

Huntington Beach State Park and top eBird Hotspot Birding!
November 10-14, 2021

Day 1 (Wednesday, November 10)

Arrive at hotel in Murrells Inlet area. Meet for dinner and discuss itinerary for the next 4 days. Possible birding at local area depending on when folks arrive.

Day 2 (Thursday, November 11)

After breakfast depart for Huntington Beach State Park. This park has the highest number of species of any eBird hotspot in South Carolina with 335 species observed here. We will spend the full day here and have lunch on site. This park contains many of the habitats found in coastal South Carolina; salt marsh, dunes, front beach, ocean, tidal creeks, maritime forest, maritime scrub, southern pine, hardwoods, and freshwater marsh. More rarities show up here more than any where else in the state. We will spend the day walking to the jetties at Murrells Inlet where we should see loons, gulls, terns, gannets, shorebirds, sea ducks, and wading birds. We will walk back through the dunes where grassland species are present, passing a large area for roosting shorebirds. We will then have lunch and then bird the Carriage Trail, Mullet Pond, Sandpiper Pond, Mallard Pond, and the Causeway. Rarities within the past years include Dovekie, Townsend's Solitaire, Townsend's Warbler, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Roseate Tern, Tropical Kingbird, and Razorbills.

Day 3 (Friday, November 12)

After breakfast we will travel south to Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center, another top hotspot in the state with 255 species observed. Once owned by Tom Yawkey, owner of the Boston Red Sox, it is held in trust and managed by the South Carolina Wildlife Resources Department. There is no public access and once on the property we will board a van to tour the property. Shorebirds, waterfowl, wading birds, and marsh birds and rails thrive here. The forests are filled with winter and year-round residents, including Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Other species are American White Pelican, Barn Owl, and the area is best known for attracting rare shorebirds such as American Golden Plover, Ruff, Wilson's and Red-necked Phalarope, and Baird's and White-rumped Sandpipers. We'll have picnic lunch along the way and return to the hotel at the end of the day, and then dinner.

Day 4 (Saturday, November 13)

After breakfast we will travel south to the Santee Coastal Reserve Wildlife Management Area, the #8 hotspot in the state with 271 species observed. This area has thousands of acres of impoundments, and much of it will be closed for the season when we arrive, but the vastness of the area supports all the species we expect to see in the closed areas with the exception of some waterfowl. One area that remains open is dedicated to shorebird management and recently has held Hudsonian Godwit and Wilson's Phalarope. Ruff has been present here in September, and this past December a Little Stint was found on a Christmas Bird Count in one of the inaccessible areas. Roseate Spoonbills and Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, along with other wading and marsh birds abound here, as do Barn Owls and other raptors. The entrance road is open mature pines supporting Red-cockaded Woodpecker and other mature pine obligates, and Purple Finches and Pine Siskins are findable here. This area also includes a TNC inholding, Washo Reserve, and is a freshwater area where Wood Storks nest in the spring and can always be good for freshwater species in the area. This is also a place where one can get 8 species of woodpeckers. We will have picnic lunch on site. We will return to the hotel and have dinner.

Day 5 (Sunday, November 14)

After breakfast we will chase any rarities observed in the previous days if desired, or any that have shown up near the area. If none are to chase, we will make our way to the Georgetown Wastewater Treatment Plant for eagles, American White Pelicans, waterfowl, and shorebirds. This is the location where a Black-headed Gull usually shows up in the state. After a short visit here, we will proceed to the Hemingway Sewage Treatment Ponds (180). This place is very birder friendly and recently a very nice observation deck has been constructed, offering birders a view from above. This area typically hosts an Eared Grebe in the winter along with waterfowl, including an occasional scoter, and in recent years, both Wilson's and Red-necked Phalarope. After visiting here, we'll end our trip with lunch at Scott's Bar-B-Que, a regional celebration of local pork and chicken.

-This itinerary may change due to weather, birds, tides, and access to certain restricted areas! We will be flexible!

-Be prepared for biting insects, pack plenty of water and sunscreen!