



Field Guides Tour Report

Cape May Megan's Way 2015

Sep 27, 2015 to Oct 3, 2015

Megan Edwards Crewe

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



Carolina Wrens are the voices of Cape May, chortling from bushes all across our tour route. (photo by guide Megan Edwards Crewe)

Migration in Cape May is all about the weather, and the one-two combination of a nor'easter and an approaching tropical storm certainly put a damper (quite literally on a few days) on our tour! However, Cape May is an awesome place for birding nearly every day of the year, and despite the weather, we still had some fine bird encounters -- and some wonderful examples of migration in action.

An American Bittern flew ponderously across the road in front of our van, showing its two-toned wings nicely. Multiple Clapper Rails paddled through the waving tops of the reed grass, flooded out by extra-high tides. A drake Eurasian Wigeon floated among his American counterparts. Hundreds of Forster's Terns and Laughing Gulls flashed over The Rips -- the turbulent area where the waters of the ocean and the Delaware Bay meet and mingle -- and a handful of Parasitic Jaegers twisted in agile pursuit of anything that caught a fishy meal. A big flock of Black Skimmers rested on the sandy beach across from our hotel. A conveniently mixed flock of Least and Semipalmated sandpipers poked and prodded for tidbits literally under our feet on a rocky jetty. A Merlin dismembered a dragonfly on a nearby tree branch. A crisply plumaged young Lesser Black-backed Gull mingled with its Great Black-backed cousins on a windswept beach.

Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks flap-flap-glided overhead (sometimes in the same thermal, allowing good comparison). An adult Bald Eagle soared over a waving American flag. A Long-billed Dowitcher foraged among a group of Short-billed Dowitchers, showing its distinctively rusty-edged mantle feathers. A small (and late) Black Tern circled briefly over one of the plover ponds before heading out to sea. A Philadelphia Vireo rummaged through fruiting juniper bushes in the company of a passel of Blackpoll Warblers. A big, busy mixed flock of chickadees, kinglets, catbirds, and 8 species of warblers -- including a stunning male Black-throated Blue, a couple of flashing American Redstarts (or were they yellowstarts?), a trunk-climbing Black-and-white, and multiple Northern Parulas -- swarmed along a roadside near the bird observatory. And who will soon forget that enormous flock of Tree Swallows swirling over Cape May Point: thousands and thousands and THOUSANDS of them, like flecks in a snow globe!

Thanks so much for joining me for some time in my "backyard". It was great fun sharing Cape May's birds, and a few of its restaurants, and a taste of its migration magic with you! I hope to see you all in the field again somewhere, some day -- who knows, maybe on a SPRING in Cape May trip!

-- 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)

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) -- Regular across our tour route, including many on Cape May Point State Park's (CMPSP's) Bunker Pond. A

few of the birds we saw were suffering from "angel wing", a condition brought on by improper nutrition (i.e. a diet high in carbohydrates and protein and low in various minerals) early in their lives; it renders them unable to fly.

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – Ridiculously abundant at CMPSP (with more than 40 birds on Bunker Pond alone), where they are rapidly becoming a problem. [I]

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) – A drake lurked behind the vegetation on a tiny island in Bunker Pond one morning, and a wary female paddled along the back edge of one of the roadside puddles at Forsythe NWR.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – A pair floated along the back edge of Bunker Pond one morning, and we saw a handful of others at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR.

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Anas penelope*) – A drake among the multitude of American Wigeons on Bunker Pond was easy to pick out, thanks to his rusty head and butterscotch crown stripe.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*) – Quite common on Bunker Pond, with others at Forsythe NWR. This species overwinters in good numbers in southern New Jersey.

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK (*Anas rubripes*) – Best seen at Forsythe NWR, where dozens and dozens floated on the various impoundments. Some 45% of all American Black Ducks overwinter along the Jersey shore, and a substantial percentage of those are at Forsythe.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Common and widespread, including many in good comparison with the previous species at Forsythe NWR.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – A little gang of eclipse-plumaged birds were regular along the edges of CMPSP's Bunker Pond, with a few of the males just starting to show traces of crescent moons on their faces. We saw others at Forsythe NWR.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – Good numbers on Bunker Pond our first morning at CMPSP. Though they were still largely in eclipse plumage, the males were well along in their molt back to breeding plumage. We saw others at Forsythe NWR.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – A couple of birds along the back edge of Bunker Pond one morning looked lean, pale and long-necked compared to the surrounding wigeons and Mallards.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*) – Good numbers on Bunker Pond, looking tiny in comparison to the other ducks, with others at Forsythe NWR. A few even flashed their eponymous green speculums at us as they preened.

BLACK SCOTER (*Melanitta americana*) – Our first were a string of six males offshore at CMPSP, but we had much better looks at an orange-beaked male paddling in the sea just off Sunset Beach, and another trio of males floating near the jetty at Reed's Beach.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – Our best looks came at Cape May Point, where we found a pair of nearly-grown youngsters wandering along the side of the road. We saw another larger flock en route to Higbee Beach WMA one morning.

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – One, already in its drab winter plumage, floated on one of the bays near the wildlife drive at Forsythe NWR.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Daily, including a few drying their wings on stumps protruding from Bunker Pond, a handful of youngsters resting on the remains of the concrete ship at Sunset Beach, and dozens winging their way south across the Delaware Bay.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

AMERICAN BITTERN (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – Our first was little more than a head and neck sticking, reed-like, out of the grasses edging Jarvis Sound, on our back bay boat cruise. Fortunately, we spotted another, in flight across the wildlife drive at Forsythe NWR.

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Common throughout, including a flock of 10 striking out across the Delaware Bay one rainy morning, seen from our shelter along Sunset Beach. A few of these big herons try to overwinter in Cape May each year, generally without success.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Very common throughout, including good numbers standing tall on the salt marshes at Forsythe NWR.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – Perhaps not as widespread as the previous species, but far more numerous where they did occur -- including many in nice comparison with the previous species at Forsythe NWR.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – Our first was a youngster -- white with just a hint of dusky wingtips -- striding across the back edge of Bunker Pond our first morning. We spotted a hunting blue adult on our visit to Nummy Island.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – Scattered individuals, including two hunting in a channel on Nummy Island, another at the Wetlands Institute and more seen from The Osprey on our back bay boat trip.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – Nancy spotted our first, crouched along the back edge of one of CMPSP's plover ponds, and we watched a second fly past over the Meadows.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Our best views came on The Osprey; we saw both adults and youngsters scattered throughout the salt marsh. We had others at Forsythe NWR, and tucked into the greenery at the heron roost in Avalon (where they were far less visible than the next species).

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – Nice scope studies of several on a day roost in Avalon, with others seen on our boat trip through the back bay marshes and at Forsythe NWR.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – After we studied the mob around the recycling center (particularly the ones checking out the dumpsters), we had point-blank views of a couple ripping a dead squirrel to shreds beside a street in Cape May.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Daily, including some in nice comparison with the previous species at the recycling center.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Common, primarily seen in flight -- often carrying a snack for later consumption! Those hunting over Bunker Pond offered our best chance for study.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – A handful of youngsters -- identified as such by their rusty-cinnamon underparts -- throughout the week, and a ghost-gray male quartering over the marshes at Reed's Beach.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – Despite the less-than-ideal weather conditions we faced for the week, we still got plenty of practice

telling this species from the next -- particularly on the first morning of the tour, when good numbers of both streamed over CMPSP.

- COOPER'S HAWK** (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Reasonably common on the first few days of the tour, before the wetter weather arrived, including several checking out the bay crossing from the skies above the Coral Avenue dune crossover.
- BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Seen nearly every day, including an immature bird soaring over Cook's Beach, and an adult circling around by the American flag on Nummy Island's dredge spoils, and then perching on a pole in the marsh.
- RED-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Surprisingly uncommon this week, with our best views coming at Cook's Beach, where a pair preened on a dead snag.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

- CLAPPER RAIL (ATLANTIC COAST)** (*Rallus crepitans crepitans*) – Incredibly high tides throughout the week meant we saw a surprisingly number of SWIMMING Clapper Rails -- including a handful from The Osprey and a couple in the roadside channels at Forsythe NWR.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

- AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus palliatus*) – Seen on most days, including a big group huddled on the Coast Guard beach during our back bay boat trip.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

- BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A lone bird on Nummy Island was followed by a handful of others along the back bays behind Wildwood (seen on our boat trip) and several big groups at Forsythe NWR. Their large size, big eyes and short bills made them easy to pick out from the other shorebirds -- as did those black "armpits".
- SEMPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Small groups of them pattered across the muddy fringes of the impoundments at Forsythe NWR, and another flew past Sunset Beach on our soggy morning there.
- KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Especially nice views of two along the edge of one of the impoundments at The Meadows, with others in flight over CMPSP.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

- SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*) – One along one of the rocky jetties protecting the Cape May harbor kept flitting further along -- stiff-winged -- as the boat approached. We saw another along the jetty at Reed's Beach and one more on the jetty at Sunset Beach.
- GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – By far the more common of the two yellowlegs species, with good numbers resting or feeding on Nummy Island, at the Wetlands Institute, at Forsythe NWR and on the back bays behind Wildwood. As we saw, this species tends to be quite an active feeder, chasing small fish around, often in deeper water.
- WILLET (WESTERN)** (*Tringa semipalmata inornata*) – Snoozing birds on a puddle in the salt marsh near the Wetlands Institute allowed great scope study. This subspecies is longer-legged, longer-billed and plainer-backed than is the eastern subspecies -- which is typically not found in New Jersey after late summer.
- LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – Scattered individuals in CMPSP and The Meadows, including one that flew overhead with a Greater Yellowlegs near the plover ponds -- conveniently showing the substantial difference in size and the more subtle differences in shape.
- RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – Superb views of a flock roosting on one of the sea walls around a marina in Cape May Harbor; they're so used to the boat passing closely by that one of them actually jumped on deck briefly!
- STILT SANDPIPER** (*Calidris himantopus*) – One hopping around at the edge of Bunker Pond had us worried about its health -- until it lowered that second leg. Good spotting, Nancy!
- SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*) – Abundant throughout, scurrying up and down the beaches as the waves rolled in and out. This species is far paler than the next, with a big white stripe in the wing in flight.
- DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*) – Best seen at Forsythe NWR, where scores rummaged along the edge of the biggest impoundment. Some still showed considerable traces of their black-bellied, rusty-backed breeding plumage.
- LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*) – Regular throughout, with particularly nice studies of a little gang along the jetty at Reed's Beach, in very nice side by side comparisons with Semipalmated Sandpipers -- practically at our boot tips! The paler legs, darker back, longer and finer bill and crouching posture of this species were all clearly visible.
- PECTORAL SANDPIPER** (*Calidris melanotos*) – One bathing along the edge of the big impoundment at Forsythe NWR was something of a challenge for some to pick out initially -- until it climbed to the top of a muddy islet to rearrange its feathers, that is!
- SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris pusilla*) – Great comparisons between this and several Least Sandpipers at Reed's Beach, with hundreds of others pattering over the mudflats edging the impoundments at Forsythe NWR.
- WESTERN SANDPIPER** (*Calidris mauri*) – A couple, looking a bit like miniature Dunlins, mingled with the shorebirds on the tide line at Stone Harbor Point, and others picked along the edge of one of the impoundments at Forsythe NWR -- so close we could even see the last remaining traces of rusty scapulars on a few of them.
- SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus griseus*) – A handful, looking short and squatty, snoozed among the Willets at the Wetlands Institute, and others foraged along the edges of the impoundments at Forsythe NWR.
- LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – At least two youngsters mingled among the big shorebird flock in one of the impoundments at Forsythe NWR, picked out by the rust-edged, dark-centered feathers on their upperparts. The bill on one of them was decidedly long -- though there is considerable overlap in the length of bills between this species and the previous one.

Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)

- PARASITIC JAEGER** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – Several birds in the Rips off Coral Avenue put on quite a show one morning, twisting in agile flight after fish-encumbered terns.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

- LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Abundant daily, with impressive numbers of brownish youngsters basking on area beaches, Bunker Pond, the back bay marshes and virtually every other spot near waterways throughout. The local breeding population certainly had a good season!
- RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*) – The first few winter visitors were sprinkled among the gull roosts on Cape May's beaches. This species doesn't nest in the area.
- HERRING GULL (AMERICAN)** (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – Common and widespread, with plenty of chocolate brown youngsters dotted

among the adults.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – A fresh youngster stood in nice comparison to several nearby juvenile Great Black-backed Gulls at Sunset Beach one wet morning. This species is proportionately longer winged and smaller beaked than the next.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*) – Abundant on area beaches, including a good-sized group near the bunker on CMPSP's beach most days. This is the world's largest gull.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – And this is the world's largest tern! We saw them on most days, including a few hunting over Bunker Pond on several mornings, and others resting among a gull flock at Forsythe NWR. The dark "crew cut", heavy red-orange bill, and dark "hand" help to distinguish this species from the more numerous Royal Tern.

BLACK TERN (*Chlidonias niger*) – One in flight over CMPSP's plover ponds was a bit of a surprise; our tour dates are getting late for this species. It did a few circles over us and then headed out to sea, towards Delaware.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – A youngster on a post at one of the marinas in Cape May harbor was a nice find; this is another species which is largely gone by the time of our tours. An adult flew past moments later, but soon disappeared behind a nearby restaurant.

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – Seen daily, and by far the most common of the tour's terns, with dozens dozing on marina seawalls and pilings around Cape May harbor, scores hunting over the channels and impoundments at Forsythe NWR and an unlucky few being mercilessly bullied by Parasitic Jaegers over The Rips.

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Regular in small numbers along the coast, including a few resting among the roosting gulls at CMPSP.

BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) – A big mob -- including an encouraging number of youngsters -- rested on the sand of Cape May's beach one morning, seen before we headed off for breakfast. We saw others in distant flight over the beach.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Scattered flocks in urban areas throughout, including a gang hanging around on the beach our first afternoon. [H]

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Common throughout, typically perched on wires along the roads or zipping past overhead.

Apodidae (Swifts)

CHIMNEY SWIFT (*Chaetura pelagica*) – A few winnowed over Higbee Beach WMA one morning in a loose flock, and we saw a handful of others over CMBO's Northwood Center one morning. Most of North America's Chimney Swifts head to Peru for the winter.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – A female or youngster visited the side yard feeder at Michael and Louise's, perching (of course) at the port farthest from the road. This is the only regularly expected hummingbird in New Jersey.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Single birds on several days, including a few perched along the Cape May canal (seen from The Osprey), one on a pole at the Wetlands Institute and a few hunting over the salt marsh near the night-heron roost in Avalon.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – Seen most days, including a couple of birds interacting in the tall pines along the trail at Cox Hall Creek WMA (allowing quick scope studies) and two more checking out a dead tree at Cook's Beach.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – One at a roadside stop en route to Higbee's hitched its way up several tree branches, showing his red nape patch as he did so. We saw another on Cook's Beach road, and in several places around Cape May Point.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – For most of us, this was a "heard-only" bird (one called from a tree along the road to Higbee's, but we just couldn't find it), but Nancy spotted one at Forsythe NWR while wandering the trail before our picnic lunch.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – Easily the most common of the tour's woodpeckers, with birds bounding past in good numbers on several mornings, and a dozen or more feeding on the ground (or sitting on bushes and wires) in fields along the road to Higbee's one day.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Small numbers on most days, including at least 8 at the Cape May airport one afternoon, hovering over the grassy edges to the runways or perched on the chain link fence around the edge of the field. This species has declined sharply as a migrant through southern New Jersey.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – Seen on most days, with especially good looks at one munching on a dragonfly in a tree along the trail at CMPSP.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – Seen on all but our first day -- not bad for a species that was extirpated east of the Rockies a mere half century ago! We had wonderful looks at several zooming over CMPSP, distant views of a disparately sized pair at Forsythe NWR and one resting on a Osprey nesting platform, seen on our back bay boat trip.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus virens*) – One made several flashing sorties after passing insects from the top of a little juniper bush along Sea Grove Avenue.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – One hunted from a roadside wire, just across the road from the previous species.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

PHILADELPHIA VIREO (*Vireo philadelphicus*) – A bright bird with a gang of Blackpoll Warblers along the driveway at CMPSP was a highlight of our last morning's walk.

RED-EYED VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*) – A couple flicked through the trees outside CMBO's Northwood Center with the big mixed flock there, searching for insects and berries.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – It took a surprising three days before we actually SAW one of these common birds, though we'd heard many before then. Fortunately, stopping to get Ann a look at one got us a number of unexpected bonuses along the road to Higbee's, and once we saw our first, we saw plenty more -- often with beaks full of acorns.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – The more common of the tour's crows, seen (and heard) on all but the first day.

FISH CROW (*Corvus ossifragus*) – A gang calling nasally from light poles along the beach promenade allowed nice study as we walked back from admiring the skimmers, and we spotted others checking out the sand at Sunset Beach. This species is smaller and narrower-"handed" than the

previous species.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – A handful at the Cape May airport alternated between creeping through the short grasses (nibbling grass seeds) and sitting on the various signs and direction boards around the runways.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Seen in good numbers daily, but most impressive were the thousands and thousands and THOUSANDS (30,000? more?) that swirled in vast tornadoes and rivers and floods in the skies over Cape May Point one morning.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – A couple of very late birds (most are long gone by the time of our tours) mingled with a big Tree Swallow flock at Sunset Beach one wet morning; good spotting, Marjorie!

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

CAROLINA CHICKADEE (*Poecile carolinensis*) – Small, noisy parties in woods and neighborhoods all across our tour route, including a few leading the mixed flock along Sea Grove Avenue, a little band at Cox Hall Creek WMA, and a handful in the woods along the road out to Cook's Beach.

TUFTED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus bicolor*) – Especially nice views of two or three with a mixed flock in the wood strip along the edge of the road out to Cook's Beach.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*) – Nancy spotted one along the edge of the road out of Cook's Beach, while the rest of us tracked down a Tufted Titmouse.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*) – We heard the distinctive nasal calls of this species at Cox Hall Creek WMA and Forsythe NWR. [*]

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – As usual, we heard far more of these than we ever saw, but we finally got lucky at the Wetlands Institute, when a male chortling from a crab apple tree put on a great show for us.

Poliopitidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliopitila caerulea*) – One danced through some junipers along the edge of Sea Grove Avenue, part of a mixed flock we found one morning.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus satrapa*) – Two in some evergreens in a Cape May Point front yard were less than cooperative, repeatedly ducking out of view into the thicker branches.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – One flitted through a small tree in the front yard of a home along Sea Grove Avenue, twitching its wings almost constantly, and others did the same in the shrubs in front of CMBO's Northwood Center.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Small numbers on most days, with one larger flock in a roadside field on our drive to Cook's and Reed's beaches.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Far more frequently heard mewing from the bushes than seen, but common throughout -- including numbers gobbling porcelainberry and pokeweed fruits at Higbee's.

BROWN THRASHER (*Toxostoma rufum*) – We heard several chipping from the scrubby vegetation at Higbee's and finally laid eyes on one high up in the thin wedge of vegetation along the edge of Lake Lily -- good spotting, Nancy!

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Daily, except for our first afternoon, including one chortling from the top of a bush near the CMPSP parking lot on most mornings.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Abundant throughout, including a big mob poking and prodding the grass in a front yard at Reed's Beach. [I]

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – Trilling flocks bounded over Cape May Point on several mornings.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Our last new bird of the trip was one we spotted on the center path at Higbee Beach WMA as we walked back to the van. It perched for 30 seconds or so on a horizontal branch, bobbing its tail.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – Jerry spotted our first, creeping up a tree trunk at Cox Hall Creek WMA. We had another doing the same outside CMBO's Northwood Center, and another with a mixed flock along Sea Grove Avenue.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Scattered birds, including a female rooting through the shrubs in front of our hotel, and a handful in the cattails in the ponds at CMPSP.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Our first was a "yellowstart" seen briefly in a pine across the street from the Coral Avenue dune crossover, but our best views came along Sea Grove Avenue, where we found one foraging with a big mixed flock. We had another with a mixed flock near the bird observatory.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – One fluttering in the road (apparently the near-victim of a passing car and then nearly run over by a following truck) gave us a brief look before it hopped into the ivy in a nearby garden and disappeared.

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – A couple near where we parked the van along Sea Grove Avenue showed nicely as they investigated a row of small trees, and others picked aphids from some of the trees outside CMBO's Northwood Center.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – One in a yard just down the street from CMBO's Northwood Center showed its distinctive black and white tail nicely as it foraged in some low bushes near the house.

- YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia*) – A trio -- looking very plain indeed -- twitched through the junipers outside CMBO's Northwood Center.
- BLACKPOLL WARBLER** (*Setophaga striata*) – A handful at CMPSP on several days, with others near the bird observatory; this is the species that largely migrates from the east coast of the US straight to South America -- three days over the ocean with no stopping!
- BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER** (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – A male foraging low in the weeds and shrubs along the edge of the road near the bird observatory was a highlight of our last afternoon's birding.
- PALM WARBLER** (*Setophaga palmarum*) – Among the most common of the tour's warblers, particularly in the dunes at CMPSP and in gardens around Cape May Point. The constantly wagging tail is a good field mark for this species.
- PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga discolor*) – One seen briefly by a few as we walked back to the van on our last morning at Higbee's. Though this species breeds locally in southern NJ, most are gone by the time of our tours.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

- SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Sparrows were notable by their absence this trip, but dozens of this species dotted the wildlife drive at Forsythe NWR, bouncing along the sides of the road or flitting off into the vegetation as our van approached.
- SWAMP SPARROW** (*Melospiza georgiana*) – A few of us had brief views of one, looking small and dark, in the tall golden grass along the edge of the path at Higbee's. This species isn't as tied to wetlands during the nonbreeding season as it is while breeding.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

- NORTHERN CARDINAL** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Regular throughout, including several bouncing through the brush around CMBO's Northwood Center and others in gardens around Cape May Point.
- ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – A female (or youngster) paused briefly in a treetop along Sea Grove Avenue one morning, attracted by the activity of a mixed flock we were enjoying.
- INDIGO BUNTING** (*Passerina cyanea*) – A winter-dulled bird sat for a bit on the edge of a juniper along Sea Grove Avenue, and others flicked along the edge of one of the fields at the Beanery.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

- BOBOLINK** (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) – We had a few high-flying flocks bounding over Sea Grove Avenue one morning, but our best views came in a front yard on Cape May Point, where we found one resting quietly in a pine tree at pointblank range.
- RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Particularly common at Forsythe NWR, where restless flocks flowed through the cattails and reedbeds. We had others most days around Cape May, often in high, loose flocks heading south.
- COMMON GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – Small numbers on most days, with bigger flocks along the edges of various area highways.
- BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus major*) – Especially nice views of both males and females rooting through the wrack on Nummy Island, with others at Forsythe NWR.
- BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus ater*) – A big flock patrolled a front yard along Reed's Beach road together with an equally numerous gang of European Starlings. We also saw scattered birds with mixed blackbird flocks at a few other locations.
- BALTIMORE ORIOLE** (*Icterus galbula*) – A subtly orange female in a treetop was one of the unexpected treats we found when we stopped to get Ann her look at a Blue Jay.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

- HOUSE FINCH** (*Haemorrhous mexicanus*) – Our best looks came at Cape May Point on our last full day, when we found a few perched along some phone wires. We had others along Reed's Beach road. [I]
- AMERICAN GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus tristis*) – A handful nibbled seeds from the fluffy dried heads of wildflowers along the edges of one of the trails at CPMSP one morning.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

- HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Particularly common around our hotel, with another little gang that hung around the hawk watch platform each day. [I]

MAMMALS

- EASTERN COTTONTAIL** (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – Scattered individuals, including one on the grounds the Sea Crest on several mornings.
- EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Particularly common at Cox Hall Creek WMA, where they scurried around gathering acorns.
- MUSKRAT** (*Ondatra zibethica*) – One paddled across Bunker Pond one morning, leaving a little wake in its passage.
- BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN** (*Tursiops truncatus*)

Herps

- PAINTED TURTLE** (*Chrysemys picta*) – A few rested on some of the sticks protruding from Bunker Pond, showing the yellow striped faces and yellow plastrons (their belly plates) that help to identify them.
- NORTHERN RED-BELLIED TURTLE** (*Pseudemys rubriventris*) – One of these large, dark turtles sat on a log near the edge of a pond at The Meadows -- though it soon dropped into the water and disappeared. Appropriately, it showed red, rather than yellow, on its plastron.
- FOWLER'S TOAD** (*Anaxyrus fowleri*) – A number of tiny toadlets hopped along the trail edges at the state park. This is the only toad species found in southern New Jersey.
- SOUTHERN GRAY TREEFROG** (*Hyla chrysoscelis*) – One calling from a pine branch near our CMPSP picnic shelter was amazingly well camouflaged.
- ATLANTIC COAST LEOPARD FROG** (*Rana kauffeldi*) – One of these spotty green frogs settled itself lower and lower into a depression in the mud, until only its eyes and the top of its head showed.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 126 bird taxa and 4 mammal taxa