

FIELD REPORT

SPRING IN CAPE MAY

Relaxed & Easy

MAY 7–13, 2023



Prothonotary Warbler ©Michael O'Brien

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**SPRING IN CAPE MAY:
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Spring in Cape May is a season of celebration. Each day is filled with birdsong and pageantry as breeding birds proclaim their territories and colorful migrants pass through. VENT's "Relaxed and Easy" tour enjoyed this spectacle and fine weather during its time exploring South Jersey's migratory flyway.



Bald Eagle chasing Osprey ©Michael O'Brien

We began our tour at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, not far from the Philadelphia Airport. Its tidal fresh water wetlands, created by the Delaware Bay and River, and lush woodlands provide excellent habitat in the midst of an otherwise urban environment. This morning's walk did not disappoint. A peek into Darby Creek revealed close views of a Solitary Sandpiper and a White-throated Sparrow feeding along the bank as Yellow Warblers displayed overhead and an American Robin busily collected nesting material. Crossing the boardwalk over the impoundment, we found ourselves surrounded by swallows! Tree and Barn jostled for their respective nest sites, and several Banks perched on the railing (an unusual site). But the real show-stopper was when a Bald Eagle chased down an Osprey and stole the Gizzard Shad it was carrying. Just amazing! Working our way to Cape May, we stopped at Belleplain State Forest, at the northern end of Cape May County. Several Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were buzzing around the feeders at the headquarters, while bluebirds and phoebes tended their nests nearby. During our picnic lunch at Lake Nummy, we set up a scope on a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers busily constructing their exquisite nest made of lichens and spider webs.

The next morning's birding began with a surprise Lesser Black-backed Gull flyover as we were loading up the vans at Uncle Bill's Pancake House (a favorite breakfast spot on the Cape May beachfront). Our first stop in the field was at Cox Hall Creek Wildlife Management Area. This reclaimed golf course, once known as "Beer Gardens," with its large trees and freshwater wetlands, provides excellent habitat for wildlife. Here we enjoyed scope-filling views of Eastern Wood Pewee, Wood Thrush, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Veery. Watching a pair of Yellow-billed Cuckoos, one with a dragonfly, and Carolina Chickadees visiting their nest hole with food, and listening to the morning's chorus reminded us that the breeding season was in full swing. As the day heated up, it was time for some sky watching. Back on Cape Island at West Cape May's Rea Farm and Michael and Louise's yard, which share the same air space, we were treated to Red-tailed, Cooper's, and Broad-winged hawks soaring. Then three Anhingas joined one of the thermals, an extremely rare sighting for New Jersey!



Cape May Warbler ©Michael O'Brien

Picnic lunches in Cape May always provide bonus birding time, especially at Cape May Point State Park. Here we totally upgraded our views of Carolina Wren, nest building, and Common Yellowthroat, two counter-singing males. Michael found two male Cape May Warblers in a nearby cedar tree, which lit up the Cape May message alert. Many other birders came to visit the local namesakes, uncommon during spring migration. We finished the day in the saltmarsh at Two Mile Landing. Here we had our first taste of shorebird ID with close views of Semipalmated plovers and sandpipers, a couple of yellowlegs, Willets, and a wonderful American Oystercatcher that posed nicely on a wall for us.

On our third morning, we headed back to Cape May Point State Park to explore the trails. Songbird highlights included an Indigo Bunting in full song, Pine Warblers (in the pines, of course), and a female Scarlet Tanager. A northbound Common Loon flew over, reminding us that it was time to do some seawatching. Cape May Bird Observatory's Spring Watch at Coral Avenue dune crossing on

Cape May Point is a wonderful place to sample the full Cape May experience. Each morning during spring migration, field biologists count seabirds, shorebirds, and landbirds as they pass the southernmost point in New Jersey. On this morning we had excellent views of Northern Gannet, a couple of Royal Terns, Barn and Cliff swallows, and Red-headed Woodpecker. There were also notable, though distant, views of a Parasitic Jaeger chasing terns offshore. Heading up the Delaware Bay, we made our first stop at Cook's Beach. We could tell that the Horseshoe Crab spawn was just getting underway. Researchers were checking for nests on the beach, and a small plane flew by with a shorebird counter onboard. Louise showed the group Horseshoe Crabs and talked about their incredible natural history and current plight. We did find one Red Knot, perhaps a harbinger of yet more to come.



Louise teaching about Horseshoe Crabs ©Michael O'Brien

In the afternoon we took a Back Bay Saltmarsh Safari on Captain Bob Lubberman's *Osprey*, always a popular trip, both spring and fall. From his pontoon boat, we explored the salt pans and tidal creeks within the marsh. Common Loons floated in the sound, Diamondback Terrapins poked their heads up in the creeks, and Seaside and Saltmarsh sparrows sang in the grasses. There were also hundreds of migrant shorebirds feeding and resting, tern and gull nests on the islands, loafing Black Skimmers and American Oystercatchers, and Ospreys on every available nest platform. It was odd to see a Bald Eagle pair with young on an Osprey platform, as typically they use big trees for their nests. All agreed that our boat ride was a most excellent way to spend our afternoon.

A low tide visit to Cook's Beach on the next morning revealed even more Laughing Gulls and shorebirds, eagerly awaiting the bounty of Horseshoe Crab eggs. Red Knot numbers had only slightly increased, but we had scope views of Short-billed Dowitchers and Seaside Sparrows. It was interesting to watch an Eastern Kingbird successfully dislodge a Red-tailed Hawk from a perch on the forest edge. Next, we made our second visit to Belleplain State Forest. We found three exceptional birds, with scope views no less: Ovenbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Summer Tanager, among the oaks on

Frank's Road. On Dean's Branch Road, we were dazzled by ridiculously close views of a pair of foraging White-eyed Vireos and a male Prothonotary Warbler visiting its nest cavity! A trip highlight for many! Back to our picnic spot at Lake Nummy, the warbler fun continued with a close female Prothonotary, a couple of Pines, and a pair of Yellow-throated. Adding a little diversity to the visit, we saw a Spotted Sandpiper at the lake and a Wild Turkey down the road.



Piping Plover ©Michael O'Brien

Heading east to the Atlantic Coast, we made an incredibly productive stop at Stone Harbor Point. The beach was full of shorebirds! Among the hundreds of Sanderlings, we were quickly able to pick out about a dozen plovers by their “walk, stop, pick” feeding style. We were thrilled to find two species of plovers: numerous Semipalmated Plovers and a pair of Piping Plovers. Piping Plovers breed on New Jersey beaches and are federally endangered. Another pleasant surprise was a flock of twenty Purple Sandpipers, lingering high arctic breeders, on a nearby jetty. Having gotten a message from the Cape May rare bird alert, we decided to add one last stop at Cape May Point State Park before our afternoon break. It was totally worth it! A wayward Common Redpoll, unheard of so late in spring, was in full view on the trail, as advertised. After soaking that in we added exceptional views of a perched male Ruby-throated Hummingbird and a male Scarlet Tanager. And we could not resist yet one more scope view of our favorite Indigo Bunting.

On our final day, winds had shifted to the southwest overnight, bringing in a wave of songbird migrants to Cape May. So, our first stop was Higbee Beach Wildlife Management area, often one of the best spots in such conditions. To our delight, we were met by a dozen species of warblers! We had nice views of many of these, but most notably Magnolia, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, and Black-throated Green, all new species for our trip list. We also had excellent views of an Olive-sided Flycatcher, a rare spring migrant here, as well as fine views of the local breeding Blue Grosbeak.

Moving north, we stopped at the Ocean City Welcome Center, a birding hotspot this time of year due to its large colony of nesting herons. Dozens each of Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned night-herons and Snowy and Great egrets were all in full display with showy plumes and hyper-saturated facial skin

colors. Also present were hundreds of Glossy and White ibises, the latter a rare species in New Jersey just a few years ago, but now the most numerous species at this colony!



White Ibis ©Michael O'Brien

We finished up our day with an eight-mile drive around Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. Our visit coincided with high tide, which meant that the impoundments were loaded with thousands of shorebirds. Brilliantly colored Dunlin and Short-billed Dowitchers were abundant, along with drabber Semipalmated Sandpipers. Among fifteen species of shorebirds, we were pleased to find less common White-rumped and Stilt sandpipers, and also study the finder ID points between Semipalmated and Least sandpipers and dowitcher subspecies. In addition to shorebirds, we had excellent studies of several tern species including numerous Gull-billed. We finally had to tear ourselves away and return to Philadelphia, but what a grand finale to a fine week of birding!

ITINERARY

Day 1, May 7: Arrival in Philadelphia; group meeting at 6:00 pm; dinner at Lehman's Tavern.

Day 2, May 8: John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum; Belleplain State Forest Field Office; picnic lunch and birding at Lake Nummy; dinner at Freda's Café and Chimney Swift viewing at Our Lady Star of the Sea, Cape May City.

Day 3, May 9: Cox Hall Creek Wildlife Management Area; Steven's Street (Rea Farm and Michael and Louise's yard), West Cape May; picnic lunch and birding at Cape May Point State Park; NJ Audubon Cape May Bird Observatory Northwood Center; Two Mile Landing, Wildwood Crest; dinner at Sapore Italiano, West Cape May.



Birding at Louise & Michael's yard ©Michael O'Brien

Day 4, May 10: Cape May Point State Park, Seagrove Avenue entrance; Coral Avenue Dune Crossing Spring Watch, Cape May Point; Michael and Louise's yard; Cook's Beach; Saltmarsh Safari to Jarvis Sound on *The Osprey* with Captain Bob Lubberman; dinner at Blue Pig Tavern, Cape May City.

Day 5, May 11: Cook's Beach; Belleplain State Forest (Frank's, Sunset Road, and Dean's Branch Roads and Lake Nummy); Stone Harbor Point and Nummy Island; Cape May Point State Park, Seagrove Avenue entrance; dinner at Oyster Bay, Cape May.

Day 6, May 12: Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area; Ocean City Welcome Center Heronry; Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge's Wildlife Drive; return to Philadelphia.

Day 7, May 13: Departures from Philadelphia.

KEY

N = Nest observed

Y = Dependent young observed

BIRDS

Waterfowl (*Anatidae*)

Brant (*Branta bernicla*) – This high arctic breeder typically lingers well into May; 1 seen in back bay from the van while en route

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) (Y) – Seen daily

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) (Y) – Introduced and thriving; there were territorial pairs in several locations

Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) – 5 flyovers at John Heinz NWR

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Seen daily

American Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*) – Breeds in coastal marshes; 3 at Forsythe NWR

Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies (Phasianidae)

Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – 2 roadside sightings; 1 in Belleplain SF and 1 at Forsythe NWR

Pigeons and Doves (Columbidae)

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) (I) – Seen daily

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) – Seen daily

Cuckoos (Cuculidae)

Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) – 2 at Cox Hall Creek WMA

Swifts (Apodidae)

Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) – Seen every day; dramatic nightly congregation in Cape May City as they get ready to go to their roosting sites

Hummingbirds (Trochilidae)

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) – Seen at a few locations; particularly well at Michael and Louise’s garden and the Belleplain SF field office

Rails, Gallinules and Coots (Rallidae)

Clapper Rail (*Rallus crepitans*) – Brief views from the *Osprey* and at Forsythe NWR



American Oystercatcher ©Michael O’Brien

Oystercatchers (Haematopodidae)

American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*) – 14 seen from the *Osprey* and a few observed around Cape Island; best view was of 1 sitting on a “Jersey barrier” at 2 Mile Landing

Plovers and Lapwings (*Charadriidae*)

Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A couple of flybys at 2 Mile Landing; 30 in the salt pans, seen from the *Osprey*; 20 at Forsythe NWR

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Singles at John Heinz NWR, Cape May Point SP, and Rio Grande (roadside)

Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Seen in several locations; 4 at 2 Mile Landing, 25 from the *Osprey*, a single at Stone Harbor Point, and 50 at Forsythe NWR

Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) – Always a treat to see this endearing endangered species; 2 at Stone Harbor Point

Sandpipers and Allies (*Scolopacidae*)

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) – Good numbers for the late date; there were 65 seen from the *Osprey* and about 25 at Forsythe NWR

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) – Seen in multiple locations; most numerous at Forsythe NWR

Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) – A species of concern, their numbers have been plummeting in recent years; Only a single scope view at Cook's Beach on our first visit and then 12 on our second visit; 3 seen from the *Osprey*

Stilt Sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*) – 1 at Forsythe NWR



Stilt Sandpiper ©Michael O'Brien

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) – Seen in several places; nice close studies of these classic sandpipers on the beach at Stone Harbor Point

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) – Great views of about 850 from the *Osprey*; then got totally wowed by about 5000 at Forsythe NWR

Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*) – A surprisingly large flock of 20 on a jetty at Stone Harbor Point

Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) – Seen at several locations; nice comparisons with Semipalmated Sandpipers at Forsythe NWR

White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*) – 1 at Forsythe NWR

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*) – Seen in several locations, though not as numerous as in the past; best views were from the *Osprey* and at Forsythe NWR

Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) – Or as Michael would call them, “Red-necked Dowitchers”; seen in several locations, best from the *Osprey*

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*) – 1 at John Heinz NWR, 1 at Nummy Lake in Belleplain SF, 1 at Two Mile Landing, 1 from the *Osprey*, and 2 at Forsythe NWR

Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*) – 1 seen closely at the edge of Darby Creek, John Heinz NWR and 1 at the Rea Farm

Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Small numbers seen in several locations

Willet (*Tringa semipalmata*) – Seen on most days; all were of the “Eastern” subspecies which breeds in coastal saltmarsh. They are wonderfully flashy and vocal this time of year.

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) – 30 at Forsythe NWR



Greater & Lesser yellowlegs ©Michael O'Brien

Skuas and Jaegers (*Stercorariidae*)

Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – One in the distance chasing terns in the “rips” off Cape May Point

Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers (*Laridae*)

Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) (N) – Abundant and highly visible; Cape May has the largest concentration of these handsome gulls during their breeding season

Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) – Numerous in the winter months, uncommon in summer; about a dozen at Cook’s Beach (seen on both stops) and 3 at Forsythe NWR

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) (N) – Seen daily

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) – 1 flyover at Uncle Bill’s, plus 2 at Coral Avenue dune

crossing

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) (N) – Seen daily

Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) – Threatened in New Jersey; 2 observed at Bunker Pond, 6 at Coral Avenue dune crossing, 7 from the *Osprey*, and a dozen at Forsythe NWR

Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – An uncommon summer resident; we had a 1 at Ocean City Welcome Center and wonderful views of 25 at Forsythe NWR!

Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – 1 at Cook's Beach and 2 at Forsythe NWR

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) (N) – 2 at Bunker Pond; large numbers, including nests, seen from the *Osprey*; our best view was of 2 sitting near the outfall at 2 Mile Landing

Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) – Common; seen at most coastal locations

Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) – 2 on Thoroughfare Island, seen from the *Osprey*; 20 at Forsythe NWR



Black Skimmers ©Michael O'Brien

Loons (*Gaviidae*)

Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) – 3 from the *Osprey*, in Jarvis Sound; 2 flyovers at Cape May Point: 1 from the State Park and 1 from Coral Avenue dune crossing

Boobies and Gannets (*Sulidae*)

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) – 1 close flyby at Coral Avenue dune crossing

Darters (*Anhingidae*)

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*) – 3 soaring over West Cape May; seen from the Rea Farm and Michael and Louise's yard. A rare sighting in Cape May!

Cormorants (*Phalacrocoracidae*)

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Common spring migrant; seen in most birding locations, including about 150 at Forsythe NWR

Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns (*Ardeidae*)

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) – 2 at John Heinz NWR and 2 at Forsythe NWR
 Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) (N) – Seen daily; we observed nesting pairs with eggs at Ocean City Welcome Center heronry
 Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) (N) – Seen daily; wonderful views at Ocean City Welcome Center
 Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) (N) – 4 at Ocean City Welcome Center
 Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) – 1 at Ocean City Welcome Center
 Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) – 1 seen from the van at the Rea Farm, West Cape May
 Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) – 2 at Ocean City Welcome Center
 Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) (N) – 20 at Ocean City Welcome Center heronry
 Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*) (N) – 35 at Ocean City Welcome Center heronry



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron ©Michael O'Brien

Ibises and Spoonbills (*Threskiornithidae*)

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) (N) – This southern species has historically been a rare vagrant in New Jersey, but numbers have increased dramatically over the past few years. We observed about 100 at Ocean City Welcome Center heronry, where they now nest.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) (N) – Numerous at Ocean City Welcome Center heronry; also saw some flocks on the move: 10 at Cape May Point, 6 at Cook's Beach, and 8 at Forsythe NWR

New World Vultures (*Cathartidae*)

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) – Seen daily

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) – Seen daily

Osprey (*Pandionidae*)

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) (N) – Increasingly common breeder; often subject to kleptoparasitism from Bald Eagles (as observed at John Heinz NWR)

Hawks, Eagles and Kites (*Accipitridae*)

Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) – 2 displaying over the Rea Farm and Michael and Louise's house and 1 from Coral Avenue dune crossing

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) (N) – 1 at John Heinz NWR, 1 at Cook's Beach, a pair with chicks seen from Ocean Drive (and the *Osprey*), and 2 at Forsythe NWR

Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) – 2 soaring over Belleplain SF, 1 in the distance from Coral Avenue dune crossing, and 3 from Michael and Louise's yard

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Seen in a few locations (generally while en route); 2 soaring over Michael and Louise's yard and 1 perched at Cook's Beach (mobbed by an Eastern Kingbird)

Kingfishers (*Alcedinidae*)

Belted Kingfisher (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – 1 from the *Osprey* at the Cape May canal and 1 at Ocean City Welcome Center

Woodpeckers (*Picidae*)

Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) – 1 perched on a telephone pole at Coral Avenue dune crossing

Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – Seen or heard daily; best views in Michael and Louise's yard

Downy Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*) – 2 at John Heinz NWR and 1 at Cox Hall Creek WMA

Hairy Woodpecker (*Dryobates villosus*) (N) – Great views of a nesting pair at John Heinz NWR and a single at Lake Nummy

Falcons and Caracaras (*Falconidae*)

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) – Last bird of the tour; seen at the Walt Whitman Bridge as we crossed over the Delaware River



Olive-sided Flycatcher ©Michael O'Brien

Tyrant Flycatchers (*Tyrannidae*)

Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) – Scarce spring migrant; seen well in scope at Higbee Beach WMA near the parking area

Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*) – Close views of 2 at Cox Hall Creek WMA and 1 in Belleplain SF

Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*) (NY) – Nest with 3 chicks at Belleplain SF Field Office

Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – Seen daily; best views at Cox Hall Creek WMA

Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – Seen every day; some migrants and some breeders

Vireos (*Vireonidae*)

White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) – Heard in several locations; was treated to close views of a foraging pair at Belleplain SF

Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) – Uncommon breeder; excellent views at Belleplain SF

Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitaries*) – 1 heard at Higbee Beach WMA

Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) – 1 at John Heinz NWR

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) – Heard in several locations; seen best at Cox Hall Creek WMA

Crows, Jays, and Magpies (*Corvidae*)

Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Seen daily; there was visible migration on the morning that we were at John Heinz NWR (70 northbound)

American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Seen on all but one day

Fish Crow (*Corvus ossifragus*) – Seen daily

Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) – Heard from Forsythe NWR picnic area

Tits, Chickadees, & Titmice (*Paridae*)

Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*) (N) – Seen daily; found a nest in a tree cavity at Cox Hall Creek WMA



Carolina Chickadee at nest ©Michael O'Brien

Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*) – Seen or heard daily; best at Michael and Louise's bird feeder

Swallows (*Hirundinidae*)

Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*) – 6 perched on a railing at John Heinz NWR

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) (N) – Seen daily, including several at their nest boxes

Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – 2 flybys at Cook's Beach

Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) (N) – Seen daily; there are a number of colonies in the Cape May area

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) (N) – Seen daily



Barn Swallow ©Michael O'Brien

Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – 4 flybys at Coral Avenue dune crossing

Nuthatches (*Sittidae*)

White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) – heard at Cox Hall Creek WMA and Belleplain SF

Gnatcatchers (*Poliophtilidae*)

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – 2 at John Heinz NWR and a nest building pair in Belleplain SF

Wrens (*Troglodytidae*)

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) – 1 heard at John Heinz NWR and 1 seen at Forsythe NWR

Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) – 1 heard at John Heinz NWR

Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – Heard or seen daily; excellent views at John Heinz NWR

Mockingbirds and Thrashers (*Mimidae*)

Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Seen daily; best views at John Heinz NWR

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Seen daily

Starlings (*Sturnidae*)

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Seen daily

Thrushes and Allies (*Turdidae*)

Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) (N) – Nesting pair at Belleplain SF field office

Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*) – 1 on the path at Cox Hall Creek WMA

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – Scope views at Cox Hall Creek WMA; heard in Belleplain SF

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) (N) – Seen daily; watched 1 collecting nesting material at John

Heinz NWR

Old World Sparrows (*Passeridae*)

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) (N) – Seen daily

Finches, Euphonias, and Allies (*Fringillidae*)

House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – Seen daily

COMMON REDPOLL (*Acanthis flammea*) – Female seen at Cape May Point State Park – a real shock to see this “winter finch” this time of year



Common Redpoll ©Michael O'Brien

American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*) – Seen at several locations; best views at John Heinz NWR and at Michael and Louise's feeder

New World Sparrows (*Passerellidae*)

Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) (N) – Seen daily

Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*) – Scope views at Coral Avenue dune crossing

White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) – Common in winter, their numbers dwindle quickly in spring; seen on the first 3 days of the tour

Seaside Sparrow (*Ammospiza maritima*) – Nice views at Cook's Beach and Forsythe NWR



Seaside Sparrow ©Michael O'Brien

Saltmarsh Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudatus*) – 1 seen from the Osprey at Jarvis Sound

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – 3 at Forsythe NWR

Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) – Seen or heard daily

Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) – 1 at Stone Harbor Point

Troupials and Allies (*Icteridae*)

Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*) – Seen at several locations; best at Cox Hall Creek WMA

Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) – 2 at John Heinz NWR, 5 at Villas WMA, and 2 at Higbee Beach WMA

Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Seen daily

Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) – Seen daily

Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – Seen daily

Boat-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus major*) – Locally numerous in saltmarsh habitats, including Cook's Beach and during the Osprey cruise

New World Warblers (*Parulidae*)

Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Many singing in Belleplain SF; scope views at Frank's Road

Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) – Watched 1 forage in Belleplain SF

Louisiana Waterthrush (*Parkesia motacilla*) – Heard in Belleplain SF

Northern Waterthrush (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Heard at John Heinz NWR

Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*) – Seen or heard almost everyday

Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) – A highlight! Extraordinary views of both male and female in Belleplain SF

Nashville Warbler (*Leiothlypis ruficapilla*) – 1 heard at Higbee Beach WMA

Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Seen in several locations; amazing views of 2 males counter-singing during our picnic lunch at Cape May Point SP near the lighthouse

Hooded Warbler (*Setophaga citrina*) – Heard in Belleplain SF

American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Nice views at John Heinz NWR and Higbee Beach WMA



Cape May Warbler (*Setophaga tigrina*) – a stunning male in Michael and Louise’s yard, plus 2 more fabulous males at Cape May Point SP near the lighthouse

Northern Parula (*Setophaga americana*) – Heard at John Heinz NWR and in Michael and Louise’s yard; 3 seen well at Higbee Beach WMA

Magnolia Warbler (*Setophaga magnolia*) – 2 at Higbee Beach WMA

Blackburnian Warbler (*Setophaga fusca*) – 1 at Higbee Beach WMA

Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga petechia*) – Excellent views at John Heinz NWR, plus a couple at Higbee Beach WMA and John Heinz NWR

Blackpoll Warbler (*Setophaga striata*) – 1 at Higbee Beach WMA

Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – 1 heard at Higbee Beach WMA

Pine Warbler (*Setophaga pinus*) – Seen or heard almost everyday; best views at Cape May Point SP

Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata*) – 2 at Cox Hall Creek WMA, 1 in Michael and Louise’s yard, and 2 at Cape May Point SP

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*) – Wonderful views of 2 different pairs at Lake Nummy in Belleplain SF

Black-throated Green Warbler (*Setophaga virens*) – 2 at Higbee Beach WMA

Cardinals and Allies (*Cardinalidae*)

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) – Handsome male singing in Belleplain SF

Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) – Scope views of a female and a male (on different days) at Cape May Point SP

Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Seen daily

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – 1 at Higbee Beach WMA

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*) – 1 at Higbee Beach WMA



Blue Grosbeak ©Michael O'Brien

Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*) – Seen in several locations; best at Higbee Beach WMA

MAMMALS

Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Seen daily

Woodchuck (*Marmota monax*) – 1 seen from the van en route

Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – Seen daily

Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) – Several in the Delaware Bay off Cape May Point

REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS

Eastern Rat Snake (*Pantherophis alleghaniensis*)

Northern Diamondback Terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin terrapin*) – from the Osprey

Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene Carolina carolina*) – crossing the road (safely) on Route 47

American Toad (*Bufo americanus*) – heard at John Heinz NWR

Fowler's Toad (*Bufo woodhousii fowleri*) – heard at Belleplain SF

Northern Gray Treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*) – heard in Belleplain SF

Cope's (Southern) Gray Treefrog (*Hyla chrysoscelis*) – heard at Cox Hall Creek WMA and in Michael and Louise's yard

Green Frog (*Rana clamitans melanota*) – heard at Belleplain SF and Cox Hall Creek WMA

BUTTERFLIES

Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) – Forsythe NWR

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio glaucus*) – Belleplain SF
 Spicebush Swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*) – On Dandelion at Belleplain SF
 Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*) – here and there
 Orange Sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*) – Higbee Beach WMA
 Henry's Elfin (*Callophrys henrici*) – Belleplain SF
 Red-banded Hairstreak (*Calycopis cecrops*) – Belleplain SF
 Spring Azure (*Celastrina ladon*) – Belleplain SF
 American Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*) – Belleplain SF
 Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) – Forsythe NWR
 Juvenal's Duskywing (*Erynnis juvenalis*) – Belleplain SF (on bear scat)
 Sachem (*Atalopedes campestris*) – Early sighting for this southern species; Cox Hall Creek WMA

DAMSELFLIES and DRAGONFLIES

Blue Corporal (*Ladona deplanata*) – Lake Nummy, Belleplain SF

MISCELLANEOUS COOL CRITTERS

Eastern Eyed Click Beetle (*Alaus oculatus*) – Higbee Beach WMA parking area



Eastern Eyed Click Beetle ©Louise Zemaitis

Atlantic Horseshoe Crab (*Limulus polyphemus*) – The Delaware Bay had just reached the right temperature for spawning. We observed some on the beach, turning some over who had been flipped by the tide.