

## **SPRING IN CAPE MAY: A Relaxed and Easy Tour**

**MAY 13 – 18, 2012**

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*Cape May, New Jersey is world-famous, not only as a National Historic Landmark with its Victorian architecture, but also as a destination for students of bird migration. This tour will visit Cape May's birding hotspots at the peak of spring migration and right as summer residents are at their most active. Best of all, this wonderful diversity can be seen in a relatively small area. This tour's flexible schedule will allow us to take advantage of tides and weather conditions that will maximize our birding opportunities.*

*The most famous spring migrant in Cape May is the Red Knot. This arctic breeder's reproductive success is tied to its ability to replenish fat reserves by eating Horseshoe Crab eggs during its stopover along the Delaware Bayshore. We will witness this feast and learn of this threatened shorebird's plight. Spring is also an excellent time to see a wide diversity of other shorebirds and our list may reach as many as twenty species including Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher, and White-rumped and Purple Sandpipers. Rare shorebirds such as Ruff and Curlew Sandpiper are also some possibilities. In addition to shorebirds, while exploring Cape May's extensive marshlands we should see an abundance of herons as well as a few secretive species including Clapper Rail and Saltmarsh Sparrow.*

*Hawk watchers may flock to Cape May in the autumn to witness its hawk migration spectacle, but with the right conditions, spring migration can be equally interesting. A drift of wind from the northwest can bring small kettles of Broad-winged Hawks and along with them the uncommon but expected Mississippi Kite. Sometimes even a spectacular Swallow-tailed Kite may appear.*

*The ocean can also be a source of great interest in Cape May. Large flocks of gulls and terns forage over "the rips" at Cape May Point, attracting some interesting seabirds. Although we will not see all of these, among the many possibilities, we could see Sooty Shearwater, Northern Gannet, Parasitic Jaeger, and Roseate Tern.*

*One of the greatest highlights of a spring visit to Cape May is the host of colorful songbirds that are to be found. Some of these are passing through while others are local breeders actively defending their territories. A visit to Belleplain State Forest will be a particularly good opportunity to see some of these dazzling birds and listen to their energetic songs.*

*This tour is one in our series of Relaxed & Easy (R&E) tours. These tours are appropriate for participants who want a slower paced tour, with somewhat fewer hours in the field and light physical activity. They are ideal for persons who prefer a somewhat later start in the morning (typically 7:00 a.m.), a break after lunch and a shorter afternoon outing. They involve only short walks, usually not more than a half mile, and avoid difficult terrain.*

**May 13, Day 1: Arrival in Philadelphia.** Participants may plan to arrive in Philadelphia at any time today. If arriving by plane, you may request the complimentary hotel shuttle by calling from the courtesy phone in the baggage claim area of the Philadelphia International Airport. Your tour leader will meet the group at 6:00 p.m. in the lobby of our hotel for a short get-acquainted meeting, followed by dinner.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Airport, Philadelphia, PA

**May 14-16, Days 2-4: Cape May and Environs.** On the morning of day two, we will depart Philadelphia for Cape May. We may decide to visit a few areas on our way, or, if conditions look good for a big flight at Cape May, we may head there directly. Since bird migration is very weather-dependent, our activities each day will be tailored to take best advantage of local conditions. Northbound migrants approach Cape May on a broad front and can be found throughout the peninsula wherever appropriate habitat exists.

We are fortunate to have an impressive amount of land preserved for wildlife on the Cape May peninsula. During this tour, we'll visit some favorite birding spots such as Les and Diane Rea's Farm (a.k.a., "The Beanery"), Higbee Beach and Villas Wildlife Management Areas, South Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge, Stone Harbor Point, Reed's Beach, Jake's Landing, Cape May National Wildlife Refuge, and Belleplaine State Forest, not to mention a variety of little known gems along the way. Our birding days will begin early but progress at an easy pace. The emphasis will usually be on finding songbirds in the earlier part of the day with hawkwatching, shorebirding and other activities taking over as the day heats up. Our days will usually wrap up by mid-late afternoon with plenty of time off before dinner.

NIGHTS: La Mer Beachfront Inn, Cape May

**May 17, Day 5: Cape May; Drive to Philadelphia.** We'll spend much of today continuing to explore Cape May before heading back to Philadelphia in the afternoon.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Airport, Philadelphia, PA

**May 18, Day 6: Departure for Home.** Participants may arrange their departures for any time today.

**Special Note:** On some tours and in certain areas, the larger 15-passenger vans are not available. Every effort will be made to secure the larger vehicle for this tour. However, when smaller vans are reserved, participants will not always have a window seat and you will be asked to rotate daily.

**EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS:** Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

**RELAXED AND EASY TOUR INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS:** Relaxed & Easy (R&E) tours are similar to "regular" VENT tours, but set to a slower pace, with somewhat fewer hours in the field and lighter physical activity. They are ideal for participants who prefer a somewhat later start in the morning, a little lengthier afternoon break, and a shorter afternoon outing. Walking is limited to short walks of usually not more than a half mile one-way, avoiding difficult terrain. A typical day will begin with breakfast around 6:30-7:00 a.m., followed by birding until about noon. We will attempt to have lunch every day between 12:00 and 1:00 p.m., followed by an afternoon break (when possible). We will resume birding for a couple of hours in the mid afternoon. On most days we will attempt to provide about an hour for personal time before dinner which will usually be between 6:00 and 6:30 p.m. Strenuous physical activity will be avoided, and all walking will be limited to well-marked roads and trails, excluding uneven or rough terrain. Relaxed & Easy (R&E) refers only to the slower pace of a tour, not to a participant's birding skills or ability. Accordingly, birders of all levels of

ability are welcome, as they are on typical VENT tours; R&E tours should not to be mistaken as tours for beginning birders. All birders are welcome, regardless of skill level, as they are on regular VENT tours.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

**TOUR LEADER:** Louise Zemaitis and Michael O'Brien

**Louise Zemaitis** is an artist and naturalist living in Cape May, New Jersey where she is a popular field trip leader teaching birding workshops as an Associate Naturalist with New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory. She also enjoys leading birding groups and lecturing at birding festivals and is known for her enthusiasm for all natural history subjects. Louise and her husband, Michael O'Brien, have been guiding young birders at birding events and conferences for many years. In addition to leading, Louise is coordinator of the Monarch Monitoring Project in Cape May, compiler of the Cape May Christmas Bird Count, and member of the Cape May Artists' Cooperative. An honors graduate of Temple University's Tyler School of Art, she enjoys working as a freelance artist and her illustrations have been widely published. Her proudest accomplishment has been the raising of her two sons, Bradley, a biologist and artist, and Alec, a philosopher and musician.

**Michael O'Brien** is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has a passionate interest in bird vocalizations and field identification, and a serious addiction to migration and nocturnal birding. His travels have taken him throughout North and Central America and beyond. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*. His illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and the new Peterson field guides. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies, leads several "Birds & Butterflies" tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis, and is coordinator of the Cape May Butterfly Count.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for this tour is **\$1,695** per person in double occupancy from Philadelphia, PA. This includes all meals from Dinner on Day 1 to Dinner on Day 5, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Philadelphia and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$350**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$300** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$150** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in

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which case the cancellation fee will be **\$50** per person. If cancellation is made between 120 and 90 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$150*
Between 120 and 90 days before departure	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
Fewer than 90 days before departure date	No refund available

\*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$50 per person.

**TRIP INSURANCE:** A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness.** VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than *Travel Insured International*, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

**BAGGAGE:** As space in the vehicles is limited, please restrict your luggage to one medium-sized suitcase and one carry-on bag.

**CLIMATE & CLOTHING:** Spring on the East Coast tends to be relatively pleasant. Expect mild-to-warm afternoons, with possibly chilly mornings and evenings. It is wisest to dress in layers, beginning the day with a light jacket or windbreaker over a sweatshirt, fleece pullover, or sweater, which in turn covers a long-sleeve shirt or t-shirt. Later, as the day gets warmer, one can adjust easily by removing layers. Jeans or similar durable, comfortable pants and light field pants (for warmer days) are most practical for this tour. Choice of footwear is largely a matter of personal preference. Sneakers or light hiking boots are generally quite suitable, though some of us prefer rubber boots (Muck Boot being the most popular) for walking in wet grass or as an extra safe guard against ticks.

Though we will hope for blue skies and sun throughout, rain is always a possibility. Be prepared with a raincoat or poncho. Dress will be informal, though you may wish to bring something to change into for dinner; e.g., an oxford or similar shirt and slacks or a simple dress. Jackets, ties, and formal dresses are not required.

**HEALTH:** If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember

to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots.

**OPTICAL EQUIPMENT:** A spotting scope will be useful, and your leaders will each bring one for use by the group. If you have a scope that you would like to bring, feel free to do so. If you are trying to decide which pair of binoculars to use, you would probably do well to bring versatile ones with 7 or 8 power magnification. We will be birding at a variety of distances. You are welcome to bring a camera. There will be good opportunities to photograph scenery. Birds, as we all know, can be more or less cooperative depending on their whim.

**OTHER ITEMS TO BRING:**

- An alarm clock is useful, as hotel wake-up calls are notoriously undependable.
- Insects could be a problem at this time of year. Bring your best defense against no-see-ums.
- There is an excellent nature center/book store at the Cape May Bird Observatory so a little souvenir money may come in handy.

**PHYSICAL EXERTION:** Our tour will involve little strenuous physical activity. Days will involve some walking, some driving, and some standing at viewing points.

**SUGGESTED READING:** Our website, [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com) offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) which specializes in ornithology books.

***Field guides:*** Any of the popular North American or Eastern North American guides will suffice, though the National Geographic and Peterson's Eastern book are probably the most useful and certainly the most current:

Dunn, Jon and Jonathan Alderfer. *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Fifth Edition. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society, 2006.

O'Brien, Michael, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson, *The Shorebird Guide*, Houghton Mifflin. Boston, 2006

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*. National Audubon Society. New York: Knopf, 2003.

***Reading and reference:***

Sutton, Clay and Pat. *Birds and Birding at Cape May*, Stackpole Books. Mechanicsburg, PA, 2007. A comprehensive history of Cape May by two of its most beloved naturalists.

Weidensoul, Scott. *Living on the Wind*. North Point Press. NY, 1999. A must read for this trip, this book outlines many amazing examples of avian migration and explains how and why it happens.

Peterson and Audubon both publish volumes on North American mammals; eastern reptiles and amphibians; insects and plants.

The Kaufman Focus Guides (Birds, Butterflies, Insects, and Mammals) are up to date and excellent.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can

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accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on August 17, 2011 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.