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**Fall Bird Migration: Hawk Mountain and
Cape May Birding Tour
October 1-8, 2014
With Dan Donaldson**

Experience the best of fall migration on a Hawk Mountain and Cape May birding tour to the Atlantic Coast where we visit two of the most recognized fall birding locations in the United States. Hawk Mountain to witness raptors of all kinds gliding the fall breezes along the Appalachian ridges. Then it's off to the Atlantic Seaboard and Cape May New Jersey. This Victorian town is a national historic district and is strategically located on the southern tip of New Jersey. Seabirds, raptors and songbirds that migrate along the east coast often pass low and slow over Cape May. Birdwatchers flock there each fall.

Hawk Mountain:

If there is a Mecca for birders and conservation minded people, Hawk Mountain is truly it. The mountain, once a spot where thousands of hawks were killed for sport, became the world's refuge for birds of prey in 1934, and is now one of the world's premier raptor and raptor migration research centers. We'll spend the better part of two days at this location exploring this famous mountain and the wonderful education facilities at the sanctuary. The lookouts are at the top of the mountain and we'll be walking the ¾ mile, well-maintained trails, to the top both days. There is no rush to get to the top so we will take our time enjoying the casual but steady incline to the ridge. Once there we'll spend much of the day sitting at the lookouts enjoying the beauty of eastern Pennsylvania in fall, hawk migration, and camaraderie of hawk watchers from all over the world. We'll enjoy accommodations in Pottsville PA.

Cape May:

The remainder of our trip will be spent exploring the Cape May region of New Jersey, a three hour drive from Hawk Mountain, where fall migration is about much more than hawks. One of the top birding destinations in North America, the Cape May peninsula of New Jersey is famous for its concentrations of migrating birds, birders, tidal salt marshes, and Victorian charm. Many of the land and sea birds migrating along the coast of North America end up spending some time at the Cape May peninsula and Delaware Bay area. The town itself is a



national historic site and offers some of the country's best examples of Victorian Architecture as well as some of the best seafood dining on the east coast.

We visit the famous Cape May Bird Observatory, Cape May Point Hawk Watch, Forsythe (formerly Brigantine) National Wildlife Refuge and many of the fresh and saltwater habitats that make New Jersey one of the best birding locations in the world. There's a reason they hold the World Series of Birding here every year. Our lodgings in the heart of historic Cape May will provide a central location for our birding exploits and many options for those that wish hang back to explore the town. We'll begin each morning with optional sunrise beach walks that will almost certainly provide some of the best views of shorebirds and the endangered Black Skimmers you'll ever get. Daily trips will range from exploring one of the worlds best example of tidal salt marshes to visiting one of the most successful beach restorations in the country. We'll have opportunities to explore habitats and locations at several Atlantic Coastal locations as well as the Delaware Bay. Keep in mind that the weather and tides play an important role in the migration along the coast and we may rearrange the day's activities accordingly.



ITINERARY

Wed., Oct. 1 Arrival in Philadelphia

Arrive at the Philadelphia Airport and assemble at 2:00 pm at a central location in baggage claim area for departure for our lodging near Hawk Mountain. Travel time by van is about 90 minutes. We'll have time to freshen up for dinner and depart for a local evening activity.
Accommodations in Pottsville, PA (D)

Thurs., Oct. 2 Hawk Mountain

After breakfast we will travel the short distance to Hawk Mountain. We will explore the education center and spend the rest of the enjoying the mountain and hawk watching as we scan the skies for migrating raptors. This is the peak season to see the greatest variety of birds of prey as they drift south along the mountain ridge.

A picnic or box lunch will be provided on the mountain. Dan will review identification of raptors and discuss the phenomena of migration.

Accommodations in Pottsville, PA (B, L, D)



Fri., Oct. 3 Hawk Mountain to Cape May

After breakfast we'll gather our things and spend the morning again exploring Hawk Mountain. After lunch we'll depart for Cape May, New Jersey (approx 3 hours). We will arrive at our accommodations in time to relax before dinner at a favorite restaurant. After dinner we'll explore the historic downtown area of Cape May or participate in a local activity.

Accommodations in Cape May (B, L, D)

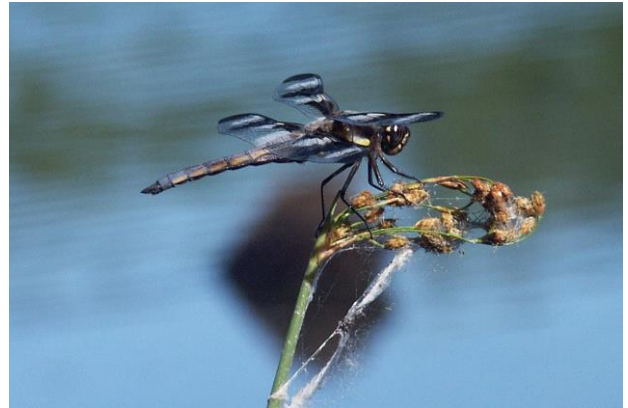
Sat., Oct. 4 Cape May Bird Observatory / South Cape May Meadows Migratory Bird Refuge (TNC)

After the optional sunrise beach walk (6:30am), we'll begin our day with breakfast.

We'll then head to the Cape May Bird Observatory Headquarters and Gift Shop to orient ourselves to the area and get the local birding news. Then we're off to the Cape May State Park Hawk Watch Platform and light house. There we'll enjoy a morning of hawk watching and visiting the nature center and light house.

We'll spend the afternoon at the South Cape May Meadows Migratory Bird Refuge, part of the Cape Island Important Bird Area, also known as "the meadows". Owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy, this important coastal birding area is one of the most successful habitat restorations on the Atlantic seaboard. It's also famous for evening Merlin and Peregrine flights as they work the meadows to catch that last dragonfly snack before settling in for the evening.

Accommodations in Cape May (B, L, D)



Sun., Oct. 5 Pontoon Boat Tour / Nummy Island Drive / Sunset Beach

After breakfast we'll head to Miss Chris Marina and board the Osprey, a large pontoon tour boat to explore the salt marshes along the intercoastal waterway. We'll have a chance to see many shorebirds and migrating waterfowl and get to walk out onto the seagrass islands of the Saltmarsh. We should also get to see the elusive Diamond Back Terrapin, Americas only saltwater turtle.



After lunch we're off to further explore the salt marshes as we drive the intercoastal areas with stops at Nummy island and saltmarsh areas. With patience you can learn to identify gulls, not the easiest task! Improving your skills is a great benefit of this fall migration birding tour.

We'll catch the sunset at Sunset beach back in Cape May, then return to our hotel to freshen up for dinner

at a local restaurant.

Accommodations in Cape May (B, L, D)

Mon., Oct. 6 Morning Flight / Higbee Beach

We're off for an early start. We'll have breakfast at a local convenient shop and head off for Morning Flight. Morning flight is an ongoing morning watch/count of returning birds that were pushed out to sea on their evening migration. This is a chance to see hundreds, if not thousands, of warblers and other passerines making their way back to land. We'll spend the rest of the morning exploring nearby Higbee Beach on the Delaware Bay.

After lunch we'll explore another local natural area or take time out to explore downtown Cape May in daylight hours depending on birding reports.

Accommodations in Cape May (B, L, D)

Tue., Oct. 7 Edwin B. Forsythe NWR / Avalon Sea Watch

We begin with our optional sunrise beach walk followed by breakfast. Then we'll bird through the salt marsh areas north of Cape May as we make our way to Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (once known as Brigantine), a 43,000 acre natural area with both fresh and saltwater marshes. Great opportunities to see clapper rails, bitterns, migrating shorebirds and waterfowl, and peregrines hunting the marshes. On the way back to Cape May, we'll stop at the Avalon Sea Watch, one of the country's longest running seabird watch/counting sites.

For our last evening together we'll dine at the famous Lobster House Restaurant on the warf in Cape May. *Accommodations in Cape May (B, L, D)*

Wed., Oct. 8 Departures

Because our drive is several hours to Philadelphia, we plan to be at the airport by 10:30AM ask you to make your flights out after Noon. (B)

COST OF THE JOURNEY

Cost of the journey is \$2295, based on double occupancy, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Tour cost includes accommodations for 7 nights, meals as specified in the itinerary, professional guide services, park and program entrance fees and miscellaneous program expenses. Single supplement is \$405.

Cost of the tour does not include: round-trip airfare to and from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone, drinks from the bar; or gratuities for luggage handling or personal services. With fewer than 6 participants, a small-group surcharge (typically \$100-200 per participant) may apply, or we may request that you pick up the cost of a few additional dinners in lieu of that surcharge.



TRAVEL INFORMATION

The airport for this tour is Philadelphia International Airport in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (PHL). Most major airlines service this very centrally-located airport. Plan to arrive by 2PM on Oct. 1 and plan to depart after Noon on Oct. 8.

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Photo credits: Red-headed Woodpecker, Wheeler McDougal, Jr.; Eastern Phoebe, Dragonfly, Gulls, Lesser Scaup – Richard Becker. Whimbrel and Northern Harrier, Greg Smith www.flickr.com/photos/slobirdr

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