

Venture to Hawk Mountain, PA and Cape May, NJ September 19-27, 2024

Itinerary:

Day 1: Thursday, Sept 19 – Arrival in Philadelphia

You may arrive in Philadelphia anytime this afternoon and transfer to our hotel (there is a free airport shuttle). We will convene at 6 PM in the lobby for a brief orientation before heading to dinner. **Night at Holiday Inn Philadelphia Airport.**

Day 2: Friday, Sept 20 – John Heinz NWR

After breakfast we will pick up our van and bird the incredible John Heinz NWR at Tinicum. This reserve is close to the Philadelphia Airport, but attracts a wide variety of birds including: Bald Eagle, Mute Swan, Wood Duck and a huge variety of migrating songbirds. We will then drive to the Hawk Mountain area through the Brandywine Valley of Northern Philadelphia. **Night in Allentown, PA.**

Days 3-4: Saturday, Sept 21 and Sunday, Sept 22 – Hawk Mountain area

We will spend at least one full day at the overlooks, on the trails, and at the visitor center at Hawk Mountain. Northwest winds and ridge topography at Hawk Mountain produce the updrafts that help carry birds of prey southward on their migration. From August through December, an average of 20,000 hawks, eagles, and falcons pass over the rocky promontory at North Lookout. Ospreys and thousands of Broad-winged Hawks arrive in September; October brings the greatest variety of species, with large numbers of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks. Weather influences the flights; a northwest wind usually brings the greatest numbers. In addition to the overlooks, there is a trail from South Lookout leading to the "River of Rocks," an impressive glacial boulder field on the valley floor. The sanctuary highlands are dominated by an oak-maple forest, with a scattering of rhododendron, laurel, and hemlock. In addition to raptor watching, we will look for songbirds in the woodlands. Alternatively, if the hawk migration is slow, we can explore some of the other great birding spots in the area. **Nights in Allentown, PA.**

Day 5: Monday, Sept 23 – Delaware Bay

Today we will head south to Delaware and explore the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge and other habitat along the Delaware Bay Shore. Bombay Hook is comprised of over 15,000 acres of tidal marsh, freshwater impoundments, wooded swamps, farmland, and grassy upland. Established as a refuge for migrating and wintering waterfowl, it also offers haven for numerous other species of birds. We should encounter plenty of shorebirds but will also explore the woodlands for fall migrant songbirds. **Night in Dover, DE.**

Day 6: Tuesday, Sept 24 – Delaware Bay to Cape May

After a morning birding around the Little Creek Wildlife Management area looking for shorebirds, we will have lunch at Cape Henlopen State Park. This is one of the best spots in the area for Brown-headed Nuthatch, which along with Pine Warbler, we should see in the stands of pine. We plan to take the afternoon ferry from Lewes, Delaware, across Delaware Bay, to Cape May, New Jersey. **Night in Cape May, NJ.**

Days 7-8: Wed, Sept 25 – Thu, Sept 26 – Cape May

The next 2 days will be birding in the Cape May area. One of the highlights will be a visit to the Cape May Point Hawkwatch Platform. Cape May is located at New Jersey's southeastern-most tip, on a peninsula bordered on the east, south, and west by water. In fall, birds migrating along the coast funnel down the peninsula. As many species of birds are hesitant to cross broad stretches of water, they concentrate at Cape May Point. Cape May is a renowned birdwatching destination, and not solely for raptors. Other locales in the area where we can observe raptors and other fall migrants include The Nature Conservancy's Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge and the Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area.

Nights in Cape May, NJ.

Day 9: Fri, Sept 27 - Departure

After a final morning of birding, we will head north from Cape May, back to Philadelphia for our return flights. ***Please plan your return flights for after 1 PM.***