

PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS

CAPE MAY – AUTUMN MIGRATION

16 – 28 September 2013

TOUR REPORT

LEADERS: CHRIS DOUGHTY and BILL ELRICK.

During the autumn months thousands of birds make their annual migration from North America, to warmer climes in Central and South America. They quickly make their way down the coastlines and mountain ridges, pausing only to feed and rest. The seaside resort town of Cape May, in New Jersey is synonymous with bird migration in North America, so much so that its fame rivals that of other key migration hotspots in the world, such as Eilat in Israel and Beidaihe in China. Our tour was specifically designed to enable tour participants to enjoy the very special spectacle of mass migration, which has a majesty and splendour that is unique to this time of year. Our comfortable hotels were very close to the key birding locations in New Jersey, Delaware and Pennsylvania, ensuring that we only had short drives to the birding hot spots. The weather throughout our stay was not ideal for bumper migration, however, a steady stream of migrants greeted us on most mornings of the tour and we were able to experience the fabulous spectacle of passerine migration. Our best day for observing large numbers of migrants on passage, occurred one afternoon at South Cape May Meadows, when we watched a very large migration of raptors, which included large numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawks, Ospreys, American Kestrels and Merlins. With smaller numbers of both Black and Turkey Vultures, Cooper's Hawks, Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers and Peregrine Falcons. The speed of passing migrants could be frustrating at times, but gradually, throughout our stay we managed to observe a good selection of birds. The huge 13 kilometre nature drive at Brigantine (Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge) produced thousands of birds and our time there gave us an impressive list of wetland birds, including good scope views of a Curlew Sandpiper, a rare visitor to the New World. Our offshore pelagic from Cape May was incredibly calm and although it did not produce any true 'tubenoses', we were very pleased to find Common Loon, a juvenile Brown Booby, a rare bird in New Jersey, a Great Cormorant and brilliant close looks at both Red and Red-necked Phalaropes sitting side by side on the ocean, right next to our boat. We also enjoyed watching a dark morph Parasitic Jaeger harrowing the gulls and terns at the 'rips'. Another highlight of the tour was enjoying very close looks at the endangered Piping Plover, which blended in perfectly with its beautiful surroundings at Stone Harbour.

Following a long and tiring flight from Australia, we arrived at Philadelphia airport, where we were met by our local guide Bill Elrick, we then travelled a short distance to our hotel, where we were pleased to stretch out in a real bed, for a well earned rest.

We started off the tour with a visit to the nearby John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, just outside Philadelphia. A large lake in the centre of the refuge produced a good number of wetland birds, which included Double-crested Cormorant, Canada Goose, American Black Duck, Laughing Gull and Forster's Tern. The woodland which surrounded the lake was full of resident and migrating birds and we very much enjoyed watching our first Turkey Vultures, Red-tailed Hawks, Feral Pigeons, Downy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, Tree Swallows, Blue Jays, the range restricted Fish Crow and White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart,

Common Yellowthroat, Northern Cardinal and House Sparrow. The tour was off and running, we then drove out of Pennsylvania and into New Jersey, where our next birding stop was at the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, near Atlantic City, which is usually referred to simply as Brigantine. During the drive Cameron spotted a group of Wild Turkeys, but as we were travelling on a freeway, we were unable to stop and have a look at them. On our arrival at Brigantine the weather was typically blustery, making observations difficult at times. We made two circuits of the pools finding many new birds for the tour. We enjoyed watching Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, both Great and Snowy Egrets, immature Little Blue Herons in their white plumage, Glossy Ibis, Mute Swan Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Osprey, Northern Harrier and Clapper Rail. We also enjoyed an excellent selection of waders. We found good numbers of Grey Plovers, one or two in immaculate breeding plumage, something that we do not see in Australia. We saw a solitary American Golden-Plover, several Semipalmated Plovers, large numbers of Lesser Yellowlegs, with a few Greater Yellowlegs mixed in amongst them. Cameron picked out a group of three or four Willets, we saw a solitary Spotted Sandpiper, and a good selection of 'peeps', which mainly consisted of Semipalmated Sandpipers, followed by a good number of Least Sandpipers, a few Baird's Sandpipers and a single White-rumped Sandpiper. We also found small numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers, a few Dunlins, good numbers of Short-billed Dowitchers and one or two Long-billed Dowitchers. We were very pleased to find a single Hudsonian Godwit, an uncommon bird in this area and best of all, Bill picked out a single Curlew Sandpiper, a rare vagrant to North America. There was also a supporting cast of American Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls, Caspian Tern, a single Black Skimmer, a couple of Belted Kingfishers, a small flock of Chimney Swifts, a couple of Barn Swallows and large flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds. In a small area of woodland we found a couple of Eastern Kingbirds, a couple of Carolina Chickadees, a Northern Mockingbird, several Palm Warblers, a good number of Chipping Sparrows and small flocks of Boat-tailed Grackles. We also saw two species of mammals today, the rather common Eastern Gray Squirrel and the less common White-tailed Deer.

The following day we enjoyed our second visit to Brigantine, where we spent the morning driving around the pools. New birds for the tour included several Black-crowned Night-Herons, a couple of American Oystercatchers, a Peregrine Falcon which flew over the ponds, flushing all the waders, which fortunately resettled nearby. New waders included a single Whimbrel, a few Ruddy Turnstones and we were very pleased to enjoy good close scope views of the uncommon Stilt Sandpiper. Amongst the cat-tails along the edge of the ponds we managed to enjoy really good looks at a Marsh Wren and a Seaside Sparrow. In a patch of woodland new birds for the tour included Mourning Dove, Red-bellied and Hairy Woodpeckers, Eastern Phoebe, Tufted Titmouse, the beautiful Northern Parula, Yellow and Pine Warblers, Savannah and Song Sparrows, House Finch and American Goldfinch.

In the afternoon we drove the short distance to Cape May, where we spent the afternoon at Cape May Point State Park. We birded from the observation platform above Bunker Pond, where we observed a small flock of Northern Shovelers, a few American Wigeons and a Killdeer flew over the pond. Small numbers of raptors were on passage and new birds for the tour included Black Vulture, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel and Merlin. We did a short walk to Cape May Beach, where we picked out a couple of Ring-billed Gulls, amongst the many other gulls and we observed a handful of Royal Terns flying just offshore. We then took a walk along the nature trail, where new birds included several Solitary Sandpipers, the stunning Magnolia Warbler, a single Northern Waterthrush and a few Indigo Buntings. A single Eastern Cottontail was observed and photographed by Pat and Nev.

The following day we did a full day pelagic off Cape May on the very seaworthy 'Gallant Lady'. The sea was flat calm, the wind was blowing at 5 knots and it was a bright sunny day. Ideal conditions for observing birds. Shortly after leaving port we pulled up very close to a juvenile

Brown Booby, which is an uncommon vagrant to the waters off New Jersey. The rest of the morning was particularly uneventful and as I was beginning to think that this pelagic was going to be a waste of time, we were joined by a school of Bottlenose Dolphins, which livened things up a great deal. We then enjoyed a couple of sightings of the huge Leatherback Sea Turtle, as well as a couple of Loggerhead Sea Turtles. The sea was positively jumping with wildlife and then a fin appeared above the surface of the sea and began to circle the boat. The sea was so crystal clear that we could clearly make out the outline of an adult Hammerhead Shark. At 12 noon, when we broke out the sandwiches, I was feeling much better about the pelagic. However, the best was yet to come. Shortly after our lunch of sandwiches and doughnuts, we observed a couple of immature Northern Gannets and then we found a very close Common Loon, which was greatly admired. Not long afterwards the boat came to a screeching halt and right next to the boat we were able to observe a Red Phalarope and a Red-necked Phalarope side by side, sitting on the surface of a flat calm sea. As Phalaropes are very rare vagrants to Australia, it was a great thrill for us to observe these two birds so well. We then decided to head back to shore and visit an area known as the 'rips', where there is an up-welling of currents, which provides rich pickings for the huge numbers of gulls and terns, that always frequent this area. We enjoyed checking through the large numbers of gulls and terns and we found a new species of tern for the tour, there was actually large numbers of Common Terns and we also saw our only Great Cormorant for the tour and several Sanderlings were running to and fro along the tide line on the beach. We then watched the great spectacle of a dark morph Parasitic Jaeger harassing the gulls and terns. It was a wonderful spectacle and rounded off a great day at sea.

The following morning found us buying breakfast at Wawas at first light, a new low for Peregrine Bird Tours, Bill, our local guide, assured us that this was what all the birding groups did. Slurping coffee and cramming down doughnuts we arrived at Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area. Our walk around the fields produced some good birds, we saw resident species such as American Crow and Northern House Wren, but it was the migrants that caused the most excitement. A Great Crested Flycatcher flicked through the higher branches, a flock of Cedar Waxwings flew around several times before settling in a tall tree, where we were able to enjoy scope views of them. A solitary Black-throated Green Warbler was heading south as fast as it could and a beautiful Baltimore Oriole flew over our heads. All very good, but it was the following two species who really stole the show, a secretive Yellow-billed Cuckoo slowly worked its way along the hedgerow, revealing glimpses of itself, before finally coming to rest in a tall tree, where thankfully, most of us saw it fairly well and then we played hide and seek with a stunning Red-headed Woodpecker, who rather reluctantly showed itself to us.

Later in the morning we moved on to Cape May Point State Park, where we walked to the hawk viewing platform. Amongst the many Sharp-shinned Hawks that were flying south, we picked out a very fine Cooper's Hawk. We then walked onto the beach at Cape May and checked out the large number of gulls loafing around on the beach and we were able to pick out a couple of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, a very scarce passage migrant anywhere along the East coast of the United States, making it one of the rarest birds of the tour.

In the afternoon we saw a few Common Grackles at a bird feeder, before driving to Stone Harbour, where we hoped to find the endangered Piping Plover. We walked the beach checking the various waders, gulls and terns, before encountering no less than 12 beautiful Piping Plovers. Mission accomplished, we headed back to our very comfortable hotel at Cape May. Following a quick stop at Wawas, where we were quicker today, as we now knew where everything was, we headed to nearby Higbee Beach. There were a few migrants on show, but overall it was fairly slow going. However the morning was livened up by a good sighting of the rather delicate

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and a splendid Brown Thrasher. We then drove to Cape May Harbour where we boarded a boat named the Osprey and we spent a very pleasant couple of hours birding in the shallow marshes searching for birds. Almost all the expected wetland birds were in attendance and it was a very comfortable way to enjoy good close looks at them. We did manage to find three new birds for the tour the very smart Tricolored Heron, a couple of immature Yellow-crowned Night-Herons and a solitary Marbled Godwit.

Following lunch, we decided to try our luck birding in and around Maurice River Cove, a little to the north-west of Cape May. While driving there we found a couple of large flocks of Brown-headed Cowbirds along the roadside. We saw a good number of wetland birds in and around Maurice River Cove but the only new bird we found was the very beautiful Green Heron. On our way back to Cape May we drove through the pleasant rural village of Eldora, where we stopped to watch a large family party of Wild Turkeys.

A quick and very proficient stop at Wawas the following morning, was followed by a short drive to Higbee Beach, where we found a strong and persistent southerly wind, which caused the trees to shake violently and the migration to come to a standstill. The only new bird for us was a Common Nighthawk, which was roosting up in a tree. We then drove to nearby Rea Farm, which is usually referred to as the Beanery. A very pleasant walk around the farm yielded excellent views of the diminutive Ruby-throated Hummingbird, which gave prolonged views as it perched out in the open for quite sometime. We then came across a party of Blue Grosbeaks, containing a male bird which was still retaining a great deal of breeding plumage. This delightful species is an uncommon migrant anywhere in the United States. We also enjoyed good looks at a couple of Field Sparrows who were feeding in the same group as the Blue Grosbeaks.

In the afternoon we decided to check out how the hawk migration at Cape May Point was progressing and we were rewarded with good looks at a soaring Broad-winged Hawk, amongst the other more common raptors. We then spent the rest of the afternoon at the very pleasant South Cape May Meadows, where we enjoyed watching a Wilson's Snipe and we also managed to pick out a small flock of Northern Pintail and a pair of Gadwalls from amongst the more common flocks of Mallards. There was also a large passage of mainly falcons, flying southwards along the beach and over the ponds. Ospreys, Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned Hawks and Cooper's Hawks all filed past, but by far the most numerous raptors streaming past were American Kestrels and Merlins. Late in the afternoon a very kind American female birder, who we had been chatting with at the meadows, ran quite a distance to us and breathlessly told us that she had been watching a Sora, a small species of crane, just a couple of hundred metres further along the pond. We hurried back as quickly as we could, just in time to enjoy really close looks at this beautiful bird, before it silently slipped inside the reeds and out of sight. The thoughtfulness of the American birder was typical of the helpful nature of the local birders we met during our time at Cape May. While birding the ponds we also found a new species of mammal, a Muskrat.

The following morning found us back at Higbee Beach, but once again the migration was very slow, even though the winds were supposedly in the right direction. The only new bird was a Veery, which was typically elusive but in the end we all saw it fairly well. We then decided to try the Beanery again, hoping that there might be some migrants lingering there. There were indeed some migrants busily feeding at the farm which included one new species for us, a couple of particularly obliging Acadian Flycatchers.

Following lunch we headed to Cape May Point, where amongst the huge migrating flocks of Tree Swallows, we found quite a few Bank Swallows. We then drove to Nummy Island near Stone Harbour, where a Brant had been reported, but we were unable to locate it. However, we did

manage to scope a distant flock of Red Knots. As we drove back to our hotel at Cape May, for the last time, darkness fell and just before reaching the hotel the distinctive shape of a Northern Raccoon crossed the road ahead of us.

The following morning we drove to the nearby car ferry terminal, where we would cross the Delaware River and enter into the state of Delaware. Unfortunately, there was some kind of mechanical problem with the ferry and we suffered a long delay. Finally, the ferry got underway and during the crossing we enjoyed watching four Parasitic Jaegers, two dark morph birds and two light morphs, as well as a fine pod of Bottlenose Dolphins. On reaching the ferry terminal we had a somewhat underwhelming brunch, before paying a visit to the nearby Henlopen State Park. The target bird here was the range restricted Brown headed Nuthatch, which is at the northern edge of its range here. In no time at all, we were watching one of these beautiful little birds and while doing so up popped a handsome Blue-headed Vireo, right next to it and we were able to enjoy good looks at both of them.

We then carried on to Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge in central Delaware, which was holding a good selection of resident and migratory water birds. The only new bird for us was a particularly large flock of American Avocets. The woodland surrounding the lakes, was holding a surprisingly large number and variety of migratory passerines and amongst them we found no less than five new species of birds. We encountered a good number of Eastern Wood-Pewees, glimpsed a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, enjoyed super looks at a breeding plumaged Black-throated Green Warbler, found a Blackpoll Warbler in non-breeding plumage and then enjoyed great looks at the particularly attractive White-eyed Vireo.

On the last day of the tour we made a quick visit to the White Clay Creek State Park, where I saw a Piliated Woodpecker in flight. We then drove to the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area where in the picnic area, we saw a few Eastern Bluebirds. At a nearby lake in the park we found a group of four delightful Snow Geese, which we all very much enjoyed.

Following a very good lunch at a rather quaint diner we continued on to Hawk Mountain, where we slowly climbed atop the mountain up to the rocky outcroppings of the Kittotinny Ridge, part of the Appellation Mountains. The ridge is completely surrounded by fertile river valleys. Unfortunately, there was little passage of raptors and nothing that we had not seen before. Walking up the mountain we added one more bird for the trip list, the Black-capped Chickadee. We also added one new mammal to the trip, the delightful Eastern Chipmunk. While Nev and Pat were descending Hawk Mountain, they enjoyed good looks at the beautiful Black-throated Blue Warbler.

It had been a great trip and it was a little sad that just when we were beginning to get to grips with the warblers in non-breeding plumage, it was time to leave. We had seen many great birds and each person will have their own highlight and hopefully will return home with memories that will last a lifetime.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

LOONS *GAVIIDAE*

Common Loon *Gavia immer* A common autumn migrant, we were very fortunate to enjoy really close looks at a bird in non-breeding plumage, sat on the ocean, during our pelagic off Cape May.

GREBES *PODICIEDIDAE*

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* A common autumn migrant, we enjoyed many good sightings throughout most wetland areas.

GANNETS and BOOBIES *SULIDAE*

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* A rare vagrant to New Jersey, there are less than 10 accepted records for this species. We were very fortunate to get extremely close to a juvenile bird sat on the ocean, not long after we left Cape May, during our pelagic trip.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* A common autumn migrant, we saw a few birds in immature plumage, during the pelagic off Cape May.

CORMORANTS *PHALACROCORACIDAE*

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* A common autumn migrant, we saw large numbers on every day of the tour.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* An uncommon autumn migrant. During the pelagic boat trip, off Cape May, we sailed through the 'rip'. Amongst the hundreds of gulls and terns that were feeding there, there was a solitary cormorant feeding with them. This was our only sighting of the Great Cormorant.

HERONS, EGRETS and BITTERNES *ARDEIDAE*

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* This very large species of heron is a common autumn migrant, which we saw on every day of the tour.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* A fairly common autumn migrant, which we saw on most days of the tour.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* A common autumn migrant, which we saw almost daily, at freshwater wetlands.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw single birds at a number of the wetlands we visited, most were in white, immature plumage. We saw one bird in adult plumage during our boat trip on the Osprey, in Cape May Harbour.

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor* An uncommon autumn migrant, which we saw well on a few occasions, particularly so during the boat trip on the Osprey, in Cape May Harbour.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw an adult bird at Maurice River Cove, which was followed by a sighting of an immature bird at a small lake in the Cape May Point State Park.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well at Brigantine and at Cape May Point State Park.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nyctanassa violacea* A scarce autumn migrant, we were very fortunate to enjoy close good looks at a couple of immatures during the boat trip on the Osprey, in Cape May Harbour.

IBIS and SPOONBILLS *THRESKIORNITHIDAE*

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* A common autumn migrant, which we saw very well at a number of the wetland areas we visited.

DUCKS, GEESE and SWANS *ANATIDAE*

Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens* A common late autumn migrant, the first birds arrive in Pennsylvania during the last week of September. We saw four birds, three adults and an

immature bird at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area in Pennsylvania, on the 25th September. It is likely that the birds we saw were the first of the season's Snow Geese, the vanguard of many thousands that winter here.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* A common autumn migrant, which we observed on every day of the tour.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* A common introduced resident throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* A fairly common autumn migrant, which we saw in small numbers at many of the wetlands we visited.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* A common autumn migrant, we picked out a couple of birds amongst the many other ducks at South Cape May Meadows.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* A common autumn migrant, we observed small numbers in many of the wetland areas we visited.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* A common autumn migrant, which we observed well, in most of the wetland areas we visited.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* An uncommon autumn migrant, which we saw very well on most of the wetlands we visited.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* An uncommon autumn migrant, which we saw well at most of the wetlands we visited.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw small numbers at most of the wetland areas we visited.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* A common autumn migrant, we saw small numbers at Bunker Pond and in the South Cape May Meadows.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well at all the wetland areas we visited.

NEW WORLD VULTURES *CATHARTIDAE*

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* An uncommon autumn migrant, which we saw in small numbers on most days of the tour.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* A common autumn migrant, we saw good numbers on every day of the tour.

OSPREY *PANDIONIDAE*

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* A common autumn migrant, seen on most days of the tour. There was a good passage of this species during our visits to Cape May Point.

HAWKS, EAGLES and KITES *ACCIPITRIDAE*

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* An uncommon autumn migrant, we observed small numbers on migration, on most days of the tour.

Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus* A common autumn migrant, we observed small numbers at a number of the wetlands we visited.

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus* A common autumn migrant, large numbers were passing through Cape May, during our time there.

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* A common autumn migrant, small numbers were passing through Cape May during our time there.

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus* A common autumn migrant, this species passes through Cape May during a very short period of approximately two weeks, in mid September, we were a week too late, to see the main migration. We observed a single bird soaring above

Cape May Point, on the 22nd and we observed a couple of birds flying past Hawk Mountain on the 25th.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis* A common autumn migrant, we observed small numbers on most days of the tour.

CARACARAS and FALCONS *FALCONIDAE*

Merlin *Falco columbarius* A common autumn migrant, we observed small numbers on most days of the tour and we noted a large movement of birds through Cape May on the 22nd.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* A common autumn migrant, small numbers seen passing through Cape May on a daily basis, with the exception of the 22nd when there was a large passage of birds, numbering 100 or so.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* A common autumn migrant, we observed small numbers throughout the tour.

TURKEYS *MELEAGRIDIDAE*

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* A fairly common and fairly widespread resident throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. We observed three separate family parties during the tour.

RAILS, GALLINULS and COOTS *RALLIDAE*

Clapper Rail *Rallus longirostris* A scarce autumn migrant, which we saw surprisingly well on a number of occasions.

Sora *Porzana carolina* An uncommon autumn migrant, we saw a single bird very well indeed, thanks to the kindness of an American birder, the sighting took place at South Cape May Meadows.

OYSTERCATCHERS *HAEMATOPODIDAE*

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well on most days of the tour.

AVOCETS and STILTS *RECURVIROSTRIDAE*

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana* A rare autumn migrant, we were very fortunate to observe a large flock, numbering in excess of 100 birds, at Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge.

LAPWINGS and PLOVERS *CHARADRIIDAE*

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well on many occasions. We very much enjoyed watching a couple of birds in full breeding plumage at Brigantine.

American Golden-Plover *Pluvialis dominica* An uncommon autumn migrant, we recorded one or two birds at a number of the wetlands we visited.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well in many of the wetland areas we visited.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* This species is an uncommon and local summer resident and a scarce to uncommon autumn migrant. We enjoyed really close looks at up to 12 birds along the beach at Stone Harbour. These birds were almost certainly breeding birds that had not

yet migrated. This species is listed as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. It is estimated that the world population is approximately 6,000 birds and rising slightly. The main threat to this species is disturbance at its nesting sites on beaches, including cat and dog predation. Piping Plovers are the most intensively managed breeding birds in New Jersey, unfortunately, even with intense management schemes in place, fences around nesting sites to exclude predators and intense education programs for the general public, the population continues to decline

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* A common autumn migrant, small numbers observed at a number of the wetlands we visited.

SANDPIPERS and ALLIES *SCOLOPACIDAE*

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* A common autumn migrant, somewhat surprisingly, we only observed this species on two occasions. The first sighting took place at Brigantine, followed by a second sighting at Cape May Point.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw four birds together at a small pond on the nature walk at Cape May Point. This was followed by a second sighting of a single bird at the South Cape May Meadows.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* A common autumn migrant, which we saw at most of the wetland areas we visited.

Willet *Tringa semipalmata* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well on a number of occasions.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* A common autumn migrant, in smaller numbers than the Greater Yellowlegs and also seen at most of the wetland areas we visited.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* A fairly common autumn migrant, which we saw well on two occasions. We saw a single bird on one of the large lakes at Brigantine which was followed by a second sighting of a few birds in Cape May Harbour, during our boat trip on the Osprey.

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* A scarce autumn migrant, we were very fortunate to pick out a roosting bird amongst a large flock of waders at Brigantine.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa* A scarce autumn migrant, which we were able to see very well in Cape May Harbour, during our boat trip on the Osprey.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well on several occasions.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* A fairly common autumn migrant, we observed a small flock through the scope on Nummy Island, near Stone Harbour.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well on several occasions, it was great to watch them running along the tide-line, following the tide in and out.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* A common autumn migrant, the commonest of the 'peeps', we saw large numbers at most of the wetlands we visited.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* A common autumn migrant, the second commonest of the 'peeps', we saw it very well at a number of the wetlands we visited.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* A fairly common autumn migrant, we observed a single bird amongst a large flock of waders at Brigantine.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* A scarce autumn migrant, we saw two birds at Brigantine and a couple more along the beach at Stone Harbour.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* A fairly common autumn migrant, which we observed very well, at a number of the wetlands we visited.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* A common autumn migrant, we observed small numbers at Brigantine and again at Bombay Hook.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* A very rare vagrant to the United States, reported annually

in very small numbers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Therefore, we were very fortunate that Bill picked one out of a large flock of roosting waders at Brigantine.

Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* A common autumn migrant, which we saw very well in a couple of the wetlands we visited.

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well at many of the wetlands we visited.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* An uncommon autumn migrant, we saw a couple of birds at Brigantine and a similar number at Bombay Hook.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw it very well, but only on one occasion, at South Cape May Meadows.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* A rare autumn migrant onshore, probably much more regular out at sea. One of the highlights of the trip was observing one of these birds in partial breeding plumage, sat by the side of the boat with the following species, during the pelagic off Cape May

Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* A rare autumn migrant onshore, probably much more regular out at sea. We observed one of these birds in complete non-breeding plumage, sat on the ocean right next to our boat, with one of the above species, during our pelagic off Cape May.

GULLS *LARIDAE*

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla* A common autumn migrant, which we observed in large numbers on every day of the tour.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* A common autumn migrant, which we saw in very small numbers, in the Cape May area.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* A common autumn migrant, we observed large numbers of every day of the tour.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* A scarce autumn migrant, we observed a couple of birds amongst a large flock of roosting gulls on the beach at Cape May Point. Numbers of this species seem to be increasing in the United States.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* A common autumn migrant, which we saw in large numbers on every day of the tour.

TERNs *STERNIDAE*

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* A common autumn migrant, we observed small numbers at several of the wetland areas we visited.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* A common autumn migrant, which we saw very well on all of the days at Cape May.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* A common autumn migrant, we saw large numbers at all of the wetlands we visited throughout the tour.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* A common autumn migrant, we saw small numbers on most days of the tour.

SKIMMERS *RYNCHOPIDAE*

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger* A fairly common autumn migrant, we observed a single bird at Brigantine and this was followed by a second sighting of half a dozen or so birds, at their regular roost site, on the beach at Cape May.

SKUAS and JAEGERs *STERCORARIIDAE*

Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* An uncommon autumn migrant, we very much enjoyed watching a bird harrying the gulls and terns which were feeding over the 'rips', during our

pelagic off Cape May and this was followed by a second sighting, of four individuals seen together from the ferry to Delaware.

PIGEONS and DOVES *COLUMBIDAE*

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* We saw small numbers of this introduced species on every day of the tour.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* A common resident which we observed on most days of the tour.

CUCKOOS *CUCULIDAE*

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* A fairly common autumn migrant, which we observed briefly, two days running at Higbee Beach.

NIGHTJARS and ALLIES *CAPRIMULGIDAE*

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* A fairly common autumn migrant. We were able to observe this bird in flight at Higbee Beach and found an individual roosting at Higbee Beach, on no less than three separate occasions.

SWIFTS *APODIDAE*

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* A common autumn migrant, which we saw frequently, sometimes in large flocks.

HUMMINGBIRDS *TROCHILIDAE*

Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris* A fairly common autumn migrant, which we saw well on a number of occasions.

KINGFISHERS *ALCEDINIDAE*

Belted Kingfisher *Megasceryle alcyon* A fairly common autumn migrant, small numbers observed on almost every day of the tour.

WOODPECKERS and ALLIES *PICIDAE*

Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* A scarce autumn migrant, we were indeed very fortunate to observe this beautiful bird on one occasion, while birding at Higbee Beach.

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus* A fairly common resident, which we saw well on many occasions.

Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens* Another fairly common resident, which we saw well on many occasions.

Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus* A fairly common and widespread resident, which we saw very well, on a number of occasions.

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus* A common autumn migrant, which we saw on most days of the tour, we observed large movements of this bird during our time at Cape May.

Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus* An uncommon and local resident. I saw one in flight at the White Clay Creek State Park and Cameron saw one from the top of Hawk Mountain.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS *TYRANNIDAE*

Eastern Wood-Pewee *Contopus virens* A fairly common autumn migrant, we enjoyed excellent looks at a few birds at Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge.

Acadian Flycatcher *Empidonax virens* A scarce autumn migrant, we were fortunate to observe a couple of these at the Beanery.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well on a number of

occasions.

Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw a single bird very well at Higbee Beach and this was followed by a second sighting at the Beanery.

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus* A scarce autumn migrant, we saw a few birds very well at Brigantine.

SWALLOWS *HIRUNDINIDAE*

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* A common autumn migrant, which we saw on every day of the tour. On some days we witnessed huge flocks migrating southwards.

Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw a few at Brigantine, followed by a large number on the 23rd at Cape May Point.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* A common autumn migrant, we saw small numbers on most days of the tour.

KINGLETS *REGULIDAE*

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula* A common autumn migrant, we glimpsed a bird at Bombay Hook and then enjoyed a much better sighting, at the top of Hawk Mountain.

WAXWINGS *BOMBYCILLIDAE*

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* A common autumn migrant, we observed fairly large flocks at Higbee Beach on a couple of days.

WRENS *TROGLODYTIDAE*

Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus* A common and widespread resident, which we observed on many occasions.

Northern House Wren *Troglodytes aedon* A common autumn migrant, which saw well on a few occasions.

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw one bird very well indeed at Brigantine and this was followed by a second sighting at Bombay Hook.

MOCKINGBIRDS and THRASHERS *MIMIDAE*

Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis* A common autumn migrant, which we saw in good numbers on every day of the tour.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* A common resident, which we saw very well, on most days of the tour.

Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw this shy species very well on several occasions.

THRUSHES and ALLIES *TURDIDAE*

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis* A common autumn migrant, we saw half a dozen or so birds at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.

Veery *Catharus fuscescens* An uncommon autumn migrant, one was observed skulking low down in a patch of woodland at Higbee Beach.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* An uncommon autumn migrant, which was seen on one occasion at Brigantine.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* An abundant autumn migrant, we observed small numbers on most days of the tour.

GNATCATCHERS *POLIOPTILIDAE*

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila caerulea* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well on a few occasions.

CHICKADEES and TITS *PARIDAE*

Carolina Chickadee *Poecile carolinensis* A common and widespread resident, which we saw daily in small numbers.

Black-capped Chickadee *Poecile atricapillus* A common and fairly widespread resident, which proved to be fairly common at Hawk Mountain.

Tufted Titmouse *Baeolophus bicolor* A common resident, which we saw very well on several occasions.

NUTHATCHES *SITTIDAE*

White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis* A fairly common and widespread resident, which we saw well at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum and again at Brigantine.

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla* An uncommon resident, we saw a single bird very well at a known stakeout in Henlopen State Park, in Delaware.

JAYS, MAGPIES and CROWS *CORVIDAE*

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata* A common autumn migrant, which we saw on every day of the tour.

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos* A fairly common autumn migrant, we enjoyed a few sightings throughout the tour.

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus* A common resident and autumn migrant, which we saw well in large numbers, on a daily basis.

STARLINGS *STURNIDAE*

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* A common introduced resident, which unfortunately, we saw on every day of the tour.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS *PASSERIDAE*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* A common introduced resident, which unfortunately, we saw on every day of the tour.

VIREOS and ALLIES *VIREONIDAE*

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw it very well but only on one occasion, at Bombay Hook.

Blue-headed Vireo *Vireo solitarius* A fairly common autumn migrant and once again we saw it very well but only on one occasion, while looking at the Brown-hooded Nuthatch in Henlopen State Park.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* A common autumn migrant, which we saw in good numbers, on most days of the tour.

SISKINS, CROSSBILLS and ALLIES *FRINGILLIDAE*

House Finch *Carpodacus mexicanus* A common and widespread resident, we saw a pair of birds very well at Brigantine and then we had a second sighting of a pair of birds at Cape May Point.

American Goldfinch *Spinus tristis* A common autumn migrant, we saw small flocks very well on several occasions.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS *PARULIDAE*

Northern Parula *Parula americana* A common autumn migrant, we observed this beautiful bird very well on several occasions.

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* A common autumn migrant, we saw small numbers throughout the tour.

Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia* A common autumn migrant, we saw this beautiful species very well on several occasions.

Black-throated Blue Warbler *Dendroica caerulescens* A common autumn migrant, Nev and Pat observed a single bird very well as they were descending Hawk Mountain.

Black-throated Green Warbler *Dendroica virens* A fairly common autumn migrant, which was glimpsed on one occasion at Higbee Beach and then we saw a beautiful male very well at Bombay Hook.

Pine Warbler *Dendroica pinus* A scarce autumn migrant, we saw solitary individuals on two occasions; the first at Brigantine and the second at Bombay Hook.

Palm Warbler *Dendroica palmarum* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well in small flocks, on several occasions.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well at Bombay Hook and again at Hawk Mountain.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* A common autumn migrant, which we saw very well on many occasions throughout the tour.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* A common autumn migrant, which once again we saw very well on several occasions throughout the tour.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis* A common autumn migrant, which once again we saw very well on several occasions throughout the tour.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* A common autumn migrant, we saw large numbers of migrants on many days throughout the tour.

TANAGERS and ALLIES *THRAUPIDAE*

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacer* A common autumn migrant, we saw a bird in flight on one occasion at Higbee Beach.

BUNTINGS, SPARROWS, SEEDEATERS and ALLIES *EMBERIZIDSAE*

Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina* A fairly common autumn migrant, we enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.

Field Sparrow *Spizella pusilla* A common autumn migrant, we only saw this species on one occasion, however, we did see it very well, at the Beanery.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* A common autumn migrant, which we saw very well on several occasions.

Seaside Sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus* A fairly common autumn migrant, we saw a couple of birds very well during our time at Brigantine.

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia* A common autumn migrant, we enjoyed several good sightings of this species.

SALTAOTRS, CARDINALS and ALLIES *CARDINALIDAE*

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis* A common and widespread resident, which we saw on every day of the tour.

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea* An uncommon autumn migrant, we were very fortunate to enjoy a male in almost full breeding plumage, with a couple of immature birds at the Beanery.

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* A common autumn migrant, we observed small flocks on several days throughout the tour.

TROUPIALS and ALLIES *ICTERIDAE*

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus* A common autumn migrant, which we observed on every day of the tour, often in very large flocks.

Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula* A common autumn migrant, which we saw well on a couple of occasions in Cape May township.

Boat-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus major* A common but local resident, which we saw on almost every day of the tour.

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* A common autumn migrant, we saw a couple of large flocks around Cape May township.

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* A common autumn migrant, we only saw one bird in flight, at Higbee Beach.

MAMMALS

Eastern Cottontail *Sylvilagus floridanus* Single animals observed frequently throughout the tour.

Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus* A single animal was observed very well on the large lake at South Cape May Meadows.

Eastern Gray Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* Small numbers observed daily throughout the tour.

Eastern Chipmunk *Tamias striatus* We observed several very well during our time at Hawk Mountain.

Northern Raccoon *Procyon lotor* One observed late one evening very close to our hotel at Cape May.

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus* Small herds observed on a few occasions throughout the tour.

Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* Seen on the pelagic off Cape May, seen well from the beach at Cape May, where the dolphins were very close to shore and then seen again from the ferry to Delaware.