



# Friendly, fun, and Informative Bird Watching

**2018**  
**Year of the Bird**

October 2018, Issue 16

Checkout our **NEW** website at [www.southernoceanbirdinggroup.org](http://www.southernoceanbirdinggroup.org) for our calendar of events, informational links, and other news.

## September Cape May



### Feathers and Eggs

- Our sympathy goes out to friends and family of Fred Lesser, who passed away recently. The SOBG would not exist without his help and support. The Board is exploring ways to honor his memory.
- Our 2018 Holiday Party will be on December 6 **at the Jacques Cousteau Preserve on Great Bay Blvd, Tuckerton. This is due to conflict at Seaport.** Sign up sheets for items to bring will be at the next meeting.

## November 1 Meeting

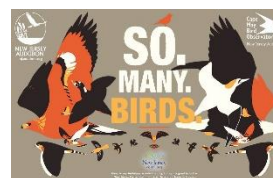


Our next meeting is November 1, at 6:30 p.m. at the Hunting Shanty of Tuckerton Seaport. **Larissa Smith**, Wildlife Biologist with Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ will present at program on **The NJ Bald Eagle Project: Past, Present, and Future.**

Bald Eagles have made a remarkable comeback in NJ. In the 1980's only one nesting pair could be found in the Garden State. As of last year, there are 150 active pairs. Learn about the efforts that have led to this remarkable recovery and how Bald Eagles in NJ are being monitored and protected today.

Light refreshments will be available.

## Field Trip October 19



Our next field trip is to Cape May, October 19. The NJAS Fall Festival is going on and you can meet us at the CMP Hawkwatch at 9:30 a.m. or at the Galloway Rest Area on the GSP at 8:30 a.m. to carpool.

# Cape May Week

**By Greg Prelich**

An advantage of being a SOBG member is that the group rents a house in Cape May for four nights each fall. And fall in Cape May is the nearest thing to birding heaven here in NJ. Even though we live an average of two hours north of Cape May, it is entirely different when you wake up right in the middle of the excitement.

This year we decided to arrive a few weeks earlier than our typical October stay, and it was interesting to note the differences in the birds this year compared with what we have seen for the past few years. There are so many good places to bird in Cape May that even during a five-day stay we didn't have time to cover them all. One of the highlights each year is spending a few hours at the Cape May Hawk Watch, one of the premier hawk watch sites in the world. Mid-October here presents a nice mix of raptors dominated by Sharp-shinned and Coopers Hawks, while on this trip the story was falcons. Merlins and American Kestrels were more common than accipiters on this trip.

Another highlight each year is visiting Higbee Beach WMA to observe the morning flight phenomenon, where warblers and other migrants that arrived overnight traverse just above the treetops, heading northward to avoid a long flight over Delaware Bay. Our morning at Higbee was one of the most productive of the trip, highlighted by a surprising Clay-colored Sparrow and an immature Red-headed Woodpecker that were found within 15 minutes of each other. The Clay-colored Sparrow was only the third reported in NJ so far this year, and Red-headed Woodpecker is not very common in Cape May. It was interesting to watch the Red-headed Woodpecker noisily protect 'its trees' from the numerous Northern Flickers that were migrating through. Add in birds like Philadelphia Vireo, Northern Waterthrush, Swainson's Thrush, and Canada Warbler and you have the recipe for a terrific morning.

The day that we arrived at the house, a text alert reported that activity was strong around Lake Lily, especially on the north and western sides. This was

great news, since our house is on the western shore of Lake Lily. And indeed, it was quite productive this year. In past years, because we usually arrive in mid-October, most warblers have already passed through, with the vast majority that remained being Yellow-rumped Warbler. This year we had a greater diversity of warblers, with Blackpolls being the most common, followed by Northern Parulas, American Redstarts, and Black-and-white Warblers. In previous years, sightings of Cape May Warblers were rare for us, while this year they were not uncommon. (yay!) Overall, the group spotted 18 species of warblers on this trip, and somewhat refreshingly, we didn't see a single Yellow-rumped Warbler, highlighting the advantage of visiting here at a different time of year.

One problem with renting this house in Cape May is that it is tough to stop birding. On most days we would start birding when birds stopped becoming featureless silhouettes around 7AM, return back to the house around noon for lunch and rest, and while trying to eat lunch on the porch (always with binoculars within an arm's reach away!) finding that we were being distracted by nearby activity. Red-breasted Nuthatches squeaked from the nearby trees. A cooperative Wilson's Warbler stayed in a holly tree just alongside our porch for an entire day. And one day Jeanine accidentally flushed a Mourning Dove from the front pine. A Mourning Dove sighting is not unusual, but this bird returned to nearly the same location shortly afterward. Closer inspection revealed a nest with two chicks on it that provided my first sighting of a Mourning Dove nest. It's amazing that such a common bird avoided detection of its nest for so long. In fact, we were there for three days before we noticed the nest just a few feet from our front porch.

This year's trip included two remarkable episodes that were detailed in other blog entries. One was the capture of a Yellow-green Vireo in the banding nets at the Meadows, allowing us to view this first-for-NJ species up close. The second episode was a sighting of a Parasitic Jaeger on land off the Coral Ave. viewing platform.



**Friends in Southern Ocean  
Birding Group (group)**