

Delaware Bay Birds and Food Tour

September 5-12. 2022

Day 1 (Monday, September 5)

Arrive in Philadelphia

Arrive in Philadelphia anytime during the day and transfer to hotel. During dinner we will go over the birding plans and the menus for the next week.

Dinner: TBA, Philadelphia - Dinner and overnight near the Philadelphia Airport

Day 2 (Tuesday, September 6)

Heinz NWR and Middletown

After breakfast we will start the birding at the wonderful (and very close) John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. While not having a lot of shorebird habitat, the list of species recorded is very long. If the water levels are low we should see our first freshwater species, such as Spotted, Solitary and Least Sandpipers. We will then drive down towards Chesapeake City, Maryland where we will bird in either Bethel WMA or Courthouse Point WMA – depending on which one has more shorebird habitat. Our first seafood dinner will be in Chesapeake City, MD where the Maryland crab dishes are very good.

Dinner: Shaefer's Canal House, Chesapeake City MD - Night in Middletown, Delaware

Day 3 (Wednesday, September 7)

Dover

This morning we will head east and cross the Delaware peninsula to Augustine Wildlife Area. Here we will hike one of the trails that bisects the marshes to give us our best chances for shorebirds. We may also find some early passerine migrants in the nearby woodlots. If the water levels are down, the shorebirding at Woodland Beach Wildlife Area can be excellent, and we hope for Stilt Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher and maybe even a stray Wilson's Phalarope. Should time allow we will explore additional areas north of the wonderful Bombay Hook NWR. Dinner tonight will be a very different experience as we enjoy the unique Sambo's Restaurant on the river in Leipsic. As well as offering plenty of local seafood, you can be truly adventurous and can hammer open a fresh local crab as you drink a cold beer.

Dinner: Sambo's Tavern, Leipsic DE - Night in Dover, Delaware

Day 4 (Thursday, September 8)

Bombay Hook and Dover

After breakfast we will spend all morning at the wonderful Bombay Hook NWR. This large refuge has a great reputation, and deservedly so. Thousands of shorebirds, herons and egrets and birds of prey congregate on the open mud-flats. This is a great place to study and learn how to identify shorebirds. Both Shortbilled and Long-billed Dowitchers feed side by side, so we can learn how to tell them apart; also we can look at the differences between Least, Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers- maybe there will be a White-rumped amongst them!

After a picnic lunch at the refuge, we will either check some of the other habitats for migrating songbirds or continue down the coast to Port Mahon Road in Little Creek WMA. Dinner will be in Dover at the Cool Springs Fish Bar which prides itself on the freshest fish in the area, so sit down for some steamed clams or stuffed crab.

Dinner: Cool Fish Bar, Dover - Night in Dover, DE

Day 5 (Friday, September 9) Little Creek WMA and Dover

If we haven't seen enough shorebirds yet (Is that possible?) we will spend the morning exploring several tracts of the Ted Harvey Conservation Area. The Logan Lane Tract hosted North America's first Whiskered Tern back in 1993, but we would be more than a little lucky to find anything as good as that! We will look for American Avocet and maybe Black-winged Stilts, as well as maybe check out the gulls and terns – just in case.

The marshes and beaches at Milford Neck will be our afternoon excursion. We will listen for Clapper Rails and if we are up to it, we will pick up our dinner to go out and listen for rails; also both Chuck Will's-Widow and Whip-poor-will occur along this road. Our restaurant tonight is Pleasanton's Seafood in Dover. Voted as some of the best seafood in the state; so hopefully it will live up to the high marks given.

Dinner: - Pleasanton's Seafood, Dover - Night in Dover, DE

Day 6 (Saturday, September 10) Dover to Rehobeth Beach

Slaughter Beach is one of the best spot in the state in which to watch Red Knots and Ruddy Turnstones feeding on the Horseshoe Crabs every spring. Of course we are here watching the birds as they migrate south in the fall, but there should still be evidence of the Horseshoe Crabs on the beaches. We will start at DuPont Nature Center at Mispillion Reserve where we will learn all about one of North America's greatest wildlife spectacles. The rest of the day will be spent in and around Prime Hook Reserve where we will look for more shorebirds, with maybe a Baird's or White-rumped Sandpiper in the mix today. Our dinner will be at Fins Fish House and Raw Bar which is renowned for friendly service and great food. Rumor has it that the oysters are delicious so how about some oyster sliders with some fine local ale?

Dinner: Fins Fish house and Raw Bar - Night in Rehoboth Beach, DE

Day 7 (Sunday, September 11) Cape Henlopen State Park

Today is our last full day along the Delaware Bayshore. We will initially head to Cape Henlopen State Park, where the star bird is not a shorebird, but the Brown-headed Nuthatch at the very northern tip of its breeding range. We will walk through the woods where we should find the nuthatch, Pine Warbler and maybe some early migrants. Piping Plovers have nested here, so maybe a few will be still around on the beaches. Depending on what else has been seen in the area, we will leave the remainder of the day to either relax or explore a little further down the coast. Dinner will be at Big Fish Grill where we can sit outside and enjoy our meal. According to the locals, some of the favorites are lobster pasta, calamari and the locally fired fish.

Dinner: Big Fish Grill, Rehoboth Beach - Night in Rehoboth Beach, DE

Day 8 (Monday, September 12)**Drive to Philadelphia**

After breakfast we will meander our way north to Philadelphia. Please plan for your flights to depart by mid-afternoon at the earliest. You could alternatively stay near the airport to relax before taking a flight the following morning.