

# BEACHCOMBER

• • • • "Let us take a journey down the Shore to see what we can find..."

## The Jersey Shore...It's for the Birds in Fall!



**Drake Harlequin Ducks return to the jetties at Barnegat Inlet each November.**

As the crisp autumn breeze blows in the window, it's time for the aromas of apple and cinnamon and everything pumpkin spice. Autumn's arrival also coincides with the annual bird migration, and the Jersey Shore plays a pivotal role.

Thousands of birds enroute to and from destinations as far away as the Arctic and South America pass through the Jersey Shore region every year. "Many species of birds travel to locations far away from the Jersey Shore, but they stop here to rest and refuel along their journey," said Scott Barnes, director of All Things Bird and assistant director of Eco-Travel at New Jersey Audubon.

Barnes explained that because there are so many bird species passing through at any given time, there isn't one single peak time for migration. Diversity leads to different times

for patterns of migration. As birds enjoy a "layover" of sorts at the Jersey Shore, the numbers day to day will vary.

"One species that actually began its migration in July is the American

Golden-Plover, which travels from the Arctic to South America," Barnes said. "While rare, American Golden-Plovers have been sighted at Island Beach State Park." The American Golden-Plover actually stops along



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the Jersey Shore during its amazing cross-global journey.

There are several locations in Monmouth and Ocean counties that can yield a variety of bird sightings throughout the migration season. While some species fly on through, others will call the Jersey Shore home during the winter months.

Barnegat Light is a prime spot to see birds on the move during the fall migration. It is also an ideal place to see birds that call the Barnegat Inlet home for the winter including Harlequin Ducks, which winter exclusively at Barnegat Light. As such, Barnegat Light has earned the title of a Jersey Shore “birding hot spot.” Other species wintering at Barnegat Light include Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Common and Red-throated Loons, and White-winged, Black, and Surf Scoters.

Another Jersey Shore birding



## THE DOS & DON'TS OF BIRDING

### DO:

- use binoculars
- educate yourself
- record your sightings
- approach with extreme care
- wear appropriate shoes

### DON'T:

- disturb nests
- cause injury to birds or other wildlife
- damage the dunes or habitats of birds or other wildlife
- feed birds/wildlife food that is not part of their regular diet
- leave any garbage

hot spot is the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, which is located in one of the Atlantic Flyway's most active flight paths for seasonal migration. The refuge stretches from Mantoloking through Brigantine, with its wetlands providing a habitat for permanent and transient birds, as well as other wildlife. Snow geese typically arrive between October and December, while more than one hundred thousand ducks and geese have been known to visit during early November. Other types of birds one

might observe during the fall migration are Northern Gannets, Hooded Mergansers, Blue-winged Teals, and Bald Eagles.

A little known Jersey Shore area that is a haven for birders is called the North Shore, which refers to the coastal sections of Monmouth County from the Manasquan Inlet north to Sandy Hook. During the off-season from late fall through early spring, birds of all kinds visit the region's fresh water ponds, river and stream inlets, ocean accesses, and wetlands. Many rare species have been observed in the North Shore during migration, including Eurasian Wigeons, Purple Sandpipers, Red-necked Grebe, and Iceland Gulls.

As the months get colder, a local favorite to look for is the Snowy Owl, who has wintered along the Jersey Shore at both Sandy Hook and Island Beach State Park over the past few years. Unfortunately, overzealous people have caused the owls to become spooked, as well as caused damage to the dunes and surrounding areas by trying to take pictures of the owls. Barnes urges people to keep their distance and to not approach a Snowy Owl for any reason.

As assistant director of Eco-Travel for New Jersey Audubon, Barnes shares his passion for birds through advocacy and education. New Jersey Audubon, one of the oldest Audubon societies in the country, is a non-profit membership orga-



Ray Yeager

**Above:** A Hooded Merganser during the fall migration.

**Left:** The American Golden-Plover stops along the Jersey Shore during its migration from the Arctic to South America.

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## “NEW JERSEY YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB” FALL EVENTS

*Pre-registration is required. For more information: (609) 898-8848 or [www.njyoungbirders.weebly.com](http://www.njyoungbirders.weebly.com); email: [sam.wilson@njaudubon.org](mailto:sam.wilson@njaudubon.org).*



Ian Butler

**The New Jersey Young Birders Club provides a forum for learning and field expeditions to the best birding spots in the state.**

### **11-19: Island Beach State Park Field Trip**

The waters off Island Beach can be teeming with scoters, loons, and gannets at this time of year, plus the scrub-shrub habitats and bayside waters attract bay ducks, raptors, and sparrows at this scenic park. This is also a great time of year to be on the lookout for western and southern vagrants. Leaders: Scott Barnes, Sam Wilson, and Linda Mack.

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

### **12-4: Brigantine Field Trip**

Brigantine can be productive at any time of year but winter offers the chance for skeins of geese, tundra swans, and an abundance of waterfowl. If there is time, the group will head over to Mott's Creek to look for Harriers, Rough-legged Hawks, and Short-eared Owls. Leaders: Sam Wilson and Margeaux Maerz.

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

ization fostering environmental and conservation awareness, species protection, and preservation of New Jersey's natural habitats. As director of All Things Birds, Barnes maintains a comprehensive online catalog of birding resources.

Additionally, All Things Birds hosts a number of Jersey Shore events planned and led by Barnes and other associate naturalists several times a month. One such event is Half Day Fridays at Sandy Hook, where participants will see a variety of migrant birds, which can include raptors, flycatchers, warblers, and sparrows. Similar field trips sponsored by All Things Birds are also held at Island Beach State Park and the Forsythe Natural Wildlife Reserve.

For young Jersey Shore birders, the New Jersey Young Birders Club runs in association with New Jersey Audubon and provides a forum for learning and field expeditions to the best birding spots in the state. Upcoming trips to observe fall vagrants and visitors will take place at Sandy Hook, Island Beach State Park, Brigantine, and Cape May. Membership to the New Jersey Young Birders Club is free.

Barnes explained that while field

trips might return to the same location several times a month, each trip is unique because so much of what participants will see is dependent upon nature. Weather and the migratory patterns on a particular day can result in an entirely different experience from one day to the next. “We never know what we are going to see, which is exciting,” Barnes stated.

In addition to advocacy and conservation efforts, New Jersey Audubon has several ongoing projects focusing on bird research and conservation in the shore region. One project is tracking and monitoring the behaviors of two Great Egrets along the New Jersey/New York coasts. The birds, named Clarence and Edward, send text messages and pings from solar powered GPS transponders with their locations, which are then displayed on maps at [www.movebank.org](http://www.movebank.org). “There are few colonies of Great Egrets below New York City. These two birds feed and forage while being tracked, and have flown from Staten Island south across the Raritan Bay to feed in the wetlands area of Sandy Hook,” Barnes said.

Other projects include the monitoring a possible Black Rail breeding location in southern Ocean County,



**Great Egret.**



Brian E. Kushner

**Red-headed Woodpecker.**

monitoring a site in the grasslands of Joint Base McGuire-Lakehurst-Dix, which is one of two nesting places for the endangered Upland Sandpiper, and managing the habitat for the Red-headed Woodpecker in the Hovnanian Sanctuary near Jakes Branch County Park in Beachwood.

Birding is a growing hobby that provides fun, companionship, education, and solitude, and there's no better time to start than autumn at the Jersey Shore. The New Jersey Audubon Society has a wealth of information for both the novice and advanced birder readily available on their website, including birding guides, site guides, and more. Consider buying a field guide to birds in your area. Keep a filled bird feeder in your yard and watch who might be visiting. Take a young person in your life to a local park to look for birds. You never know...the bird you see might be headed somewhere thousands of miles away!

—Jill Ocone

## “ALL THINGS BIRDS” FALL EVENTS

For more information: [www.njaudubon.org/SectionCenters/SectionAllThingsBirds/Introduction.aspx](http://www.njaudubon.org/SectionCenters/SectionAllThingsBirds/Introduction.aspx)

### Half Day Fridays at Sandy Hook Bird Walks

Join Scott Barnes and/or associate naturalists for a half-day of birding at Sandy Hook. Fall is a great time to bird The Hook, and each week promises to have a different array of migrants including raptors, shorebirds, warblers, sparrows, and more. Cost: \$15. members; \$20. non-members. Pre-registration required by calling Plainsboro Preserve at (609) 897-9400. Gateway National Recreation Area, Sandy Hook Unit, meet at Guardian Park (Lot M), (732) 872-2500

8:30 AM – 11:30 AM

**Fridays, 10-21, 10-28**

### Saturday Field Trips to Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (Brigantine)

Mid-October offers an interesting mix of species at “Brig,” including shorebirds, raptors, and songbirds. Led by Mike Mandracchia and Pete Bacinski. Cost: \$20. members; \$25. non-members. Pre-registration required by calling Plainsboro Preserve at (609) 897-9400.

Forsythe Brigantine NWR, 800 Great Creek Road, Galloway, meet at main lot by headquarters.

8:45 AM – 2:45 PM

**Saturdays, 11-5, 11-26**

### Field Trip to Sandy Hook

This is the peak time of year for large numbers and diversity of sparrows at “The Hook.” We’ll also be searching for raptors and short-distance migrants. Led by Scott Barnes. Cost: \$20. members; \$25. non-members. Pre-registration required by calling Plainsboro Preserve at (609) 897-9400.

Gateway National Recreation Area, Sandy Hook Unit, meet at Parking Lot B by the bathrooms, (732) 872-2500

8:45 AM – 2:45 PM

**10-22, 11-6, 11-12**



An Osprey lands at Sandy Hook.

Paul Schaff

### 10-29: Field Trip to Island Beach State Park

The waters off Island Beach can be teeming with scoters, loons, and gannets at this time of year, plus the scrub-shrub habitats and bayside waters provide plenty to look for at this scenic park. This is also a great time of year to be on the lookout for western and southern vagrants. Led by Scott Barnes and Linda Mack. Cost: \$20. members; \$25. non-members. Park entry fee not included. Pre-registration required by calling Plainsboro Preserve at (609) 897-9400.

Island Beach State Park, Route 35 South, meet in the median parking lot just north of the park entrance (outside), (732) 793-0506

8:45 AM – 2:00 PM

## JERSEY SHORE BIRDING LOCATIONS

For more information: [www.njaudubon.org/SectionBirdingSites/GreatBirdingLocations.aspx](http://www.njaudubon.org/SectionBirdingSites/GreatBirdingLocations.aspx)

### MONMOUTH COUNTY:

#### Along the Raritan Bay:

- **Pirate's Cove**, located on the border of Cliffwood Beach and Laurence Harbor on Ocean Boulevard by Whale Creek. (Note: no signage.)  
Sightings include loons, grebes, bay ducks, thrashers, and flycatchers.
- **Treasure Lake**, Lakeshore Drive, Cliffwood Beach  
Sightings include Pied-billed Grebe, Gadwall, loons, Wood Duck, and Horned Grebe.
- **Cheesequake State Park**, 300 Gordon Road, Matawan  
Sightings include Scarlet Tanager, Baltimore Oriole, Green Heron, Great and Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Osprey, Marsh Wren, Short-eared Owl, and Rough-legged Hawk.

- **Conaskonk Point**, off 8th Street, Union Beach  
Sightings include Black-headed Gull, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, American Golden-Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, Sanderlings, Red Knot, and Greater Scaup.

#### • Keansburg Beachfront:

- Sightings include Common Goldeneyes, Great Cormorants, Common and King Elder, and Red-necked Grebe.

- **Natco Lake**, Rose Lane, Hazlet (adjacent to the Henry Hudson Bike Trail)  
Sightings include Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Least Tern, American White Pelican, and Rough-winged Swallow.

- **Leonardo State Marina**, 102 Concord Avenue  
Sightings include loons, grebes, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Barrow's Goldeneye.

- **Hartshorne Woods**, 1402 Portland Road, Highlands  
Sightings include Anhinga, Great Horned and Screech Owl, Eurasian Wigeon, Pileated Woodpecker, Mississippi Kite, Dickcissel, and Lincoln's Sparrow.

- **Oceanic Bridge**, Bingham Avenue, Middletown  
Sightings include Bufflehead, Red-necked Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser, Canvasback, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, American Black Duck, and Greater Scaup.

#### Sandy Hook, Gateway National Recreation Area, Highlands

Specific birding locations include Plum Island, the Spermaceti Cove boardwalk, the Horseshoe Crab salt marsh, and North Pond.

Sightings include Western Grebe, Gyrfalcon, Arctic Tern, Long-billed Murrelet, Black Guillemot, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Painted Bunting, and Wilson's Plover.

**Monmouth Beach:** Monmouth Beach Bathing Pavilion, 29 Ocean Avenue  
From the beach, look towards Shrewsbury Rocks.  
Sightings include Western Grebe.

#### Long Branch:

- **Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park**, 221 Ocean Avenue  
Sightings include Razorbill, Long-tailed Duck, Bonaparte's Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Scoters, Loons, Brant, Snow Bunting, Shearwater, and Black-legged Kittiwake.
- **Lake Takanassee**, series of ponds along Route 71/Ocean Avenue  
Sightings include Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull, Wigeon, Lesser Scaup, and Ruddy Duck.
- **Pullman Avenue (Elberon)**, east of Ocean Avenue  
Look toward the ocean.  
Sightings include common Eider, Harlequin Ducks, Red-necked Phalarope, and Little Gull.



Spermaceti Cove at Sandy Hook.

**Deal:** Roosevelt Avenue; Phillips Avenue; Clem Conover Boulevard at oceanfront.  
Sightings include Pacific Loon.

**Allenhurst:** on the boardwalk looking towards the ocean  
Sightings include loons, scoters, gannets, purple Sandpiper, various gulls and ducks.

**Manasquan:** Fisherman's Cove Conservation Area, 391 Third Avenue  
Sightings include Snowy and Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, American Oystercatcher, Osprey, various gulls, geese, fish hawks, ducks, and terns.

**Howell:** Manasquan Reservoir, 331 Windeler Road  
Sightings include Bald Eagle, Bonaparte's Gull, Snowy Egret, Red-tail Hawk, Baltimore Oriole, Black-and-white Warbler, Great Crested Flycatcher, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Yellow-throated Vireo.

## OCEAN COUNTY:

### Point Pleasant Beach:

- **Gull Island County Park & Conservation Area,** 419 Broadway
- **Lake of the Lillies,** Elizabeth Avenue
- **Little Silver Lake,** Arnold Avenue
- **Lake Louise,** Niblick Street

Sightings include Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Broadbill, Black Duck, Snow Goose, Gadwall, Blue-wing Teal, American Wigeon, Canvasback, various loons, ducks, terns, and gulls.

**Bay Head:** Twilight Lake and Scow Ditch, Bridge Avenue  
Sightings include Osprey, Canvasback, Coot, various fish hawks, geese, gulls, and ducks.

**Trader's Cove Marina and Park,** 40 Mantoloking Road, Brick Township  
Sightings include Osprey, Cormorant, Snow Geese, Least Tern, various fish hawks and gulls.

**Cattus Island County Park,** 1170 Cattus Island Boulevard, Toms River  
Sightings include Osprey, Green Heron, Great Black-backed Gull, Foster's Tern, American Oystercatcher, Marsh Wren, Belted Kingfisher, Little Blue Heron, and Red-necked Grebe.

**Island Beach State Park,** Route 35 South  
Sightings include Osprey, Northern Gannet, Sooty Shearwater, Brown and American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron, Snowy and Great Egret, Snow Goose, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Glossy Ibis, White Ibis, Peregrine Falcon, and Snowy Owl.



**Cattus Island County Park in Toms River.**

Judy Capelot

### Barnegat Lighthouse State Park & Inlet,

208 Broadway, Barnegat Light  
Sightings include Harlequin Duck, Oldsquaw, Bufflehead, Merganser, Western Kingbird, Snowy Owl, Gyrfalcon, Northern Gannet, American Golden-Plover, Oystercatcher, various warblers, vireos, thrushes, owls, loons, gulls, and terns.

### Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge:

- **deCamp Wildlife Trail,** intersection of Adamston and Mantoloking Roads, Brick Township
- **Eno's Pond,** 330 East Lacey Road, Lacey
- **Barnegat Observation Platform,** Bay Shore Drive, Barnegat
- **Holgate Wilderness Area,** Long Beach Blvd., Holgate
- **Graveling Point,** Radio Road, Tuckerton
- **Forsythe Brigantine,** 800 Great Creek Road, Galloway

Sightings include Bufflehead, Goldeneye, Horned Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser, Black Duck, Atlantic Brant, Willet, Marsh Wren, and Salt-marsh Sparrow.

**Manahawkin Wildlife Management Area,** Stafford Avenue, Manahawkin

Take care when driving along the dirt road as potholes and standing water make for risky navigation.  
Sightings include Rough-legged Hawk, Meadowlark, Savannah Sparrow, Sedge Wren, Black Duck, and Short-eared Owl.

For more information:

**New Jersey Audubon Headquarters,** 9 Hardscrabble Road, Bernardsville, NJ 07924  
[www.njaudubon.org](http://www.njaudubon.org)  
Scott Barnes: (609) 400-3859; email: [scott.barnes@njaudubon.org](mailto:scott.barnes@njaudubon.org)

**Great Egret Tracking Project:** [www.njaudubon.org/SectionCitizenScience/HarborHeronSurveys/GreatEgretTracking.aspx](http://www.njaudubon.org/SectionCitizenScience/HarborHeronSurveys/GreatEgretTracking.aspx)

**Hovnanian Sanctuary:**  
[www.njaudubon.org/default.aspx?tabid=2114](http://www.njaudubon.org/default.aspx?tabid=2114)



**A Royal Tern at Island Beach State Park.**

Jill Ocone