

Birding A Seashore Near You

May 23 –May 31, 2018

Itinerary

To date, Kane County Audubon has taken some pretty neat trips to places far and wide across our country. But as yet we have not ventured to the Mid-Atlantic States. So in May 2018 we're heading out to the Mid-Atlantic States on the eastern seaboard and will bird New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia and North Carolina targeting primarily migrating shorebirds, coastal passerines and topped off with pelagic seabirds! Many of the birds we'll be seeing already occur in Illinois but the possibility of picking up those dozen or two we rarely if ever get to see here is pretty good. In all (based upon 10 year sighting reports in ebird) there's the probability we could see over two hundred species! Our planned itinerary will be as follows:

Day 1 (Wednesday, May 23)

An early morning flight will get us to Philadelphia (PHL) where we'll rent our transportation and then drive toward Cape May New Jersey. Cape May is a peninsula in southern New Jersey that juts out between the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay creating one of the most productive migrant traps in the country. On our way we'll be stopping at a famous east coast shorebird destination, Forsythe NWR. Then once in Cape May we'll do our usual shopping for food and drink with the rest of the day being spent combing the beaches and wooded areas around the bottom of the cape looking for shorebirds and late passerine migrants. Hopefully here we'll get our first looks at Red Knots, and Nelson's Sparrow. Overnight in Wildwood at the Days Inn and Suites.

Day 2 (Thursday, May24)

With an early morning start we'll continue searching through the myriads of shorebirds, gulls and migrant passerines around the cape visiting such places as Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area, Cape May Wetlands State Natural Area, and the Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge. These few areas alone could produce over one hundred species of birds. Overnight again in Wildwood at the Day's Inn and Suites.

Day 3 (Friday, May 25)

Another early morning start will put us at the shoreline near the boat docks where we'll catch the ferry that takes us to the Delaware shore at the south end of Delaware Bay. On the crossing we'll keep a careful eye out for any lingering Great Cormorants which are not uncommon still this late in the year. Once in Delaware there are a number of options depending on RBA and eBird reports but our main target stops for the day will include Bombay Hook NWR, Prime Hook NWR and/or Slaughter Beach where we will hopefully get to witness the spring horseshoe crab migration. These prehistoric creatures invade the beaches of New Jersey and Delaware each

spring depositing their gazillions of eggs, a favorite and essential nutrient for the myriads of shorebirds passing through the area. As in Cape May we'll be looking for such birds as Red Knot, many species of sandpipers and plovers, varieties of rails, and terns as well as Seaside Sparrow, and Saltmarsh Sparrow. Ruff have been reported in April and May of 2016 and 2017. In May of 2008 a Wood Sandpiper was seen in Prime Hook NWR and a Little Egret was well seen in Bombay Hook NWR just this past June and July. You never know what's going to show up. Overnight at the Sleep Inn & Suites in Lewes DE.

Day 4 (Saturday, May 26)

Picking up where we left off on Day 3 and with another early morning start, our trip will continue down the coast and for about 100 miles where we'll be visiting well known birding hotspots along the eastern seaboard. A primary stop will be Chincoteague NWR with its 22 square miles of forest, seacoast and beaches, inlets and marshes. We may even get to see the wild horses that live here. Overnight at the Quality Inn in Exmore.

Day 5 (Sunday, May 27)

On Day 5 we continue into more southerly climes and some of our targets will begin to change. Stops will now include searching more actively for Piping Plover, Nelson's Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow and of course the various rails including, King, Clapper, and Virginia Rails and we'll always be listening for the very hard to find Black Rail. We'll pass through Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, cross the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel and head over to the beautiful beaches of Virginia. A stop will be made at Back Bay NWR, a can't miss spot. From here we'll do a long drive south to Buxton and Cape Hatteras. Along the way we should stop at a few places such as Pea Island (appropriate name for a rest stop as well). In Buxton we'll get a good night's sleep in preparation for the next day; **PELAGIC!** (See notes on the Pelagic Trip in the General Information pages) Overnight in Buxton at the Cape Pines Motel.

Day 6 (Monday, May 28)

The Brian Patteson pelagic out to the Atlantic Gulf Stream is well known throughout the birding world as a place to easily get birds you'll find no place else in the United States. Shearwaters, petrels, storm-petrels, terns and gulls will be the order of the day which will hopefully include, Cory's Shearwater, Black-capped Petrel, Manx Shearwater, Audubon's Shearwater, Bridled Tern, Wilson's and Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, and Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. And of course we're always hopeful for the occasionally rare petrels such as Bermuda, Fea's, or Herald Petrels or the equally rare European or White-faced Storm-Petrels. This year a Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel was seen. For more information go to www.Patteson.com and peruse through the home page especially looking at Spring 2017 reports. After a full day at sea we'll again overnight again in Buxton.

Day 7 (Tuesday, May 29)

Our day will start by birding the Hatteras lighthouse area for a full morning of Carolina beaches, and around noon start heading back to the “mainland”. A four hour ride aboard two ferries (very smooth) will take us from Hatteras through Ocracoke and over to Cedar Island. Along the way there will be more than ample “opportunities” to study local gulls “up close and personal” (bring some bread). Once on Cedar Island we’ll continue to search for Seaside Sparrow and the various rails that are abundant (but hard to see) in the tall coastal grass marshes. Toward evening and after dinner we’ll sit by the Cedar Island boat ramps and listen for Black Rail. Unfortunately this bird has been dwindling in numbers but we’ll try nonetheless. Overnight in Morehead City at the Quality Inn.

Day 8 (Wednesday, May 30)

Today we’re up very early and heading back to Cedar Island where we’ll spend the earlier hours looking and listening again for rails. Then around nine o’clock or so we’ll return to the motel, have breakfast, check out and continue up to the Croatan National Forest. The rest of the day will be spent here looking for southern woodland specialties including, Worm-eating Warbler, Swainson’s Warbler, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachman’s Sparrow and Brown-headed Nuthatch. Then, later in the afternoon, we will begin our last leg of the trip up to the Raleigh Durham Airport (RDU) where we will have a final dinner, complete our checklists and get ready to depart the next morning. Overnight at the Comfort Inn at the Raleigh Durham Airport.

Day 9 (Thursday, May 31)

Fly home.