



Field Guides Tour Report

CAPE MAY MEGAN'S WAY II 2013

Oct 7, 2013 to Oct 13, 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 our blustery, stormy week was definitely a bit of a challenge! Although it meant that we spent some mornings (or afternoons) huddling under picnic shelters or searching for seabirds in the pouring rain, it also meant that we were treated to some wonderful "fallouts", when the trees and gardens around Cape May Point were dripping with birds: squadrons of kinglets flicking through junipers, multiple species of warblers sallying after insects, sparrows bouncing across grassy lawns and Eastern Phoebes hunting from clotheslines. After all, even a tough day's birding in Cape May is better than a good day in many other places!

We had some nice avian encounters during the week. A male Dickcissel nibbled seeds below the hawkwatch, looking subtly more colorful than his companion House Sparrows. A Virginia Rail huddled under a dune crossover. A vagrant American Golden-Plover snoozed beside a Pectoral Sandpiper -- until a hunting Merlin's strafing run sent every shorebird in the area skyward. A flock of Wild Turkeys scurried across the road in front of us. A Baird's Sandpiper foraged on a muddy island at The Meadows. Scores (hundreds?) of sparrows twitched through weedy fields across the county, including a couple of dapper White-crowned Sparrows near the hawkwatch, a surprisingly hard to spot Seaside Sparrow chewing on seed heads at Forsythe NWR, a Clay-colored Sparrow rummaging in short grass under a bench in Stone Harbor and dozens of Savanna Sparrows bouncing along the pathway at The Meadows.



It's always nice when one of the scarcer migrants, like this male Dickcissel, drop in for a bite to eat (here near the hawkwatch) and give us a chance to study them more closely. Photo courtesy of Mike Crewe.

Four Stilt Sandpipers foraged energetically amid a gang of sleeping Lesser Yellowlegs. A White-rumped Sandpiper trundled around a soggy baseball infield. An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull balanced on a jetty stone, fortunately close to some nearby Great Black-backed Gulls for easy comparison. Tornadoes of Tree Swallows swirled over ponds and dipped into Bayberry bushes to gorge on berries. A male Eurasian Wigeon floated among his American Wigeon cousins. A Great Cormorant preened atop the wreck of the concrete ship, surrounded by a crowd of smaller Double-crested Cormorants. A male Purple Finch foraged along the edge of a driveway. And who will soon forget the two Muskrat youngsters nibbling vegetation right below us on a bridge at the Meadows?

Thanks to all of you for joining me in my "backyard". It was fun to share some special birds with you -- even if most of them were a bit wet! I hope to see you all again in the field somewhere, some day. Until then, good birding! -- Megan

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 (*Branta bernicla*) – A big gaggle of these winter visitors rummaged in a puddle on Nummy Island on each of our visits, and another large group paddled warily along one of the channels in the back bays, seen on our boat trip.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*)

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) [I]

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) – A couple of males, looking particularly dark in the rain, paddled on the back edge of Bunker Pond our first afternoon, and another preened at the edge of the reeds on Lighthouse Pond, seen from our picnic shelter one lunchtime.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*)

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Anas penelope*) – An adult male floated among the American Wigeons on Bunker Pond one morning, allowing nice comparisons.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*)

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK (*Anas rubripes*)

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Common, including a big flock of them floating in one of the little puddles on the marsh at Nummy Island.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – Ten or so, all in eclipse plumage, floated among the Green-winged Teals at Cape May Point SP, giving us good opportunity to study the distinctive differences between them.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*)

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – A handful, already arrived from their Arctic breeding grounds, tipped up on the ponds at Cape May Point SP and The Meadows. Though they were in eclipse plumage, they were easily distinguished by their long necks and pale feathers.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*)

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – A female floated among the ducks and geese near the east path of The Meadows; normally, this species isn't present at the time of our tours.

BLACK SCOTER (*Melanitta americana*) – A female floated near one of the stone jetties in Cape May Point, and long strings of these Arctic breeders winged past offshore, headed south for the winter.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – A few snoozed among the big rafts of ducks at The Meadows, their stiff tails giving them away even when their pale cheek patches weren't visible.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – A parade of 13 trotted across the road in front of the van our first morning, seen as we headed back to Cape May Point from Higbee Beach. The last few looked rather like somebody was hurling them in from offstage!

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – An adult, still in nearly perfect breeding plumage, hunted on Sunset Lake one rainy afternoon, alternately floating on the surface and disappearing underneath the water -- great spotting, Jan!

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Stacey spotted one floating among the Green-winged Teal at Bunker Pond on our first afternoon, but it took the rest of the group until the end of the tour to catch up to the species. Fortunately, we found another, again on Bunker Pond, on our last morning.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NORTHERN GANNET (*Morus bassanus*) – An adult gliding low over the rough sea at the start of our final morning of birding. Sadly, it was a bit far away.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – One preened atop the concrete ship at Sunset Beach, surrounded by a mass of Double-crested Cormorants for nice comparison. This species is a winter visitor to Cape May.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Scattered individuals, including a few youngsters hunting along the back edge of Bunker Pond, and a handful of birds headed out over the Delaware one morning.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Daily, including some in nice comparison with the next species at Cape May Point SP and The Meadows.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*)

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – A few soggy birds quickly took flight when we got out of our van scope a roost developing at Nummy Island. Fortunately, one of them quickly landed and began to hunt, allowing us to scope it after all. We saw others from The Osprey on our back bay boat trip.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – A youngster crouched along the edge of a little channel in Cape May Point State Park gave us astounding views -- not hard to do, considering it was only about 6 feet away!

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – A couple of birds preened along the edge of Bunker Pond, towering over the nearby Greater Yellowlegs and Green-winged Teal.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Two circled beside the highway, seen as we drove down from the airport.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Scattered individuals, including a few youngsters plunge diving into Bunker Pond in search of fish.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – Particularly nice views at The Meadows, where a cinnamon-bellied youngster hunted low over the reedbeds, sweeping across the path only 50 yards or so from where we watched.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – A handful flap-flap-glided over the trees at Higbee Beach WMA on our first visit, hunting the migrating passerines. We saw others at Cape May Point SP and The Meadows.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Disappointingly uncommon, thanks to the omnipresent rain, but we did get the chance to directly compare

this species and the previous one at Higbee's our first morning. We saw others at Cape May Point SP and The Meadows.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – One soared over Higbee's our first morning there, and another spiraled over Cox Hall Creek WMA.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – The amount of rain we had during the week definitely impacted raptor movements. We saw only a couple of this normally common species: one over Cape May Point SP and a second over The Meadows.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

VIRGINIA RAIL (*Rallus limicola*) – One below the wheelchair ramp at the Coral Avenue dune crossing was unexpected. It was huddled under a sumac bush, looking rather sorry for itself.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Good numbers rested on the muddy edges of channels in the back bays, seen from The Osprey on our boat trip.

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica*) – A long-staying bird dozed on a mudflat at the Meadows, next to an equally sleepy Pectoral Sandpiper -- at least until the Merlins and Peregrines started flying over, sending every bird in the neighborhood fleeing in terror!

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – One flew past while we seawatched from the Coral Avenue dune crossover, and we saw a couple of others in one of the little puddles on the marsh at Nummy Island.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*) – Several family groups along the stone jetty in the Cape May harbor showed very well on our boat trip. We saw others in the back bays and on Nummy Island.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – One flew -- distinctively stiff winged -- along the edge of a channel through the back bays, seen from The Osprey.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Common throughout the tour, with nice comparisons between this and the next species at The Meadows.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – A dozen or so rested on the fringes of a big Laughing Gull roost in Bunker Pond on our first morning in the state park, and we had others at The Meadows.

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*) – A couple of youngsters feeding on the grassy edges of muddy islands were a highlight of our back bay boat trip.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – David spotted our first two, poking around in a ditch beside the road on Nummy Island. We had others scurrying along the tideline at Sunset Beach and along the edges of back bay channels on our boat trip.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*)

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*)

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – A little gang feeding on the mudflats at The Meadows allowed good study -- particularly because they had a few Semipalmated Sandpipers in tow for easy comparisons.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER (*Calidris fuscicollis*) – One trundled around the edges of a baseball diamond in Stone Harbor, in the company of a pair of Sanderlings. Its white rump was nicely visible when it preened, and when it flew briefly from one spot in the field to another. Its distinctive flank streaking was rather harder to spot!

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (*Calidris bairdii*) – One at the Meadows with a double handful of Pectoral Sandpipers was a surprise; the species isn't common in Cape May. Sadly, it fled from a Merlin before everybody got to see it in the scope.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER (*Calidris melanotos*) – A wary group of eight stopped briefly beside one the main pools at The Meadows, though the Peregrine/Merlin air show soon convinced them to continue on.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*)

STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*) – Four among a mob of Lesser Yellowlegs gave us great views, and a fine demonstration of their distinctive "super fast sewing machine" method of feeding.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – A big group of 20 or so probed a ballfield in Stone Harbor one rainy afternoon. We tried in vain to turn one into a Long-billed Dowitcher!

WILSON'S SNIBE (*Gallinago delicata*) – Two rocketed away across one of the ponds at The Meadows late one afternoon.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Still quite common on the beaches around Cape May county. This species ships out for the winter, heading south into the southern states and Central America.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – This species, on the other hand, returns to Cape May for the winter after breeding further north. We saw a couple of adults near the Second Avenue jetty one rainy morning, and picked up a few more on our back bay boat trip.

HERRING GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*)

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – An adult atop a triangular rock in the Second Avenue jetty showed very well -- and in nice comparison with a big flock of Great Black-backed Gulls loafing on the beach nearby. We also saw a couple of youngsters snoozing on a ballfield near 80th Street in Stone Harbor.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*) – Very common on the beaches around the county. Believe it or not, the one-day high count for this species a century ago was FOUR!

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – Several of these big terns hunted near one of the bridges onto Nummy Island, and a handful of others rested in (or hunted over) Bunker Pond. This is the world's largest tern.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – A youngster flew in and landed on the beach just outside the shelter near the west end of Cape May beach, not far from the young Black Skimmer.

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – Quite common in the rips off the Coral Avenue dune crossover, with others resting in the sand near the Second Avenue jetty.

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*) – A few hunting near the concrete ship one rainy morning, with others seen at the Coral Avenue dune crossover and from The Osprey -- including multiple loudly begging youngsters following their parents.

BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) – One youngster rested on the beach near the Second Avenue jetty in Cape May, seen on a particularly damp morning.

Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)

PARASITIC JAEGER (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – A couple of dark, distant birds chased hapless terns around in the rips off Coral Avenue, hassling them until they dropped their catches.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) **[H]**

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Daily, typically sitting on telephone wires along the roads.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – One preened briefly in a tree at Higbee's, seen by David as we walked back to the parking lot from the beach.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – One at Cape May Point SP sat on posts while not hunting over Bunker Pond. We saw (and heard) others over Lake Lily while birding around Cape May Bird Observatory's Northwood Center.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) – One bounded across the road in front of us as we drove up to the Philadelphia airport at the end of the tour -- good spotting, Stacey!

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes carolinus*)

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – A youngster hitched up a Pitch Pine tree trunk at Cox Hall Creek WMA, posing several times in plain view. Its vertical white wing stripe is distinctive.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – Some of the group spotted one near the parking lot at Higbee's on our first morning, and others saw one bound past at Cox Hall Creek WMA.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – Easily the most common woodpecker of the trip, with several dozen seen at Higbee's and Cape May Point SP on our first morning, and double figures on other days.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Regular throughout, including a few cruising over the Cape May Point SP parking lot on our first day, and two fighting the wind over the beach one morning at the Coral Avenue dune crossover.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – Quite common throughout the week, including several zooming over the parking lot, dunes and ponds at Cape May Point State Park.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – Regular throughout much of the tour, including a big female sitting on a rooftop along Alexander Avenue one wet morning.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – Scattered individuals, including one hunting from a thick rope near a driveway in Cape May Point one wet day and others flycatching along field edges at Higbee's.

Vireonidae (Vireos)

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*) – A youngster flicked through some of the bushes beside the central trail at Higbee's, its dark eye proving potentially confusing!

RED-EYED VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*) – Several gobbling fruits in berrying Virginia Creeper vines at Cape May Point SP and outside CMBO's Northwood Center.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Seen almost every day, often carrying acorns. Some, like the little gang we spotted flying over CMBO's Northwood Center, were probably migrating.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

FISH CROW (*Corvus ossifragus*) – Especially nice views of a big family group gleaning goodies from under the picnic tables in one of the shelters at Cape May Point SP.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Including big flocks swirling over Bunker Pond, occasionally dipping down for a drink or dropping into Bayberry bushes along the pond edges to strip berries from their branches.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*)

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – One zipped back and forth over the pond east of the east trail at The Meadows (just above our Baird's Sandpiper), showing well its pale rump patch.

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

CAROLINA CHICKADEE (*Poecile carolinensis*) – Birds visiting the feeding station at CMBO's Northwood Center proved especially confiding; we had others with the big mixed flock along Alexander Avenue.

TUFTED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus bicolor*)

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

BROWN CREEPER (*Certhia americana*) – At least two -- and possibly three -- birds crept up thick pine trunks at Cox Hall Creek WMA. This species is a winter visitor to the area.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – Seen nearly every day, including one investigating a juniper tree over a driveway in Cape May Point, and another with a mixed flock along Alexander Avenue.

Poliptilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila caerulea*) – One calling bird twitched through a berry-laden Virginia Creeper vine high in a juniper near the Coral Avenue dune crossing, its bluish gray plumage contrasting nicely with the deep red leaves.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus satrapa*) – Dozens swarmed through the junipers outside CMBO's Northwood Center.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – Also common around CMBO's Northwood Center, though in smaller numbers than the previous species.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – A gang of ten or so flashed from branch to branch in a pine grove at Cox Hall Creek WMA, lighting up a gloomy rainy day.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Surprisingly scarce during our tour, with only a single bird flicking through the trees outside CMBO's Northwood Center one rainy afternoon. However, those who drove up to the airport spotted a big group hunting on a grassy lawn along the highway just north of the Cape May canal bridge.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Quite common in the berrying vines at Higbee's our first morning, with scattered individuals elsewhere. Their meowing calls were a regular part of the tour soundtrack.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – A calling pair atop bushes near the Cape May Point SP parking lot probably provided our best views. We had others at The Meadows, especially while searching for those darn sparrows.

BROWN THRASHER (*Toxostoma rufum*) – Especially nice views of a calling bird in a juniper bush at Higbee's on our final morning.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – Best seen on the first morning of the tour, when we found a small gang of youngsters sitting in a leafless tree at the far end of one of the fields at Higbee's.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – Small numbers crawled along trunks and branches of trees throughout the tour, particularly at Higbee's, and in the junipers outside the Cape May Bird Observatory's Northwood Center.

NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*) – One flicked through several trees along the central path at Higbee's on our final morning, showing quickly for a lucky few.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Daily, including a few lurking in the weeds around the platform at Higbee's.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – One in a holly tree along the red trail at Cape May Point SP, part of a mixed flock that provided fine entertainment our first full day.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – One in a garden along Alexander Avenue sat for long seconds in a holly tree under a telephone wire before disappearing into the vegetation -- good thing Mike was along to spot it for us!

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – Scattered individuals, including a couple with the mixed flock along the red trail at Cape May Point SP, and others foraging in the junipers outside CMBO's Northwood Center.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – Our best views came in the junipers outside of CMBO's Northwood Center, where one foraged just inches over our heads.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (*Setophaga fusca*) – Single birds seen along Alexander Avenue on each of our visits, including one that sat for several minutes in a holly tree on our first day.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – Small numbers on most days, including a few foraging in the trees outside CMBO's Northwood Center. The combination of a streaked back and lightly streaked underparts -- as well as dark legs with yellowish feet -- separate this species from the similarly-plumaged Pine and Bay-breasted warblers.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – A male in a holly tree along the yellow trail at Cape May Point SP showed nicely -- eventually -- as did another along Alexander Avenue.

PALM WARBLER (*Setophaga palmarum*) – One of the more common warblers on the tour, with those wagging their tails along the edges of the trail at The Meadows showing particularly well.

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus*) – One with the swirling mixed flock along Alexander Avenue looked decidedly plain.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (*Setophaga coronata*) – Probably the most common warbler of the tour, with scores seen twitching through the trees (or shrubs or reedbeds) virtually everywhere we went.

PRAIRIE WARBLER (*Setophaga discolor*) – One along the edge of Lake Lily proved rather elusive -- great spotting, Stacey! Fortunately, another at Higbee's on our final morning was far more confiding as it foraged in a little juniper along the track out to the beach.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – One in the junipers outside CMBO's Northwood Center proved particularly cooperative -- and increased to three on our second visit. We saw another along Alexander Avenue.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

EASTERN TOWHEE (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) – As usual, we heard more than we saw, but a male scratching along the edge of one of the side trails at Higbee's showed well for all.

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – A gang of them bounced across a front yard in Cape May Point or swirled through the junipers lining the road, ignoring the misty drizzle.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (*Spizella pallida*) – Our best views came at the Stone Harbor Bird Sanctuary, where one bounced around under a bench, in close association with a Song Sparrow and a couple of drab Indigo Buntings. We also saw one in a grassy backyard in Cape May Point the first morning of the tour -- occasionally being chased back into the trees by a passing Northern Cardinal or Mourning Dove.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Dozens were sprinkled along the pathways at The Meadows on each of our visits there, and we saw others bouncing through the sand at the Coral Avenue dune crossover.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – Regular throughout, including one singing from the top of a bayberry bush along the dunes at Cape May Point SP.

SWAMP SPARROW (*Melospiza georgiana*) – Quite common in the overgrown fields at Higbee's, and in the tall grassy end of The Meadows. This species is quite richly colored compared to Cape May's other common species.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) – Increasing in numbers as the week progressed, including a little gang of them working the edges of several yards near Lake Lily on Cape May Point. This is a common winter visitor to the area.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) – A couple of handsome adults joined the House Sparrows feeding along the edge of the grass under the hawkwatch platform while I made lunch on our last full day.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (*Junco hyemalis*) – A couple of "early birds" -- vanguard to the numbers that will arrive later in the autumn -- flicked through a juniper tree across the street from the bird observatory one afternoon. We saw another rummaging in the grass along one of the trails at Higbee Beach WMA our final morning.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SCARLET TANAGER (*Piranga olivacea*) – One hid among the branches at the top of a Black Gum tree at Cox Hall Creek WMA -- though it took a scope view for most of the group to find it.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Reasonably common throughout, including several nibbling Multiflora Rose hips at Higbee's on a couple of mornings. We spotted a couple of handsome red males among the more common females/youngsters.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – One flew past shortly after we started our hike at Cox Hall Creek WMA, showing its pink wingpits.

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – Small numbers seen on most days, including a couple in treetops above the Clay-colored Sparrow at a property along Alexander Avenue our first day.

DICKCISSEL (*Spiza americana*) – A colorful winter male mingled with a flock of House Sparrows below the hawkwatch one morning, entertaining the group while I organized breakfast.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

BOBOLINK (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Regular at The Meadows, where they swirled through the reedbeds; we saw others at Cape May Point SP.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – A trio flicked briefly into view at Higbee's on our final morning, flying low over the dune forest. Their open-winged glides are distinctive.

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – One skulked in the junipers outside CMBO's Northwood Center.

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*) – Particularly nice views of several singing along the road across Nummy Island.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Giant flocks foraged along roadsides across the southern part of the county.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (*Icterus galbula*) – A bright bird appeared briefly among the fruits of a Black Gum tree at Cox Hall Creek WMA, replacing the Scarlet Tanager.

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

PURPLE FINCH (*Haemorhous purpureus*) – A male feeding in a driveway along Alexander Avenue was a bit of a surprise -- but allowed lovely close studies.

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – A male made several visits to a feeder in a garden along Alexander Avenue, just above the lawn where we spotted our first Clay-colored Sparrow. [I]

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – A little group nibbled seeds in a big patch of bright yellow tickseed sunflowers along one of the trails at Cape May Point SP.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

MAMMALS

RED BAT (*Lasiurus borealis*) – One came in off the sea at Cape May Point SP, flew over the parking lot and disappeared into the junipers near the picnic shelter.

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – One scurried along the edge of the road as we drove along Sunset Boulevard early one morning.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Regular throughout, including one chewing on a walnut near the parking lot at Higbee's one morning.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – Two youngsters chomped marsh grasses beside one of the bridges at The Meadows, while two adults paddled around on one of the big ponds.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – We saw big pods hunting in the rips on a couple of days. This species congregates in big numbers off Cape May Point before heading south for the winter.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 143 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa