

Cape May: Fall Migration Species List | October 14 – 20, 2025 with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guides James P. Smith and Rick Weiman.

Our fabulous participants included Marty & Karen, Marie, Bunny, Clare, Rick, Carlo B., Wyatt, Carol. L, Lee and Cynthia.

A classic fall birding adventure to the Cape May peninsula at the peak of autumn migration. During the week we sampled some of the many elements for which historic Cape May is justly renowned. Fortune came our way as early as the first afternoon when, as soon as we stepped out of the vehicles, a vagrant Say's Phoebe flitted and hovered about the parking lot at Cape May Point State Park in beautiful late autumn sunshine! Though not our find, this rarity from the western US has furnished less than 30 records for the state of New Jersey. More surprises came in the form of scarce raptors from the north including a sharp looking immature Golden Eagle and a light morph Rough-legged Hawk, the latter being the earliest we'd ever seen on the east coast. But, the trip was far from being rarity oriented and we enjoyed close-up studies of many shorebirds in challenging, 'basic' plumage with particularly instructive sessions on Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and the 'peeps' including White-rumped, Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers. The back-bay cruise through the salt marshes aboard the Osprey proved as popular as ever and gave us the best looks at Great Cormorants, American Oystercatchers, hordes of Forster's Terns and roosting Sanderlings. The gaudiest species of the trip must surely have been the boldly patterned adult Red-headed Woodpeckers at Dennis WMA. In stark contrast we had great views of the subtle, unobtrusive Ipswich Savannah Sparrow at Two Mile Landing where Lee, a few days prior, had spotted an American Bittern remarkably well hidden in the *spartina* grass. And there was an adventure across Delaware Bay by ferry which ultimately offered up two firm favorites; the ever-reliable Brown-headed Nuthatches in beautiful Cape Henlopen State Park, and the best brunch of the tour at the Nectar Café and Juice Bar! Finally, Cape May, perhaps not noted for dramatic scenery, delivered some truly extra-ordinary sunrises and sunsets which were nothing short of spectacular.

The tour logged **136** bird species (seen and/or heard) with a handful of leader-only observations noted accordingly in the comments within each e-bird checklist. We also found 4 species of mammal and 3 reptiles/amphibians. Aside from the fantastic birding and wonderful cuisine, this trip was particularly memorable for its great group camaraderie, jovial atmosphere and the many laughs we had along the way!

The eBird link below details the **136** species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Cape May: Fall Migration | October 14th – 20th, 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Other fauna noted on the tour included;

MAMMALS: — (4)

Eastern Cottontail *Sylvilagus floridanus* — routinely spotted on the lawns in front of the Sea Crest Inn on Beach Ave.

Eastern Gray Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* — not abundant, but certainly widespread.

Common Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* — small numbers spotted around the head of the Cape May canal, and at the Avalon Seawatch.

Eastern Chipmunk *Tamias striatus* — one around the parking area at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS: — (3)

Snapping Turtle *Chelydra rossignonii* — a young specimen on the footpath at South Cape May meadows allowed for close study while an adult lurked in the shallows close by!

Painted Turtle *Chrysemys picta* — several at South Cape May meadows on the 15th

Eastern Ratsnake *Pantherophis alleghaniensis* — a gorgeous black specimen at South Cape May meadows on the 15th.

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