

## **FIELD REPORT**

# **CAPE COD & RHODE ISLAND**

**OCTOBER 16–22, 2024**



Common Dolphin by Kevin Burke

**LEADERS: KEVIN BURKE & RICK WRIGHT**  
**LIST COMPILED BY: KEVIN BURKE**

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## Cape Cod & Rhode Island October 16–22, 2024

By Kevin Burke

We had a blast on VENT's inaugural tour to Cape Cod and Rhode Island. New England in mid-October is gorgeous. The fall foliage is just about in peak color, and the weather is usually very pleasant. We did have a warmer than usual week this year, but in general it was very pleasant. The crowds of Cape Cod have waned for the season, so getting around is a little easier than in other months. The birding is still great; we got lingering migrants hanging on to the last grasp of summer. We also got great numbers of sea ducks. And Rhode Island was beautiful. Wonderful views of the water, fall foliage, cranberry bogs, and killer birds were enough to make the smallest state feel big. Twelve great participants made the trip that much more delightful, and having Rick Wright along was the icing on the cake. His expertise and kind nature added a lot to the trip.

We started the trip in Providence, Rhode Island. The smaller T.F. Green Airport is very convenient to travel through. A welcome dinner at the hotel on the 15<sup>th</sup> was a good way to get to know each other. The next morning, we were off on our adventure. The first stop took us to Watch Hill, Rhode Island. This small community in the very southwestern part of the state is a beautiful setting for some initial sea watching. The Watch Hill Lighthouse allows access to a rocky point jetting out into Block Island Sound. Our first looks at all three scoter species were here. We had extended views of all three species and our first rarity of the trip, a King Eider! There were many life birds at the first stop, a great way to start the tour. We drove to Cape Cod after Watch Hill, having lunch on the Cape Cod Canal watching gulls, cormorants, and even a cooperative Belted Kingfisher from our tables. The afternoon consisted of wandering around Fort Hill. Fort Hill is a part of the Cape Cod National Seashore and had the second highest eBird checklist on the cape. Our first looks at American Black Duck were here along with passerines such as Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Golden-crowned Kinglet. It is truly a beautiful place!

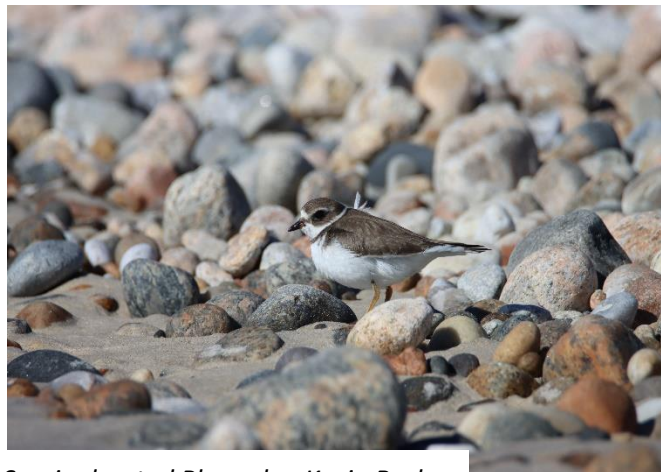


*King Eider by: Kevin Burke*

Our next day was supposed to include a whale watch out of Provincetown, but high winds all week prohibited this from happening. We were all a little bummed, because this was a big part of the trip. I had been in touch with the whale watch company and rescheduled for the next day (Saturday). So, we shifted plans and had a wonderful day exploring the outer cape. We took a wonderful walk around Wellfleet Bay Audubon Sanctuary with birds such as Blue-headed Vireo, Blackpoll Warbler, Semi-palmated Plover, and cooperative Greater Yellowlegs. Any trip to the cape is not complete without a trip to the Bird Watcher's General Store. Our retail needs were satiated with anything and everything bird related. After lunch, we traveled up to Provincetown to walk around downtown and MacMillan Wharf.

This is where we learned that the rescheduled whale watch for the next day was cancelled again. Ugh! A sliver of light was seeing a Great Cormorant on the rock jetty. Our last stop of the day was out to Race Point Beach. Here we had a few long-distance Great Shearwaters and Northern Gannets among the swells of sea ducks.

I got to work on our break before dinner and made plans to take another company's whale watch out of Hyannis the next day. We were very fortunate to find another company running a trip to the same area!



*Semipalmated Plover* by: Kevin Burke

It was back on, and folks were happy that we were going to get out on the water. I was relieved that we would at least get a chance to view some pelagic birds and whales. We made a quick stop to Nauset Lighthouse before our boat tour and had the surprise of the trip! A Gray Kingbird was on the wires in the parking lot—a most welcome and unexpected surprise. The boat trip did not disappoint. We departed Hyannis around 11 AM and headed all the way up Cape Cod Bay towards Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. Stellwagen Bank is famous for its deep water coming right

offshore at the North end of Cape Cod. This brings all kinds of marine life nearshore and makes for easier viewing than almost anywhere else on the east coast. We had a huge surprise while we were still in the marina in the form of a Manx Shearwater. Wow! As we traveled up Cape Cod Bay, we had great looks at Great Shearwater, Northern Gannet, and all three scoter species. Provincetown was getting closer, and we rounded the cape's northern end to find Corey's Shearwater, Northern Fulmar, Parasitic Jaeger, and Razorbill. This is what we wanted—a good mix of pelagic birds fairly close to shore. The Humpback Whale show was awesome too. We had a single individual first, and then three individuals together feeding and interacting with one another. They were so close to the boat that everyone had great views. It was an awesome way to spend a day that just the night before we thought may not happen. Common Dolphins saw us back to Hyannis by putting on a show off the stern of the boat riding our wake. We made our way to Newport Rhode Island with great memories of the cape and its abundant wildlife.

Rhode Island is a very nostalgic state for me. I spent a lot of time in the summer here as a kid. We would explore the rugged coastline, play on the sandy beaches, and spend time with relatives. It was nice to get to share some of what I remember with everyone on this trip. We started the morning at Sachuest National Wildlife Refuge, a peninsula refuge near Newport that can produce some great birds. We did the 1.5-mile loop walk. Sweeping views of the Rhode Island coastline surrounded us as we walked. A single Harlequin Duck flew in and was foraging in the surf. Great Cormorant, Ruddy Turnstone, and Common Yellowthroat were among the other birds we had here. Albro Woods was our next stop, to chase a state first Tropical Kingbird. We didn't see the kingbird, but quite a few other birds were active in the woods. Hairy Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, and White-breasted Nuthatch were among the birds we saw here. A nice lunch at a local farmstand was a welcome treat. The farm was good for birding, with a Palm Warbler in the sunflowers. Our afternoon was spent



amongst the famous mansions of Newport near Brenton Point State Park. The day was very scenic overall, and our relaxed pace was a welcome treat.

The last full day of our tour was awesome. My good friend and her family own and operate a large-scale cranberry farm. They opened up the farm to us to see the operation and bird the property. It was an experiment for us, and I believe it worked out well! Production was done for the year, but we got to explore the farm and hear all about how cranberries are farmed. The setting was beautiful, as the fall color in Western Rhode Island was near peak. A fifty-acre pond on the property had Green-winged Teal, Bald Eagle, and three adorable River Otters. The afternoon was a relaxed one, with visits to a salt marsh and Goddard State Park near Warwick. We rounded out the day with a dinner at the hotel, reminiscing about the trip and talking about what trips we wanted to do in the future.

This was a great group of people to travel with. The mild weather, although at times unseasonably warm, made for a pleasant tour. We had to improvise a bit to get out on our whale watch tour, but in the end, I think it turned out to be a nice tour. The spectacular scenery, great pelagic birds, surprise birds, and great food make this a perfect short tour, and one that I would highly recommend!



*Birding the Greene Family  
Cranberry Bog by: Kevin Burke*



## **ITINERARY**

**Day 1 October 16** – Evening get-acquainted dinner at Warwick Crowne Plaza

**Day 2 October 17** —Watch Hill/Fort Hill

**Day 3 October 18**—Marconi Station/Wellfleet Bay/Provincetown/Race Point Beach

**Day 4 October 19**– Nauset Light/Hyannis Whale Watch

**Day 5 October 20** – Sachuest NWR/Albro Woods/Brenton Point SP

**Day 6 October 21**– Greene Family farm/Marsh Point/Goddard SP

**Day 7 October 22** – Departure



*Humpback Whale by: Kevin Burke*

## **BIRDS**

### **Waterfowl- Anatidae**

Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis*

Mute Swan, *Cygnus olor*

Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*

Northern Pintail, *Anas acuta*

Green-winged Teal, *Anas crecca*

Lesser Scaup, *Aythya affinis*

King Eider, *Somateria spectabilis*

Common Eider, *Somateria mollissima*

Harlequin Duck, *Histrionicus histrionicus*

Surf Scoter, *Melanitta perspicillata*

White-winged Scoter, *Melanitta deglandi*

Black Scoter, *Melanitta americana*

Long-tailed Duck, *Clangula hyemalis*

Red-breasted Merganser, *Mergus serrator*

### **Pigeons & Doves- Columbidae**

Rock Pigeon, *Columba livia*

Mourning Dove, *Zenaida macroura*



*Yellow-billed Cuckoo by Kevin Burke*

### **Cuckoos- Cuculidae**

Yellow-billed Cuckoo, *Chordeiles minor*

### **Plovers & Lapwings- Charadriidae**

Black-bellied Plover, *Pluvialis squatarola*

Semipalmated Plover, *Charadrius semipalmatus*

### **Sandpipers & Allies- Scolopacidae**

Sanderling, *Calidris alba*

Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*

Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*

Greater Yellowlegs, *Tringa melanoleuca*

### **Skuas & Jaegers**

Parasitic Jaeger, *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Pomarine Jaeger, *Stercorarius pomarinus*

**Auks, Murres & Puffins- Alcidae**

Razorbill, *Alca torda*

**Gulls, Terns & Skimmers- Laridae**

Black-legged Kittiwake, *Rissa tridactyla*

Bonaparte's Gull, *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

Laughing Gull, *Leucophaeus atricilla*

Ring-billed Gull, *Larus delawarensis*

Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus*

Great Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus*

Forster's Tern, *Sterna forsteri*

Common Tern, *Sterna hirundo*

**Loons- Gaviidae**

Red-throated Loon, *Gavia stellata*

Common Loon, *Gavia immer*



*Red-throated Loon by: Kevin Burke*

### Shearwaters & Petrels- Procellariidae

Northern Fulmar, *Fulmarus glacialis*

Corey's Shearwater, *Calonectris diomedea*

Great Shearwater, *Ardenna gravis*

Manx Shearwater, *Puffinus puffinus*

### Boobies- Sulidae

Northern Gannet, *Morus bassanus*

### Cormorants- Phalacrocoracidae

Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Double-crested Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax auratus*



Corey's Shearwater by Kevin Burke

### Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns- Ardeidae

Great Blue Heron, *Ardea Herodias*

Great Egret, *Ardea alba*

### New World Vultures- Cathartidae

Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura*

### Hawks, Eagles & Kites- Accipitridae

Northern Harrier, *Circus hudsonius*

Sharp-shinned Hawk, *Accipiter striatus*

Cooper's Hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*

Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Red-shouldered Hawk, *Buteo lineatus*

Red-tailed Hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis*



### **Owls- Strigidae**

Great Horned Owl, *Bubo virginianus*

### **Kingfishers- Alcedinidae**

Belted Kingfisher, *Megasceryle alcyon*

### **Woodpeckers- Picidae**

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, *Sphyrapicus varius*

Red-bellied Woodpecker, *Melanerpes carolinus*

Downy Woodpecker, *Dryobates pubescens*

Hairy Woodpecker, *Dryobates villosus*

Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*

Northern Flicker, *Colaptes auratus*

### **Falcons & Caracaras-**

American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius*

Merlin, *Falco columbarius*

### **Tyrant Flycatchers- Tyrannidae**

Gray Kingbird, *Tyrannus dominicensis*

Eastern Phoebe, *Sayornis phoebe*

### **Vireos, Shrike-babblers & Erpornis- Vireonidae**

Blue-headed Vireo, *Vireo solitarius*

### **Crows, Jays & Magpies- Corvidae**

Blue Jay, *Cyanocitta stelleri*

American Crow, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Common Raven, *Corvus corax*



*Fishing Boat by Kevin Burke*

**Tits, Chickadees & Titmice- Paridae**

Black-capped Chickadee, *Poecile atricapillus*

Tufted Titmouse, *Baeolophus bicolor*

**Swallows- Hirundinidae**

Tree Swallow, *Tachycineta bicolor*

**Kinglets- Regulidae**

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, *Corthylio calendula*

Golden-crowned Kinglet, *Regulus satrapa*

**Nuthatches- Sittidae**

White-breasted Nuthatch, *Sitta carolinensis*

Red-breasted Nuthatch, *Sitta canadensis*

**Treecreepers- Certhiidae**

Brown Creeper, *Certhia americana*

**Wrens- Troglodytidae**

Carolina Wren, *Thryothorus ludovicianus*

Winter Wren, *Troglodytes hiemalis*

**Mockingbirds & Thrashers- Mimidae**

Gray Catbird, *Dumetella carolinensis*

Northern Mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*

**Starlings- Sturnidae**

European Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*

**Thrushes & Allies- Turdidae**

Eastern Bluebird, *Sialia sialis*

American Robin, *Turdus migratorius*

**Old World Sparrows- Passeridae**

House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*

**Wagtails & Pipits- Motacillidae**

American Pipit, *Anthus rubescens*



*Song Sparrow by: Kevin Burke*

**Finches, Euphonias & Allies- Fringillidae**

House Finch, *Haemorhous mexicanus*

American Goldfinch, *Spinus tristis*

**New World Sparrows- Passerellidae**

Dark-eyed Junco, *Junco hyemalis*

White-throated Sparrow, *Zonotrichia albicollis*

Savannah Sparrow, *Passerculus sandwichensis*

Song Sparrow, *Melospiza melodia*

**Troupials & Allies- Icteridae**

Red-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus*

Common Grackle, *Quiscalus quiscula*

**New World Warblers- Parulidae**

Common Yellowthroat, *Geothlypis trichas*

Blackpoll Warbler, *Setophaga striata*

Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler, *Setophaga coronata*

### **Cardinals and Allies- Cardinalidae**

Northern Cardinal, *Cardinalis cardinalis*

## **MAMMALS**

### **Squirrels, Prairie Dogs & Marmots- Sciuridae**

Eastern Gray Squirrel, *Sciurus carolinensis*

Eastern Chipmunk, *Tamias striatus*

### **Rabbits & Hares- Leporidae**

Eastern Cottontail, *Sylvilagus floridanus*

### **Seals- Phocidae**

Gray Seal, *Halichoerus grypus*

### **Weasels- Mustelidae**

Northern River Otter, *Lontra canadensis*

### **Deer- Cervidae**

White-tailed Deer, *Odocoileus virginianus*

### **Rorqual Whales**

Humpback Whale- *Megaptera novaeangliae*



*Humpback Whales by: Kevin Burke*

### **Dolphins- Delphinidae**

Common Dolphin- *Delphinus delphis*

## **FISH**

Ocean Sunfish, *Mola mola*