



Field Guides Tour Report
SPRING IN CAPE MAY 2019

May 12, 2019 to May 18, 2019
Tom Johnson

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



One of the great pleasures of this tour was the opportunity to study the normally secretive Nelson's Sparrow in comparison to Saltmarsh and Seaside sparrows at Jakes Landing. Nelson's Sparrows are scarce spring migrants in Cape May, but you wouldn't have known that from our experience this spring! Photo by leader Tom Johnson.

Our time together in Cape May was marked by dramatic contrasts: we started off our birding with rain and a stiff wind, but enjoyed warm, calm days later on as well. Migrant birds of the far north like Red Knots and Northern Gannets met with southern overshoots like Mississippi Kite and Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, all set against a tapestry of expected migrants like Broad-winged Hawk and Magnolia Warblers and exciting breeders like Saltmarsh Sparrow and Clapper Rails. Nearly as compelling as the birds, we filled our bellies with tasty field breakfasts in Belleplain State Forest and wonderful seafood and pasta dinners at some of Cape May's finest restaurants. We experienced all of these stimulating contrasts while lodging at a single comfortable beachfront hotel and even fitting in an occasional afternoon nap!

During the tour, we visited all of the varied habitats of the Cape May peninsula, and saw and heard an impressive sampler of its legendary birdlife. From day to day, our focus shifted from one major theme to another: we took our time enjoying the pageantry of horseshoe crabs and migratory shorebirds along the Delaware Bayshore, canvassed the forests of Belleplain SF for breeding warblers, vireos, and tanagers, studied nesting herons from just a few feet away in Ocean City, and rode on a boat to gain a new perspective on the tidal saltmarsh of Wildwood. On most days, we were able to check the thickets, ponds, groves, and marshes of Cape May Point in search of migrant songbirds, too. In fact, we finished off the tour with a routine check of migrant habitat along Lily Lake that ended up giving us some of our best views of warblers for the whole week, including our first Bay-breasted and Blackburnian warblers!

For specific details on the birds we encountered along the way, please refer to the annotated list below. Thank you all for joining me for a week exploring and enjoying my favorite place in the world!

-Tom

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)

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) – One of these beautiful tree ducks put in an appearance at Lily Lake in Cape May Point. This species is a vagrant to New Jersey, but this spring marked a huge invasion from the south.

BRANT (ATLANTIC) (*Branta bernicla hrota*) – These geese winter in big numbers in mid-Atlantic salt marshes and are late migrants in spring; plenty lingered for us to see near Stone Harbor, Wildwood, and Forsythe NWR.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Common and widespread. [N]

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – Most of our sightings were in the ponds and marshes around Cape May Point. These giant invaders are hard to miss! [IN]

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) – One male swam along the back edge of the Meadows as we waited for woodcock to display.

GADWALL (*Mareca strepera*) – Four were in the Meadows (where they breed).

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Mareca americana*) – Two lingered at the Meadows; this species is rare in New Jersey in May.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Common and widespread.

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK (*Anas rubripes*) – We enjoyed good views in the Wildwood back bays, and again at Heiserville where we found a female incubating 11 well-insulated eggs cloaked in a downy nest. [N]

BLACK SCOTER (*Melanitta americana*) – Five of these sea ducks were in the ocean at Stone Harbor Point. Small numbers of non-breeding scoters persist here through the summer months.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – Three were in the Wildwood back bays during our boat trip.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – One was in a tidal creek at Forsythe NWR.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies).

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – We enjoyed near-daily sightings of these impressive birds as they strolled around the yards of Cape May.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Common and widespread. [I]

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Quite common.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos).

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus americanus*) – We scoped a vocal pair perching high in pines at Belleplain SF.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies).

COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*) – Our evening walk at the Meadows positioned us nicely to see ~6 of these long distance migrants bounding through the evening sky.

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW (*Antrostomus carolinensis*) – We heard one singing during our dusk walk at the Meadows. [*]

Apodidae (Swifts).

CHIMNEY SWIFT (*Chaetura pelagica*) – Fairly common, with great views on a few different days at Cape Island. We could even see the spines on the tail!

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds).

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – It was a real treat to find a female adding spiderwebs to her lichen-armored nest during our picnic lunch at Forsythe NWR. [N]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

CLAPPER RAIL (*Rallus crepitans*) – Fairly common in the salt marshes of Cape May; we were fortunate to see several very well in Wildwood, Stone Harbor, and at Forsythe NWR.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers).

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*) – This big, pied shorebird is a conspicuous year-round resident of the sandy beaches and mudflats of Cape May.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Many of these fine shorebirds were on migratory stopover during our tour.

SEMPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Another common migrant plover that we saw frequently at many coastal sites.

PIPING PLOVER (*Charadrius melodus*) – We walked out at Stone Harbor Point to see a few of these ghostly plovers, and ended up watching one return from the intertidal zone to its nest site. It was great to see this well-camouflaged shorebird on a nest up close in the scope. The species is highly imperiled in New Jersey due to human demands for beach access and increased abundance of predators in recent years.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – We found these widespread plovers on several occasions.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*) – Hundreds of these large, distinctive shorebirds were in the back bays between Wildwood and Forsythe NWR. Mid-to-late May is the peak time to see flocks of this species moving through the region.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Common, both in the salt marshes and on the Delaware Bay beaches foraging on horseshoe crab eggs.

RED KNOT (*Calidris canutus*) – On our visits to the Delaware Bay beaches, we saw impressive flocks of these long distance migrants resting and foraging for horseshoe crab eggs. At Cooks Beach, we saw about 1000 individuals. The region is incredibly important to the rufa subspecies of Red Knot - gobbling horseshoe crab eggs helps the knots put on enough fat to finish the final leg of their migration from southern South America to the Canadian Arctic and breed successfully.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – We found about 160 individuals chasing waves on the beach at Stone Harbor Point.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – A common migrant, with hundreds between the Atlantic salt marshes and the Delaware Bayshore.

PURPLE SANDPIPER (*Calidris maritima*) – These high Arctic breeders linger fairly late into the spring on the rocky jetties of Cape May. We were pleased to see these beauties coming into their breeding plumage at Sunset Beach and Stone Harbor Point. I don't think we could see any purple this time, but they were lovely nonetheless.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Small numbers of these tiny peeps patrolled the edges of marshy mudflats.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER (*Calidris fuscicollis*) – At least 10 of these long-winged peeps were mixed in with other small sandpipers at Forsythe NWR. This species is most common in the middle of the continent during migration, but we see them in small numbers each year, usually mixed in with large flocks of migrating Semipalmated Sandpipers.

SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – We found thousands of these small sandpipers along both the Atlantic coast and the Delaware Bayshore. The area is critically important for these sandpipers as they migrate from northern South America (many winter in Northeast Brazil) to Canada and Alaska to breed.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – Another of the common migrant shorebirds of spring - we found flocks of hundreds at many coastal locations during our journey.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK (*Scolopax minor*) – One evening after dinner, we walked out in the Meadows and waited until one of these portly sandpipers began his evening display. We heard his "peent" calls from the ground, and then watched him take off and heard his wings twitter as he spiraled up into the sky and then descended back into the marsh. We even got to see the bird through an infrared scope!

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – Our best views of these familiar, body-bobbing shorebirds came at the Meadows.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*) – Our tour coincides with the end of migration through the area for these boreal forest-nesting shorebirds. We still managed to see several of them at freshwater marshes on Cape Island.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Plenty of sightings, including in comparison to Lesser Yellowlegs at the Wetlands Institute.

WILLET (EASTERN) (*Tringa semipalmata semipalmata*) – This is the common breeding Willet of Cape May County (and the Atlantic Coast of North America), and we saw and heard many of them.

WILLET (WESTERN) (*Tringa semipalmata inornata*) – One of these pale gray, lanky Willets was hunkered down along the edge of a tidal creek during our boat trip to the Wildwood back bays. This is the subspecies that breeds in the interior of western North America; though it is a common fall migrant and uncommon wintering bird in New Jersey, it is fairly rare in springtime.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – We found plenty of these small yellowlegs in marshes throughout Cape May.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – A group of 3 immature birds was making the rounds at Cape May; we saw them at the State Park, Second Avenue Jetty, and the Meadows.

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – An abundant breeding bird in the Atlantic coast marshes of Cape May; during daylight hours, it is difficult to spend more than a minute or two out of earshot of one of these loud gulls. Thousands were feeding on horseshoe crab eggs at Cooks and Reeds beaches. [N]

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – Uncommon in May; we saw a small handful of immature birds mixed in with the more common breeding species of gulls.

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) – Common and widespread. [N]

ICELAND GULL (*Larus glaucoideus*) – This rarity was a beautiful near-adult that flew past us at Sunset Beach. The species is unusual in any season in Cape May, but this individual has lingered into late spring here for the past few years.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – Two were on Sunset Beach with other gulls during the rain on our first day together.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*) – This largest of the gulls is a common sight in Cape May - quite an impressive bird! [N]

LEAST TERN (*Sternula antillarum*) – These tiny terns are rather vocal and conspicuous on Cape May's beaches and marshes during the spring. [N]

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – These odd, long-winged terns put on a show for us as they hunted frogs, fish, and insects at Shell Bay Landing and Forsythe NWR.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – Two of these huge terns were on the flats in the impoundments at Forsythe NWR.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – This is a fairly common breeding tern in the marshes and beaches of Cape May, but they were outnumbered by Forster's Terns at most of our birding stops. Nesting colonies were observed during our boat trip on the Osprey. [N]

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – This was the most common tern that we saw throughout the week in Cape May. It's an abundant nesting species in the back bays, though its marsh nests are susceptible to high tide flooding.

BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) – Between Heislerville and Forsythe NWR, we saw over 400 of these amazing coastal birds in one day. Fabulous!

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – One was in Jarvis Sound during our boat trip.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NORTHERN GANNET (*Morus bassanus*) – About 7 cruised by in the distance during our seawatch from Coral Ave. in Cape May Point.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Common in Cape May, though nesting is restricted to just a couple of spots in the area.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Two were at Forsythe NWR. This species is strangely absent as a breeder in Cape May in springtime.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Common and widespread in marshes, and we were fortunate to see one in a plume-spread breeding display at Ocean City.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – We saw plenty of these beauties out in the salt marshes.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – A few breeding adults patrolled the heronry at Ocean City.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – An uncommon bird in Cape May, though we did well to see at least 8 of them, including 6 during one crossing of Nummy Island.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – One flew past us at the Garrett Preserve on our final morning of birding together.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Plenty of these fine herons were on nests below eye level at the Ocean City heronry.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – We really enjoyed seeing the nesting pageantry of these gorgeous herons up close in the Ocean City colony.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Plenty were in the nesting colony at Ocean City, where we could study their iridescence and the beautiful pale blue face pattern.

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – This species has earned "rare but regular" status in New Jersey, and we had a really great sighting of a bright adult at the Ocean City heronry. On last year's tour, we documented nesting behavior for the first time ever in the state. We'll keep monitoring this area going forward to see what happens - it's clearly a dynamic situation.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Common and widespread - the short-tailed vulture with the choppy wingbeats.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Common and widespread.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Very common - the current status of the species here in Cape May is a real conservation success story. We saw many Osprey carrying freshly caught bunker (Atlantic Menhaden) in from offshore.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

MISSISSIPPI KITE (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) – One immature bird (hatched last year) circled over the forest at Belleplaine, clutching a freshly caught insect in one foot.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Ours were soaring over the Beanery.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Fairly common around Cape May during May.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) – A few immature birds soared over during our skywatch scans at the Beanery and in Belleplaine.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – We saw these widespread hawks regularly during our drives around the peninsula.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Scarce in May; only one flyover during our tour.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – These woodpeckers are fairly common; our best look was of one interacting with a Hairy Woodpecker at the Beanery.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Dryobates villosus*) – One squabbled with a Red-bellied Woodpecker at the edge of a field at the Beanery.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – A few sightings of this beautiful, noisy woodpecker.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – A rust-stained adult with chicks was hunkered down just above eye level under the Ocean Drive bridge to Wildwood. We had a wonderful view of this bird on the nest during our boat trip on the Osprey.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus virens*) – These long-winged flycatchers were seen regularly in the forest at Belleplaine, and we heard their "pee-uh-wee" songs at regular intervals.

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax virens*) – This distinctive Empidonax sang sharply along the road through swampy forest at Belleplaine.

LEAST FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax minimus*) – One sang at Higbee Beach on our final morning. This Empidonax flycatcher is an uncommon migrant in Cape May in spring.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – These familiar tail-dippers were around Belleplaine State Forest in a few spots.

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – This large, bold flycatcher showed off at Belleplaine State Forest.

EASTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – Fairly common and widespread in Cape May.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*) – It took some patience, but we finally saw these skulkers well at Belleplaine.

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (*Vireo flavifrons*) – One sang just out of sight at Cape May Point SP, but later we found one overhead along Weatherby Road. This is a scarce breeder in the northern edge of Cape May County.

RED-EYED VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*) – Common in forested habitats.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Common and beautiful.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Seemingly much scarcer than Fish Crow at this season.

FISH CROW (*Corvus ossifragus*) – This is the most common and conspicuous crow of Cape May during springtime.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – These brown, loping swallows were around Cape May Point on several occasions.

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) – The fabulous nesting colony at Cape May Point SP was a delight for photographers and enthusiasts of nesting behavior.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – A common breeding swallow in the wetlands here.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – A few migrants were noted; this species does not breed here, but shows up on westerly winds.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Common.

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – During the stormy weather at the beginning of the tour, we enjoyed some close studies of these orange-rumped swallows low over the water at Lily Lake.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

CAROLINA CHICKADEE (*Poecile carolinensis*) – This is the breeding chickadee of southern New Jersey; common and vocally conspicuous.

TUFTED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus bicolor*) – We found plenty of these gray tits in forested habitats all over Cape May.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*) – We found this striking forest songbird in the northern part of the peninsula; this is the eastern subspecies.

Troglodytidae (Wrens).

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*) – A common vocalist on the peninsula in springtime.

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*) – We enjoyed great views of these tail-up wrens on several occasions in the marshes of the Delaware Bayshore and at Forsythe NWR.

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – Abundant, especially by voice. It took a little while, but we did track down these caramel-colored wrens for some nice views.

Poliophtidae (Gnatcatchers).

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – Quite common in forested habitats, especially at Belleplain.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – We scoped one of these lovely singers as it belted out its "eee-o-lay" songs from a big pine tree in Belleplain SF.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Common and widespread.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers).

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – These noisy songbirds sing from forest edge all around Cape May.

BROWN THRASHER (*Toxostoma rufum*) – Just a few sightings this time - May is quiet time for thrashers here as they tend to their nests.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Common and quite vocal!

Sturnidae (Starlings).

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Common. [I]

Bombycillidae (Waxwings).

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – We found several flocks of these lovely songbirds zipping around Cape May Point.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorrhous mexicanus*) – Common around town in Cape May. [I]

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – Plenty of these finches were calling and chasing each other around in open habitats.

Passerellidae (New World Sparrows).

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – One of the common trills that you heard in many places, especially in the northern part of the peninsula.

FIELD SPARROW (*Spizella pusilla*) – This pleasant-voiced sparrow was in several meadow-like habitats around Cape May, including at Higbee Beach.

SEASIDE SPARROW (*Ammospiza maritima*) – These salty sparrows sang softly from Spartina spikes near the [Bay]shore. Apologies for alliteration.

NELSON'S SPARROW (*Ammospiza nelsoni*) – About 8 of these orange-faced salt sparrows were forced out of the marsh at Jakes Landing during high tide. Several even perched up and sang! Though a regular migrant, the species is typically difficult to find here in spring.

SALT MARSH SPARROW (*Ammospiza caudacuta*) – Rising sea levels are contributing to the decline of this Atlantic Coast specialty. We were pleased to compare one with its close relative, Nelson's Sparrow, at Jakes Landing. More were along the wildlife drive at Forsythe NWR.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – A few migrants were at Shell Bay Landing and Jakes Landing.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – Great views of breeders at the Meadows and scattered other sites on the peninsula.

EASTERN TOWHEE (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) – We saw these big sparrows a few times around Cape May and Belleplain, though they are fairly quiet in May.

Icteriidae (Yellow-breasted Chat).

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (*Icteria virens*) – This striking songbird was the object of our affection on the final morning of the tour at the Garrett Preserve on Cape Island. We found two individuals singing up a storm in the treetops there. Formerly considered a wood-warbler, this species is now placed into its own family, Icteriidae.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies).

BOBOLINK (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) – A small posse of singing and calling birds flew around the shrubby meadows of the Garrett Preserve on our final morning together.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – One sang beautifully from the huge field along Sumner Ave. near Belleplain.

ORCHARD ORIOLE (*Icterus spurius*) – We enjoyed the antics of these slender orioles on Cape Island and along the edges of Belleplain SF.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (*Icterus galbula*) – We found migrants at Cape May Point SP and at Higbee Beach.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Very common in fields and wetlands.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Frequent sightings; females are busy scouting for other songbirds' nests during this season.

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – Common and conspicuous; the breeding birds here are the coastal "Purple" Grackles.

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*) – In New Jersey, these long-tailed, shiny beauties are only found in coastal saltmarsh habitats.

Parulidae (New World Warblers).

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – This forest dweller is a loud presence in Belleplain SF; during our first morning there, we quietly tracked a singing bird until we were able to scope it on its song perch.

WORM-EATING WARBLER (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) – When this stripe-headed warbler sings its buzzy trill, the entire bird vibrates! Excellent views at Belleplain SF.

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia motacilla*) – A few singing birds proved difficult to see in the area of Belleplain SF.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Migrants encountered included one along the shoreline of Lily Lake in Cape May Point.

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) – We found this small warbler singing its "bee-buzz" song in mixed pine-oak forest along the northern border of Cape May County.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – These well-streaked warblers are quite common in Belleplain SF.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*) – We enjoyed a few sightings of this bright yellow warbler, especially in wet forest around Belleplain SF.

TENNESSEE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis peregrina*) – A singing bird posed briefly for us in the replanted section of Cape May Point SP. The species is a scarce migrant here in spring.

KENTUCKY WARBLER (*Geothlypis formosa*) – On our second visit to Belleplain SF, we had nice views of a beautiful singing male in the subcanopy of swampy forest.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – These yellowthroats were indeed common during our tour.

HOODED WARBLER (*Setophaga citrina*) – This stunning green, yellow, black, and white warbler performed admirably near a small creek that runs through Belleplain SF.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Great views of singing males at Head of River Road and at the Garrett Preserve.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – Wow - the gorgeous male that fed and sang in a small juniper in a Cape May Point yard was quite impressive! Despite its name, this migrant species can be fairly uncommon here in spring.

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – Singing birds put in several appearances around Cape Island and also around Belleplain SF.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – We had some good luck with this striking migrant at Cape May Point, the Ocean City heronry, and Belleplain SF.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER (*Setophaga castanea*) – We had to wait until the final morning, but wow! The views in the line of juniper trees along the edge of Lily Lake were absolutely spectacular.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (*Setophaga fusca*) – This species is only found in Cape May as a migrant; we were very pleased to find an orange-throated male in the same flock that included Bay-breasted and Blackpoll warblers on our final morning together.

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – Quite memorable was the bright male that moved through the heron colony at Ocean City while we watched from above.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – We found migrants on several occasions including at Cape May Point SP and along the edge of Lily Lake.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – These oddly patterned migrant warblers were singing on Cape Island.

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus*) – Belleplain SF is home to many of these early-breeding trillers. In particular, we enjoyed a nice male near the entrance to the state forest campground.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Setophaga dominica*) – The birds that we found in pine forest at Belleplain SF belong to the yellow-lored, long-billed subspecies group.

PRAIRIE WARBLER (*Setophaga discolor*) – Our finest view of this warbler of open habitats came along the fenceline along Sumner Ave. in Belleplain.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – We spotted a migrant in a flowering oak tree near the back of the Cape May Point SP trail system; another was singing at the Beanery.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) – An immature male sang from the woods along the Cape May Canal; we eventually found a bright red adult male singing in pine forest along Weatherby Road, too.

SCARLET TANAGER (*Piranga olivacea*) – A stupendous black and red male sang to us from the canopy of the forest near the Sunset Triangle at Belleplain SF.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – These iconic songbirds are very common at Cape May.

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Passerina caerulea*) – Males sang their burry songs and twitched their tails from low perches at the Garrett Preserve and Higbee Beach.

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – Brilliant aqua and blue-purple males studded field edges all around the Cape May peninsula.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Common around people. [I]

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – There was certainly a bumper crop of these bunnies this year around Cape May.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Common in oak forests.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – We found these aquatic mammals a few times in the wetlands of Cape Island and Forsythe NWR.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – This marine mammal is the only cetacean (whale or dolphin) that is common in the nearshore waters of Cape May.

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – Just a few sightings, as is typical here (they aren't as common on the peninsula as they are farther north in New Jersey or inland in Pennsylvania).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 163 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa