northwood Center one day.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – Also increasingly common as the week went by; those at Cox Hall Creek WMA and CMBO's Northwood Center gave us good opportunity to directly compare the two kinglet species.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – A trio of youngsters flitting from treetop to treetop at Cox Hall Creek WMA were another 11th hour find on our final morning.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH (*Catharus ustulatus*) – One initially played quite hard to get at Cox Hall Creek WMA, hiding among a gang of Gray Catbirds as it nibbled berries from a fruiting shrub. Eventually, it moved up to the top of the bush, allowing scope views.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Only a few seen during the week, primarily at Higbee's and Cox Hall Creek WMA.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Abundant at Higbee's, where alternated between skulking through the undergrowth and popping into clear view -- particularly if there were pokeberry berries to be gobbled.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Common, with the pair along the Cape May Point SP parking lot proving particularly cooperative.

BROWN THRASHER (*Toxostoma rufum*) – Especially nice views of a couple bouncing around in the grass on the central path at Higbee's one morning, with others at Cox Hall Creek WMA.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*) – One strode around on the runways at the Cape May county airport with a mob of Horned Larks; we also saw a few flying over Cape May Point State Park one morning.

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – Small flocks bounded over Higbee's on several mornings.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Mike and I were the lucky ones who spotted a furtive bird slipping through the undergrowth along the central trail at Higbee Beach WMA.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – Small numbers on several days, including a few crawling on tree trunks outside CMBO's Northwood Center.

TENNESSEE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis peregrina*) – One, looking quite golden, hung upside down at the very tips of the longest branches on "The Magic Tree" or flicked through the long-needled pines just behind it one afternoon.

NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*) – One outside CMBO's Northwood Center played hard to get on several afternoons, and a single bird along the center track at Higbee Beach WMA wasn't much more cooperative -- flashing briefly into view for a couple of folks before disappearing into the thicker growth, never to be seen again.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – One of the most common warblers of the tour, with good numbers seen twitching through low growth around the fields at Higbee Beach WMA, Forsythe NWR and Cape May Point SP.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Singletons on several days; most were rather drab youngsters, but we did spot one black and orange male outside the bird observatory.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – It seems only appropriate we should get this species in Cape May! Our first was a bright bird high overhead in trees right near the start of the yellow trail at Cape May Point SP. We had looks at another -- at a somewhat less neck-breaking level -- outside CMBO's Northwood Center.

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – Among the most common warblers on several days toward the end of the tour, with small groups working through the trees outside CMBO's Northwood Center, and others at Higbee's. Their short tails and stubby shapes are distinctive.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – Singles twitched through the junipers outside CMBO's Northwood Center on several days, glowing against the dark vegetation.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (*Setophaga fusca*) – Two flicked through the big Siberian Elm overhanging the CMBO's Northwood Center one afternoon, with a Magnolia Warbler and several Blackpoll Warblers nearby for comparison.

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – Small numbers in the bayberry bushes along the dunes at Cape May Point SP, with others at Forsythe NWR and The Meadows. Although it was getting late in the season for this species, we saw them nearly every day.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) – One clambered through a tower of Summer Grape that had overtopped several small trees at Higbee Beach WMA, regularly popping out into the open as it hunted.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – Small numbers throughout, including a few that showed well their distinctive dark legs and yellow-orange feet. The black back streaks and smudgy breast streaks of this species help to separate it from the similarly-plumaged Bay-breasted and Pine warblers.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – Several males danced through a holly tree outside CMBO's Northwood Center on a couple of afternoons.

PALM WARBLER (*Setophaga palmarum*) – Common in dunes and wetland areas throughout the county, with good studies of many wagging their way along the dune crossovers at Cape May Point SP.

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus*) – One, looking decidedly plain, twitched through the Magic Tree with a goodly number of other warblers and kinglets.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (*Setophaga coronata*) – Increasingly common as the week went by -- mostly rather drab youngsters!

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – One bounced through some small street trees (which were turning a lovely gold color) just across the street from the "Magic Tree" -- giving us views that were very nearly at eye level!

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

EASTERN TOWHEE (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) – A male cooperated nicely at Cox Hall Creek WMA one afternoon, perching up where we could get him in the scope.

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – A few near the Eastern Bluebirds at Cox Hall Creek WMA were another 11th hour find on our last morning.

FIELD SPARROW (*Spizella pusilla*) – A couple of rather shy birds flirted along the edges of the central path at Higbee Beach WMA.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Dozens littered the paths at The Meadows on our final afternoon.

SEASIDE SPARROW (*Ammodramus maritimus*) – One feeding in some tall grasses just across a small channel at Forsythe NWR proved surprisingly difficult for some of the group to spot -- and sadly, it ducked down into thicker growth before everybody got a look.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – A few along the dunes at Cape May Point SP, with others (in nice comparison with nearby Savanna Sparrows) in the dunes at Stone Harbor.

SWAMP SPARROW (*Melospiza georgiana*) – Nice views of several -- looking distinctively rusty backed -- at The Meadows on our final afternoon.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) – A little gang of them moved along the far end of the central pathway at Higbee Beach WMA one morning.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) – An immature bird joined the House Sparrows at the seeds strewn on the grass near the hawk watch platform at Cape May Point SP on our last full day, seen by most while I made lunch.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (*Junco hyemalis*) – Two bounced along the grassy central path at Higbee Beach WMA, part of a mixed flock gobbling up grass seeds one morning.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SCARLET TANAGER (*Piranga olivacea*) – A winter-plumaged male rested quietly near the top of one of the Siberian Elms outside the Cape May Bird Observatory's Northwood Center, allowing repeated scope views.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Common in suburban gardens (like those around Cape May Point) and parks (like Higbee Beach WMA and Cox Hall Creek WMA) alike, with lots of youngsters seen.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – One squeaked from high in a locust tree at Higbee Beach WMA one morning, then flew off along the treeline. Sadly, some folks never got on it until it flew.

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – We spotted a few at Higbee Beach WMA, and others at Cape May Point SP. Their "plain brown" appearance at this time of year rather belies their name!

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

BOBOLINK (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) – We heard the distinctive "link link" calls of this daytime migrant on most days of the tour, but never saw them as more than bounding dots overhead. [∗]

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Best seen at Forsythe NWR, where restless flocks rose and fell from the Common Reed stands. We saw others on our back bay boat trip, and around Cape May Point SP.

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – One prowled through the junipers outside CMBO's Northwood Center, and we saw others at Cape May Point SP. This species is often surprisingly tough to find at the time of our tour; it's molting, and keeping its head down!

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*)

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Several giant flocks foraged along the roadsides around Rio Grande, seen as we returned from Stone Harbor Point one evening. It's rather sad to think of all the warblers and sparrows that raised baby cowbirds instead of their own chicks!

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – A few rested briefly on wires around Lake Lily, and others bounded over the hawk watch platform at Cape May Point SP. This species was introduced to the east from the western US early in the last century; it was originally sold in NY as the "Hollywood Finch"! [I]

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – Far more commonly heard than seen, but we had nice views of a busy flock feeding on sunflowers along one of the trails at Cape May Point SP. This is New Jersey's state bird.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – Single rabbits scuttled off Sunset Boulevard as we headed to Higbee Beach WMA in the pre-dawn light on several mornings, and we saw another dive into the bushes near the Higbee Beach parking lot one morning.

PLAIN EASTERN CHIPMUNK (*Tamias striatus*) – Some of the group spotted one in the forest surrounding the picnic grove at Forsythe NWR while I was making lunch.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – If we had a dollar for every one we saw...

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – Good numbers cavorted in the waves offshore. Though we mostly saw dorsal fins, a few of them jumped clear of the water now and then.

NORTHERN RACCOON (*Procyon lotor*) – Two, looking sleepy, curled up on branches in a Black Cherry tree at Higbee Beach WMA. What cuties!

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – Two grazed in a yard along Route 47, seen on our drive south from the Philadelphia airport, and

another trotted across the Forsythe NWR entrance road in front of us.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 141 bird taxa and 6 mammal taxa