



CAPE MAY MIGRATION MADNESS

September 27 - October 2, 2018

Guide: Josh Engel

Maximum group size: 7

Price: \$2100 based on double occupancy

Single supplement: \$400

CONTACT AMANDA ZEIGLER WITH QUESTIONS OR TO REGISTER:

INFO@REDHILLBIRDING.COM

INTRODUCTION

Cape May is one of the world's great bird migration hotspots. As millions of birds follow the eastern shoreline of the United States, they get funneled to the southernmost point in New Jersey, where they are faced with a predicament: continue south over water, or turn back north. Regardless of their ultimate decision, they end up at Cape May. September and October are rocking months in Cape May, when the combination of warblers, sparrows, hawks, falcons, shorebirds, ducks, and seabirds makes for incredible birding and diverse experiences.

This trip is timed to coincide with the best of Cape May's fall migration. It is perhaps the best "outdoor classroom" anywhere for learning about the wonders of migration and the intricacies of bird identification. While we will make an effort to see as many species as possible, we will also take our time to study the birds in front of us. We will have four full days of birding in the area, one of which will be spent doing a day drip across the mouth of Delaware Bay to birding in coastal hotspots of Delaware. We will stay at just one hotel, one of Cape May's lovely beachfront accommodations, for the duration of the trip.

Among the birds that we will look for that we don't normally find in the Chicago area are American Oystercatcher, Brown Pelican, Eurasian Wigeon, Tricolored Heron, Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, Black Skimmer, Brant, Clapper Rail, Parasitic Jaeger, Northern Gannet, three species of scoters, Common Eider, Great Cormorant, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Seaside Sparrow, and Saltmarsh Sparrow.

ITINERARY

Day 1, Sep 27: We will meet at the Philadelphia Airport at 2pm Eastern Time, load up the van, and make the 1.5 hour drive to Cape May. After dropping our things at the hotel, we will start birding at one of the many excellent birding spots within a short driving distance of the hotel.

Days 2-5, Sep 28 - Oct 1: We will have four full days of birding around Cape May. Because this is a relatively short tour, we will have early mornings and long days in the field. However, because most of the birding sites are in close proximity to each other and to the hotel, it will be easy to drop people at the hotel if they would like to take a break, and pick them up again later. Most of our birding will be around Cape May, but we are also likely to make an excursion to Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (still usually referred to by its former name, Brigantine), about a 1.5 hour drive from Cape May, with its extensive saltmarshes and freshwater impoundments. Among the places we will be spending time are:

Cape May Point State Park: At the heart of Cape May migration is this remarkable state park, right at the southernmost point of New Jersey. It includes the famed Cape May Hawkwatch Tower. We will spend time here during the day watching the hawk migration, which at this time of year, with the right weather, should feature vast numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Harrier, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, and Osprey, not to mention Tree Swallow, American Robin, and other passerine migrants. The ponds here are often filled with ducks and shorebirds while the coastal thickets and woodlands are filled with passerine migrants.

Higbee Beach: Famed for its "morning flight," where large numbers of passerines can be seen migrating as day breaks, we will start some of our birding days here. The birds, fortunately, often land here as well in the hedgerows and fields, and it is a wonderful place to study passerines and passerine migration.

Cox Hall Creek: Once a golf course, this protected area is now managed for birds and wildlife, with a set of trails that winds through the woodlands and fields. It will be full of sparrows while we are there, giving us excellent opportunities to learn the ins and outs of sparrow identification.

Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge ("Brigantine"): The wetlands, coastal dunes, and mudflats of the refuge still called "Brig" are teeming with birds. It's possible to see a dozen species of shorebirds at this time of year along with large flocks of ducks and a variety of wading birds, terns, and gulls. The salt marshes are home to coastal residents like Seaside and Saltmarsh Sparrow and Clapper Rail, and we may find a few early arriving Brants.

Birding boat trip: One morning we will board a boat for a trip through the marshes, a great way to get excellent views of shorebirds, wading birds, terns, and more. It's also a good way to see Clapper Rail, American Oystercatcher, and other birds of the shore.

A day in Delaware: We will also board the ferry and motor across the mouth of Delaware Bay for a day trip to the state of Delaware, keeping an eye out for Northern Gannets and Parasitic Jaegers from the boat. Our first destination will be **Cape Henlopen State Park**, home to one of the northernmost populations of Brown-headed Nuthatch, which is usually not too difficult to find. We will no doubt encounter many migrants here as well. From there we will head north along the shore of Delaware Bay to **Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge**. A haven for shorebirds, ducks, and other waterbirds, it hosts flocks of American Avocet in the fall, a bird that can be difficult to find on the New Jersey side of the bay. It's also a magnet for vagrants, so while we scan through flocks of yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpipers, and other shorebirds, we will keep a careful eye out for Curlew Sandpiper and Ruff.

This is just a small sample of places we will visit. Other spots in the area that we are likely to visit include The Beanery, Stone Harbor, Avalon Seawatch, Lake Lily, and more. Our daily itinerary will depend on what we have seen previously and what the conditions are like, as different weather conditions favor different birds and thus different birding locations.

Day 6, Oct 3: After breakfast and some morning birding, we will return to Philadelphia to meet our flights home, arriving at the airport no later than 1pm Eastern Time.

IMPORTANT NOTES

Contact information

The Red Hill Birding **tour manager** for this trip is Amanda Zeigler. To sign up, or if you have any questions, please contact us at info@redhillbirding.com. Your spot on the trip will be confirmed upon our receipt of the deposit and booking form (we will give you the requisite mailing information and forms upon request).

Timing

The trip will **begin** on Thursday, September 27, 2018, at 2pm EST, at the Philadelphia Airport, and will **end** at the Philadelphia Airport on Tuesday, October 2 at 1pm EST. There are many non-stop flights daily to Philadelphia; please plan your flights accordingly. If you wish to arrive a day early, there are many hotels near the Philadelphia Airport. The guide can pick you up there before meeting the rest of the group at the airport.

Physical difficulty

This trip is **physically easy**. The terrain is almost entirely flat, and while we may be on our feet for extensive periods, we will be walking at a "birding pace."

Pace

The pace of the trip is **moderate**. We will maximize the amount of time we spend in the field with early mornings, breakfast in the field, and fairly long days. On some days we will have a rest after lunch and/or before dinner. We may have optional nighttime excursions as well, especially if there is heavy nocturnal migration.

Price

The price of the trip **includes** all meals, from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 6, all transportation and accommodation during that period; a Red Hill Birding guide; all entrance fees, including the ferry fare to Delaware and a birding boat trip; and a bound checklist to keep daily track of your sightings. It **does not include** alcoholic beverages, snacks, laundry, tips (apart from meals), or other items of a personal nature. The deposit is \$500. Final payment is due by May 27, 2018.

Photography

The photographic opportunities in Cape May during migration are excellent. That said, this is primarily a birdwatching tour, so while there will be ample opportunities for photography along the way, we will not be making special considerations for photographers.

Weather

Like mid-fall in much of the Midwest and Northeast, the weather at that time of year in Cape May can be quite unpredictable. Plan for chilly weather, possibly as low as the 40s, especially in the early morning. Rain is possible. The temperature is likely to be mild during the day, but can feel much colder if we are standing in a strong wind on the hawkwatch platform or looking for shorebirds along the beach.

Food

Breakfasts will generally be eaten in the field and we will usually take a break for a nice lunch. Dinner will be eaten in one of Cape May's many wonderful restaurants. If you have food allergies or other dietary restrictions, please let us know in the booking form and we will be sure to accommodate them.

Packing considerations

You will generally want to wear comfortable clothing that you don't mind getting a little dirty. The dress for the tour is entirely casual. Think about spending a day in the field in the Chicago area in early October. Long pants and long sleeves are recommended. Comfortable walking shoes are a must. Also bring an umbrella and/or raincoat as well as a mid-weight jacket or sweater for cold mornings.

Resources

There are many good field guides to eastern North American birds that cover the birds of Cape May. Our favorite is *The Sibley Guide*. Much has been written about birds and birding in Cape May. For a historical perspective, try *Bird Studies at Old Cape May*, by Witmer Stone. A great introduction to birding in the area is *Birds and Birding at Cape May*, by Clay and Pat Sutton. Jack Connor's *A Season at the Point* is about hawkwatching at Cape May. Many of Pete Dunne's books, such as *Tales of a Low Rent Birder*, include stories from Cape May.

Tipping

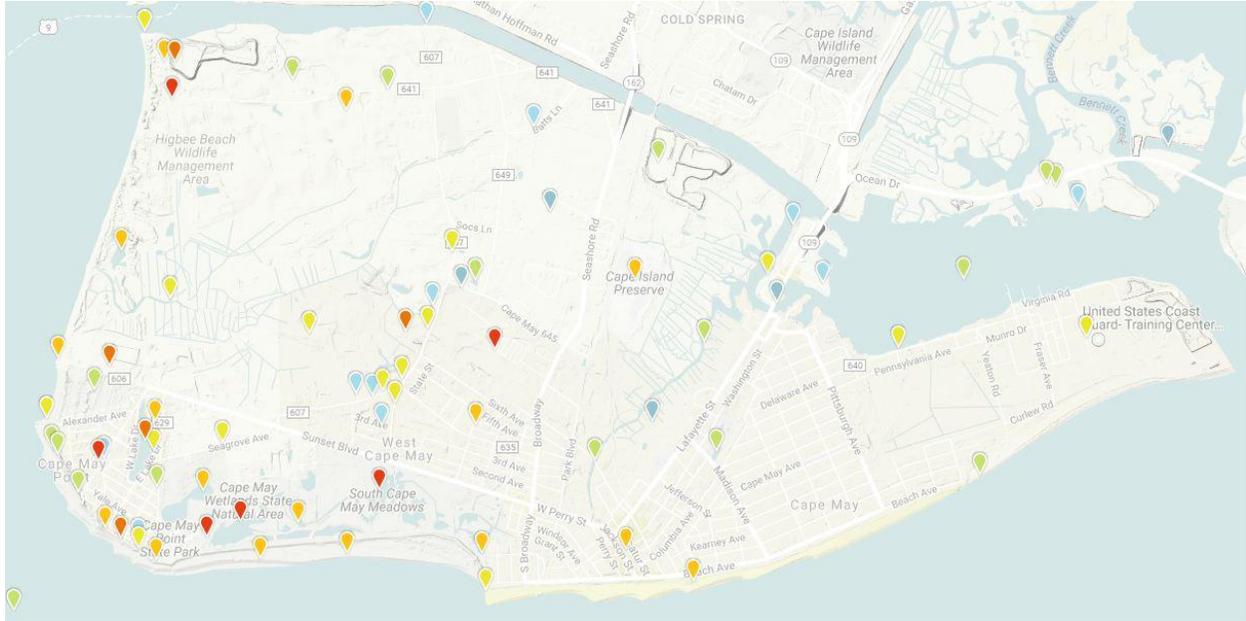
We aim to provide exceptional service, using guides that are knowledgeable, interesting, personable, and experienced. While tipping is never expected, if you feel that your guides went above and beyond, you are welcome to leave them a gratuity.

Travel insurance

We do not require travel insurance for US trips. However, we recommend buying it as it is inexpensive and can protect you from unforeseen costs associated with missed flights or sudden illness.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please contact the Red Hill Birding tour manager, Amanda Zeigler, at any time with questions: **info@redhillbirding.com**



Just how good is the birding around Cape May? This is the eBird hotspot map for the area. Each dark red dot indicates a location where **more than 300 species** of birds have been recorded.