

# Cape May: Spring Migration | Species List

## May 14 – 20, 2023 | with Naturalist Journeys



**With Guides Rick Weiman and Greg Butcher and Clients Brad, Jen, Carol, Caryn, Dana, Deke, Elaine, Joanne, Kathy, Meg, Ron, Melissa, and Hugh Simmons, Naturalist Journeys visiting photographer**

Compiled by Greg Butcher

### **Itinerary:**

5/14 -- John Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia, Second Avenue Jetty (across from the Sea Crest Inn)  
5/15 – Second Avenue Jetty, Coral Avenue Dune Crossing (Springwatch Platform), Hawkwatch Platform and neighborhood, Marsh boat: The Osprey  
5/16 – Edwin B. Forsythe Refuge, Ocean City Welcome Center Rookery  
5/17 – South Cape May Meadows, The Wetlands Institute  
5/18 – Higbee Beach, Garrett Family Preserve, Beach Plum Farm, Cook’s Beach and Road, Two Mile Landing  
5/19 -- Coral Avenue Dune Crossing (Springwatch Platform), Sea Grove Avenue, Northwood Center (Cape May Bird Observatory), Sunset Beach/Concrete Ship, The Beanery (Rea Farm), Two Mile Unit of Cape May Refuge  
5/20 – Heislerville Wildlife Management Area – Main Pool

(HO)= Distinctive enough to be counted as heard only

(I)=introduced

\*Photos shared with us either by text attachment (thanks Dana!) or on the photo share site:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/yW8HoR36P4Vc3h1E8>

**BIRDS (117 species recorded, of which 56 have shared photos\* and 12 were heard only -- HO):**

See <https://ebird.org/tripreport/130330> for the eBird trip list.

### **DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: Anatidae (5)**

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*— Seen every day. Fifty years ago they would have all been back in Canada in May, but all the state wildlife departments decided to reintroduce resident Canada Geese, so now we have them year-round.

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor* (I) — Seen every day. This species is native to Europe. They were brought here starting in the mid-1800s to beautify decorative ponds.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*— Seen every day. Another species that would not have been seen in May 50 years ago; instead, the American Black Duck was the common breeder in the Northeastern United States. State wildlife agencies released many Mallards over the years, and Black Duck females seemed to prefer Mallards over Black Ducks, so now Black Ducks are rare breeders (more common in winter) and Mallards are common year-round.

**American Black Duck** *Anas rubripes*— One pair flew over the rookery at Ocean City Welcome Center, and another was at The Wetlands Institute.

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis*— We had a pair at Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The male was just coming into his cinnamon coloration and bright blue bill.

### **PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae (2)**

**Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia* (1)— Seen every day. These are common introduced birds worldwide; they began on the cliffs of Scotland.

**Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura*— Seen every day. They're native!

### **CUCKOOS AND ALLIES: CUCULIDAE (1)**

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus*— HO. Heard at Higbee Beach one day and The Beanery the next. They hide in the canopy, and their voice carries far!

### **NIGHTJARS: Caprimulgidae (1)**

**Chuck-will's-widow** *Antrostomus carolinensis*—One bird flushed in front of Dana from the beach dunes at the Two Mile Unit of Cape May NWR. It was the last afternoon, and only 4 of us were adventuring.

### **SWIFTS: Apodidae (1)**

**Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica*— Always seen overhead in flight; we had them on 5 different days. They used to be MUCH more abundant in all Eastern cities. They are considered an "aerial insectivore", and all species of this type are declining in the East.

### **HUMMINGBIRDS: Trochilidae (1)**

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird** *Archilochus colubris*— Yay! We found a pair at Higbee Beach! I know you westerners have several species (and Kathy has a dozen in SE Arizona!), but this is the only breeding species in the East.

### **RAILS, COOTS AND ALLIES: Rallidae (1)**

**Clapper Rail** *Rallus crepitans*— HO – on 4 separate days. This is one of the most common birds in coastal New Jersey, but it spends its days walking in the marsh grasses. One day you will get a peek at one at the edge of the grass, probably at low tide.

### **OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae (1)**

\***American Oystercatcher** *Haematopus palliatus*—This is one of the most colorful birds in Cape May. (I wish I knew why Black Skimmers have a similar color scheme, but I'm happy to make up a story!) We saw them every day, including one day when two pairs had a loud skirmish. It is one of the few shorebird species that breeds in Cape May.

### **PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae (3)**

\***Black-bellied Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*— We had this species on 4 days. Most had the full black belly of the breeding plumage, but some were still in the dull gray winter plumage. They will fly to the Arctic to breed.

\***Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus*— We had this species on 5 days, mixed in with Semipalmated Sandpipers along the shore.

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus*— Usually one of the most common shorebirds, because it loves parking lots, we struggled to find an individual on two different days, both times in natural wetlands.

### **SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (13)**

\***Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*—I counted 20 on our marshboat trip, 30 at Forsythe NWR, and one at the Wetlands Institute. Like Red Knots, these are super-long-distance migrants, breeding in the Arctic and wintering in southern South America. They are big birds, with a long decurved bill.

\***Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*— We had these on 4 days. They are among the most colorful of our shorebirds, with black and white and rusty patches in breeding plumage. They are a bit more subdued in winter plumage (except when they fly).

\***Red Knot** *Calidris canutus*— We didn't see huge numbers of this species, but we did have a close group of 9 at Cook's Beach (and I saw a total of 40 through the telescope). Some winter at the southern tip of Tierra del Fuego in Chile and Argentina and breed in the Arctic tundra. They must navigate all kinds of issues all along the way.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*— Like the Killdeer, this should have been one of the most common shorebirds on the trip. We finally found a few along the shore at the Two Mile Unit of Cape May NWR. The rusty breeding plumage is surprisingly different from the almost all-white winter plumage.

\***Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*— We saw this species on 5 days. The most (40 individuals) were at Forsythe NWR. This is another species that looks really different in breeding plumage compared to winter plumage.

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima*— These birds will disappear soon to head to the Arctic to breed. We had a flock of 15 from the platform at Coral Avenue (where Cape May does their Spring Watch), but they all flew away when the fisherman approached.

\***Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla*— The birds hung out with the Semipalmated Sandpipers – both species are called “peeps”. Least are smaller, browner, have yellow legs, and usually stay in the mud, farther from the water.

\***Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla*— This was the most common shorebird by far. I counted 800 at Forsythe NWR and 500 at Cook’s Beach. We saw them on all 5 shorebird days.

\***Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus*— After all these years, I still can’t get used to the fact that this long-billed bird is called “Short-billed.” We had it on all 5 shorebird days, mostly with its bill buried in the mud eating mudworms. We had 10 or more almost everywhere.

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius*— We only had 2 of these usually common shorebirds, one from the wetlands boat trip on the Osprey. They don’t have any spots in the winter and are most easily identified by their quick shallow wingbeats over the water.

\***Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca*—It’s always difficult to tell Greater from Lesser Yellowlegs unless they are side by side. Luckily, we did have a couple that way at Forsythe NWR.

\***Willet** *Tringa semipalmata*— Like the oystercatcher, Willets have back-and-white wings. Also like the oystercatcher, they breed in Cape May. And like the oystercatcher, we saw them on all 5 shorebird days. But – they are nowhere nearly as attractive as the oystercatchers.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*— Like the Greater Yellowlegs, we saw Lessers at Forsythe NWR and in the saltmarsh at Two Mile Landing, near our lunch spot across from the Laughing Gull colony.

### **SKUAS AND JAEGER: Stercorariidae (1)**

\***Parasitic Jaeger** *Stercorarius parasiticus*—Most people have to go offshore on a pelagic trip or up to the Arctic in breeding season to see this species. But we got a great show from the Coral Avenue platform of one harassing a tern seemingly forever. After that, it hung out with a couple of other individuals of the same species. The chase was one of the bird highlights of the trip for me.

### **GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae (12)**

\***Bonaparte’s Gull** *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*— Ron got a photo of this species on the first day in Cape May, then a couple on the shore at Higbee Beach.

\***Laughing Gull** *Leucophaeus atricilla*— OK, did we see more Laughing Gulls or Semipalmated Sandpipers? The fun about the Laughing Gulls was seeing their large nesting colonies, including from the marshboat (the Osprey) and from Two Mile Landing lunch spot. And seeing the gulls creating the next generation. And hearing them earn their name. And watching them fight with shorebirds for horseshoe crab eggs. If you think about Cape May without thinking about Laughing Gulls, I will be surprised.

\***Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis*— In the winter, this is one of the most common species, but most of them are looking for inland nesting colonies this time of year. We had one at Forsythe NWR and 10 on Cook’s Beach with all the other gulls (mostly Laughing).

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*— We had small numbers of this species every day. It is another species that is much more common in winter. They have large colonies like Laughing Gulls do, but not near Cape May.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*— I had one individual flying away on our first evening at the beach across the street from the hotel. It is the same size as a Herring Gull, but much darker. I’m not sure if anyone else saw it.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus*— We saw small numbers of this species every day. It is by far the largest gull at Cape May, with very dark upperwings and back.

\***Least Tern** *Sterna antillarum*—This was one of the 3 common terns of the trip. It was by far the smallest, with a yellow beak and white forehead. We saw them fishing along the coast every day.

\***Gull-billed Tern** *Geochelidon nilotica*— This species is a saltmarsh specialist during the breeding season and is always expected at Forsythe NWR, but few other places. We saw 9 individuals, which is a lot for this species. This species has an all-black bill that is thicker than Least, Common, and Forster's Terns.

\***Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*— One of the most difficult identification challenges is telling this species from Forster's Tern. Sure, Common Tern has a redder beak and feet, but sometimes red looks orange or orange looks red. Nonetheless, we were able to pick out a lot of individuals of both species. Our best look at Commons was on the railing near the far turn at Forsythe NWR – it's a lot easier when the birds perch close in good light!

\***Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri*—I recorded the most Common Terns from the marshboat (the Osprey), but more Forster's Terns most other places. I hope I got it right! In the breeding season Forster's (and Gull-billed) Terns are whiter underneath and Common is grayer underneath.

**Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus*— We had 2 of these very large terns with large yellow/orange beaks fly by during our first visit to the Coral Avenue platform.

\***Black Skimmer** *Rhynchops niger*— I expected to see a lot more of this species, but they have a new breeding site that pulls them away from Cape May at the height of the breeding season. A few of us saw one from the van one afternoon at Two Mile Landing, then most of us saw a couple hundred on a tiny island at Heislerville Wildlife Management Area (WMA) on our way back to the Philadelphia Airport.

### **LOONS: Gaviidae (1)**

\***Common Loon** *Gavia immer*— All the loon sightings were distant, most in flight. We had some winter-plumaged birds and some breeding-plumaged birds. Common Loons are common at Cape May in Winter, but most had left for their more northerly breeding grounds before we got to Cape May.

### **GANNETS AND BOOBIES: Sulidae (1)**

**Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus*— Gannets are like loons. They are common at Cape May in winter and migration, but most have returned to their northern breeding grounds by mid-May. We saw them at a distance offshore on two different days.

### **CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae (1)**

\***Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus*— We saw this species every day, including a large group of 40 on the concrete ship at Sunset Beach.

### **PELICANS: Pelecanidae (1)**

\***Brown Pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis*— We saw pelicans on 3 different days. Their numbers will increase after the breeding season as post-breeding wanderers.

### **HERONS AND EGRETS: Ardeidae (8)**

\***Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias*— We saw this species on 4 different days. They breed colonially, but we weren't close to any of their breeding colonies. It's the largest of all the herons and egrets in North America.

\***Great Egret** *Egretta alba*— We saw this species almost every day, including on the nest at Ocean City Welcome Center. Egret plumes on hats were the height of fashion when the 18<sup>th</sup> century turned to the 19<sup>th</sup>, and the campaign against the plume trade launched state and national Audubon societies that persist into today.

\***Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula*— This species may have the showiest plumes, as well as golden slippers. I recorded a few more individuals of Snowy Egret compared to Great.

**Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea*— We only saw this species on two days. Adults are deep blue all over, but immature birds are all white and can be confused with Snowy Egrets.

**Tricolored Heron** *Egretta tricolor*— We saw this species only at Ocean City Welcome Center, and none of the birds I saw was close by. This species looks a lot like a Little Blue, but it has a white belly.

**Green Heron** *Butorides virescens*— We only saw one individual of this species, at the saltmarsh at Two Mile Landing. It has a chestnut neck and yellow legs.

\***Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*— We only saw night-herons at the Ocean City Welcome Center, but both species had close-in nests. This species is a relatively drab black, white, and gray, but also has a bright red eye.

\***Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea*— I loved the view we had of this species on the nest with the long yellow plumes on the head!

### **IBIS AND SPOONBILLS: Threskiornithidae (2)**

**White Ibis** *Eudocimus albus*— A few years back, the northernmost breeding White Ibis were in the Carolinas, so everyone was surprised when they started breeding in New Jersey! They may be white, but they also have a bright red face and legs.

\***Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*— I forgot to record this species at the Welcome Center, but we had a large flock at Forsythe Refuge earlier in the day. The wings and back are glossy, but in the breeding season, the front is bright maroon.

### **NEW WORLD VULTURES: Cathartidae (2)**

**Black Vulture** *Coragyps atratus*— This species never seems as common as the next one, but we saw it every day. It's fun to learn to tell the two vultures apart: this species is shaped more like a Red-tailed Hawk, with a broad tail and wings. Also, this species has white "finger-tips".

**Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura*— This species emerges in the sky as the day warms up and the thermals help it to soar effortlessly. This vulture has long wings, half brownish-black and half silvery gray. It usually shows a narrower tail than the other vulture.

### **OSPREY: Pandionidae (1)**

\***Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*— Have you ever seen so many Ospreys in your life? In the mid-70s, we thought they would go extinct, but after DDT was banned, they've made a huge comeback. I'm not sure Cape May could hold more Ospreys than what we saw. I counted 15 on our marshboat trip aboard the Osprey.

### **HAWKS, KITES AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (2)**

**Bald Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*— This species has also rebounded from losses suffered during the DDT era, but we didn't see nearly as many as we did Ospreys. I counted 4 during our trip on the Osprey. We saw both full adults and immature birds. It takes them 4 years to get a fully white head and tail.

**Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis*— We saw only one of this species – at Cook's Beach. Cape May has all the raptors in the fall, not so much in the spring.

### **WOODPECKERS: Picidae (4)**

**Red-bellied Woodpecker** *Melanerpes carolinus*— Everyone wants to call this "Red-headed Woodpecker", but the real Red-head has the entire head red, not just the top and back. We saw 4 of these on 3 days.

**Downy Woodpecker** *Dryobates pubescens*— A small woodpecker, we only had it on two days.

**Hairy Woodpecker** *Dryobates villosus*— This is a bigger version of the Downy. We only had one.

**Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus*— We didn't have a lot of woodpeckers on this trip, but these 4 are the regular ones in Cape May. We had a flicker once at the Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia and once at the Forsythe Refuge north of Cape May in New Jersey.

### **TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: Tyrannidae (3)**

**Eastern Phoebe** *Sayornis phoebe*— Like the flicker, we had an Eastern Phoebe once at Heinz and once at Forsythe. Both like relatively open habitats that the two refuges provide. Both flickers and phoebes are short-distance migrants, wintering primarily in the United States.

\***Great Crested Flycatcher** *Myiarchus crinitus*— We had this species on 5 different days. It is typical to hear this species calling from the canopy, so we were lucky to have a few good looks in the open. This species and the next one are long-distance migrants wintering in tropical region.



\***Eastern Kingbird** *Tyrannus tyrannus*— What a great scientific name – bestowed because this species attacks any species (including crows and humans) that gets near its nest. Its call sounds like electric sparks; it's a gray and white bird with a distinctive white tail band. We had 6 individuals on 4 days.

### **VIREOS: Vireonidae (3)**

**White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus*— HO. You might think it odd that all 3 of the vireos were heard-only birds, but they all feed by picking caterpillars from leaves, so they are rarely in the open. We were close to White-eyes several times, especially at Higbee Beach, but I don't think anyone got a peek.

**Warbling Vireo** *Vireo gilvus*— HO. This species earns its name with a long up-and-down warble; we only had it at Heinz Refuge in Pennsylvania.

**Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus*— HO. This species has sing-songy three-note phrases: "Here-I-am, Where-are-You?" repeated endlessly all summer long. Like the Warbling, we only had this species at Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia.

### **CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (3)**

\***Blue Jay** *Cyanocitta cristata*— I hope all the westerners got good looks at this species; it's really a blue, black, and white jay with a persistent "jay" call. We had at least one almost every day, plus a flock of a dozen flying north over the beach early on our first full day in Cape May.

**American Crow** *Corvus brachyrhynchos*— Luckily, crows like to talk since the two species look so similar. This is the familiar species found across the country that goes "caw, caw, caw". We had a couple almost every day.

**Fish Crow** *Corvus ossifragus*— This species is restricted to the southeastern United States, so may have been new for some of you. It has a bad attitude, always saying "unh, unh" no matter what the question is.

### **SWALLOWS AND MARTINS: Hirundinidae (4)**

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*— Surprisingly, only Brad had this species. It nests near freshwater ponds.

\***Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor*— We saw this species every day, but never in huge numbers. It has a blue back, a white belly, and a squarish tail. It nests in bluebird boxes and adds white feathers to its nest.

\***Purple Martin** *Progne subis*— Holy mackerel, did we see a lot of martins or what? I counted 50 at the Cape May hawkwatch, 30 at Forsythe Refuge, and 20 at South Cape May Meadows. Those were probably all underestimates. We were lucky to visit 3 well-maintained colonies. Without careful stewardship (or with an unexpected spring freeze), martin colonies can die out.

\***Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*— We saw this species every day, including a large number nesting under the boardwalk at Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia. This species can be found worldwide, always with the characteristic forked tail.

### **TITS AND CHICKADEES: Paridae (2)**

\***Carolina Chickadee** *Poecile carolinensis*— Rick lives in northern New Jersey, where the chickadee is Black-capped, like it is over much of North America. Carolina looks a lot like Black-capped, but there are subtle differences, and Carolina is restricted to the southeastern United States. We had a chickadee or 2 almost every day.

**Tufted Titmouse** *Baeolophus bicolor*—This species also has a southeastern range, although it goes a bit farther north into Black-capped Chickadee territory. It has some calls that are similar to chickadees, but is unmistakable with its crest. It took a while, but I think everyone got good looks at this species in the last couple of days.

### **WRENS: Troglodytidae (3)**

**House Wren** *Troglodytes aedon*—HO! On 2 days. Normally, this is an easy bird to see, but it really does prefer houses, and we didn't spend much time birding in suburbia. It's a nice, bubbly song.

**Marsh Wren** *Cistothorus palustris*— We had amazingly good looks at this species from the first boardwalk at Forsythe Refuge, including an individual going in and out of a nest. Often this species hides in the marsh grass and refuses to be seen.

\***Carolina Wren** *Thryothorus ludovicianus*— We heard this species every day, whether it was saying chee-burger or tea-kettle tea-kettle. They finally started showing themselves on the last two days: big white line over the eye, rufous back, and cinnamon breast.

### **GNATCATCHERS: Polioptilidae (1)**

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** *Polioptila caerulea*— HO. We heard this species at Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia. It's a pretty common species, but it arrives early and stops singing early, so it's hard to find even by mid-May.

### **THRUSHES: Turdidae (3)**

**Eastern Bluebird** *Sialia sialis*—We had a pair of bluebirds at the end of the loop at Forsythe Refuge.

**Wood Thrush** *Hylocichla mustelina*— HO. Some of us got to hear the call of this species from the vans on the drive along Cooks Road from Cooks Beach: wick, wick, wick.

**American Robin** *Turdus migratorius*— Are we sure this isn't the national bird? It may be both the most common and the most widespread of our native species, so not surprisingly, we had at least one every day. Don't forget that it's a pretty bird with a pretty song and a wide variety of calls.

### **MOCKINGBIRDS AND THRASHERS: Mimidae (3)**

\***Gray Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis*— This species was all over Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia. It wasn't as common in Cape May, but we had at least one on 3 days. I hope you all got to hear it meow.

\***Brown Thrasher** *Toxostoma rufum*— This is a very secretive species, so we were lucky to encounter it 3 times. I think most of us got to see it traveling back and forth to a nest near the Coral Avenue platform (Spring Migrationwatch).

\***Northern Mockingbird** *Mimus polyglottos*— This is NOT a secretive species, so we saw and heard it every day. We didn't have time to count how many species were being mimicked, but others have. I don't remember the number, but I think one individual mimicked 20+ species in a study.

### **STARLINGS AND MYNAS: Sturnidae (1)**

\***European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris (I)*— We saw it every day, but not in big numbers. It really is a very interesting-looking bird, and it can mimic other species too.

### **OLD WORLD SPARROWS: Passeridae (1)**

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus (I)*— We saw this species every day as well, at least in part because we had them at and near our hotel. The male is very distinctive, but the female is pretty plain and often gets confused with other species.

### **FINCHES: Fringillidae (2)**

**House Finch** *Haemorhous mexicanus*— Like the House Wren, this species hangs around suburbia. We encountered it at 6 places on 4 days, but never in big numbers.

**American Goldfinch** *Spinus tristis*— Another species not to take for granted! We saw this species a lot, but never very many. They are a late breeder, so they haven't started yet.

### **NEW WORLD SPARROWS: Passerellidae (6)**

**Chipping Sparrow** *Spizella passerina*— We had several looks at this sharp-looking sparrow with a chestnut cap, white line over the eye, black line through the eye, and white breast. They usually nest in evergreen trees near houses.

\***Field Sparrow** *Spizella pusilla*—I was surprised to see this species in the dunegrass; I usually see them in shrubby fields. The pink bill is a clincher on the identification.

\***Seaside Sparrow** *Ammospiza maritimus*—Like the Marsh Wren, this species often hides in the saltmarsh and never makes an appearance. In contrast, we kept running into birds in the open, singing their hearts out!

**Savannah Sparrow** *Passerculus sandwichensis*— This species is SUPPOSED to be in the dunes, and we had one from the Coral Avenue platform.

\***Song Sparrow** *Melospiza melodia*— “Sweet, sweet, sweet SWEET kettle-ettle-ettle” is how this bird earned its name. We at least heard this species every day.

\***Eastern Towhee** *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*— Most of us saw this species at South Cape May Meadows, then we ran into the motherlode at the Two Mile Unit of Cape May NWR.

### **YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT: Icteriidae (1)**

**Yellow-breasted Chat** *Icteria virens*—I love the song of this bird! Some of us got to see it giving its flight-song at Garrett Family Preserve – priceless! We also had one at Forsythe Refuge. It’s such an unusual bird that it has no known relatives, so it has been placed in its own family.

### **NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS: Icteridae (5)**

\***Orchard Oriole** *Icterus spurius*— What a surprise when we tracked down the singing oriole at Beach Plum Farm that it was a one-year-old male Orchard Oriole in a female-like plumage with a black throat surrounded by a small amount of chestnut. We also heard at least one at Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia, where they are common.

**Baltimore Oriole** *Icterus galbula*— HO. We heard one at the Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia and another the next day in Cape May. It’s too bad we never got to see this beautiful bird!

\***Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus*— We saw and heard this species every day. It prefers wetlands, but can also be found in open fields.

**Brown-headed Cowbird** *Molothrus ater*— We saw this species every day. Females are plain gray and difficult to recognize when they aren’t with a male.

**Common Grackle** *Quiscalus quiscula*— Another species we saw every day. I would say that it has a long tail, but it isn’t nearly as long as the next species.

**Boat-tailed Grackle** *Quiscalus major*— Unlike Common Grackle, this species is a saltmarsh specialist, and we saw it at most of the saltmarshes we visited. It has some strange loud calls!

### **NEW WORLD WARBLERS: Parulidae (8)**

**Ovenbird** *Seiurus aurocapilla*— HO. At Forsythe Refuge. This species breeds on the forest floor of Eastern deciduous forests.

\***Prothonotary Warbler** *Protonotaria citrea*— Our patience paid off! Rick and I heard one when we arrived at the wet woodland at The Beanery (Rea’s Farm), but then it got quiet. It finally reappeared many minutes later, and most of us got good looks at this bright yellow warbler. (A prothonotary is a Catholic official who wears yellow garments.)

\***Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas*— This was the common warbler of our trip. It is a wetland specialist, and we spent a lot of time in or near wetlands, so we heard a lot of “witchety, witchety, witchety” and occasionally saw a bright yellow male with a black mask.

**American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla*—HO. We heard this species at Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia and at the Garrett Family Preserve in Cape May. I’m not sure if anyone got a look. Like the Orchard Oriole, first-year-male redstarts can look like females and sing like the males they are.

\***Yellow Warbler** *Setophaga petechia*— “Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweeter-than-sweet.” This was a very common bird at Forsythe Refuge and at the Two Mile Unit of Cape May Refuge. It loves willows and other trees near water.

**Blackpoll Warbler** *Setophaga striata*— HO. We heard a (long-distance) migrant at Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia. This species breeds in the boreal forest of Canada (and a bit of northern New England) and winters in South America.

**Pine Warbler** *Setophaga pinus*— A few of us got to see this species while we were walking in the shrubbery near the hawkwatch platform at Cape May, but more of us got good looks at Sea Grove Avenue in Cape May. It really does stick to the pines!

\***Prairie Warbler** *Setophaga discolor*— We heard this species on 5 different days (a trill that rises steadily in pitch), and many of us got really good looks at the Garrett Family Preserve in Cape May. It’s a stunning-looking black-and-yellow bird!

### **CARDINAL-GROSBEAKS: Cardinalidae (3)**



\***Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis*— Maybe we Easterners can be forgiven for ignoring cardinals – we saw them every day and pretty much every place. But, they are gorgeous, and their whistled song is pretty attractive too.

\***Blue Grosbeak** *Passerina caerulea*— We only saw one, but he perched in the open, and many of us got a good look. It is a lot like an Indigo Bunting, but larger, with a bigger beak, and a bright rufous patch on the wing.

\***Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea*— Bluer than a jay or a bluebird! And pretty tiny – but really intensely blue. We had males every day, and an occasional gray-brown female.

### Mammals (5 species)

\***Eastern Cottontail** *Sylvilagus floridanus*— A bunny a day keeps the doctor away!

\***Eastern Gray Squirrel** *Sciurus carolinensis*— We saw several of these. Don't tell anyone that these cute mammals eat a lot of bird eggs.

**Muskrat** *Ondatra zibethicus*— We saw a couple of these swimming in the wetlands

**Common Bottlenose Dolphin** *Tursiops truncatus*— We had great luck with dolphins just offshore on at least 4 days!

**Common Raccoon** *Procyon lotor*— I don't remember this species, but I have it marked down for May 18, which we spent at various sites in Cape May.

### Reptiles and Amphibians (5 species)

\***Diamondback Terrapin** *Malaclemys terrapin*— We got good looks at Forsythe Refuge.

**Painted Turtle** *Chrysemys picta*— We saw this species at Heinz Refuge in Philadelphia.

**Red-eared Slider** *Trachemys scripta elegans*— This is a midwestern species that has escaped in the East from pet owners. It is a subspecies of the Pond Slider.

**Black Racer** *Coluber constrictor*— These snakes eat any animal they can catch, including bird eggs and baby birds.

\***American Toad** *Anaxyrus americanus*— Did anyone come down with warts?

### Crabs (2 species)

\***Horseshoe Crab** *Limulus polyphemus*— I didn't forget – did you? – that Horseshoe Crabs aren't really crabs, but they are Arachnids with an ancient lineage. And they are the spring food base for Red Knots, Dunlins, Ruddy Turnstones, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Laughing Gulls in Delaware Bay. I won't forget the night we Returned the Favor!

\***Fiddler Crab** (one of a hundred species!)— The males' major claw is much larger than the minor claw, while the females' claws are both the same size. Fiddler crabs love the mudflats in saltmarshes!

\***Ghost Crab** (one of many species)— Dana got a night photo while we were Returning the Favor.