

CAPE MAY: A BIRDING WORKSHOP

SEPTEMBER 17-23, 2017

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Along the Atlantic Coast, fall is perhaps the most enchanting of seasons. Summer has lifted, the harvest is in, and the air carries a promise of winter to come. But there is a last warm chance to savor the abundance of nature. Thousands of birds, their brief annual residence in the north completed, make their way down the eastern seaboard, pausing only to feed and rest. The feeling is very different from that of the spring migration, with its joyful song and sprightly breeding dress. However, this autumnal journey has a majesty and splendor that is truly unique.

At Cape May, southbound hawks find themselves in a quandary. They have been moving along the coastline, but here the land ends, and they are surrounded by water on three sides. This causes an avian traffic jam, and birders are its greatest beneficiaries. Songbirds, also heading south, are forced to stop in Cape May. The morning sky is often filled with warblers, vireos, flickers, buntings, and other species as they seek a place to rest and refuel after their nocturnal flight. As the day heats up, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, and Broad-winged hawks, along with Northern Harriers, Ospreys, American Kestrels, and Merlins are on the move. Even Peregrine Falcons may number in the dozens.

But there are more than just hawks and songbirds in Cape May. In the “rips” off Cape May Point, feeding flocks of gulls and terns attract migrating Parasitic Jaegers, while the first southbound scoters, loons, and Northern Gannets pass by. Area marshes and ponds harbor an interesting seasonal mix of shorebirds and waterfowl, ripe with opportunity for study. A leisurely cruise through the back bays aboard a pontoon boat will be a particularly enjoyable way to explore these habitats. Fall is also the best time of year to witness insect migration in Cape May. The often spectacular movements of Monarchs are particularly well known, but movements of dragonflies can be equally impressive, and usually accompanied by Merlins and American Kestrels that prey on them.

There is no better classroom in the United States to learn about migration and migratory birds than Cape May. Our visit to this magical place will focus on studying the fascinating dynamics of migration, while also learning about various groups of birds. Although we should see a wonderful diversity of species, accumulating a large bird list is not our goal. Field sessions will include time in the unique habitats that promise exposure to different families of birds—shorebirds, terns, hawks, warblers, etc.—while working on improving our birding skills through the use of field guides, field marks, and vocalizations. If conditions allow, we'll have the privilege to see raptors and songbirds in-hand during banding demonstrations by local researchers. We'll also learn about the amazing Monarch butterfly during a tagging demonstration presented by our own Louise Zemaitis, who coordinates the Monarch Monitoring Project in Cape May.

We emphasize that this workshop presents a special opportunity for anyone interested in learning more about birds and migration, and that it will prove valuable for beginning birders as well as more experienced observers.

The instructors for this workshop, Louise Zemaitis and Michael O'Brien, are long-time Cape May residents who know the area and its birds as well as anyone. Both have years of experience leading birding workshops with Cape May Bird Observatory, and have conducted migration counts of raptors, songbirds, and waterbirds in Cape May. Louise has been coordinator of the Monarch Monitoring Project in Cape May for more than twenty-five years, and has taught thousands about the migration of this amazing insect during public tagging demos. Michael is a noted author on shorebirds and bird sounds, and much of the fieldwork for his pioneering research on nocturnal flight calls of migrating songbirds was conducted in Cape May.

September 17, Day 1: Arrival in Philadelphia. Participants may plan to arrive in Philadelphia at any time today. The *Hampton Inn Philadelphia Airport* offers complimentary shuttle service from Philadelphia International Airport (code PHL). Your tour leaders will meet the group at 6:30 p.m. in the lobby of our hotel prior to our get-acquainted dinner. A short introductory program on the dynamics of migration in Cape May will be presented either this evening or at some point on Day 2. Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, the VENT office will be happy to assist with reservations at our group hotel.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Philadelphia Airport

September 18-21, Days 2-5: Cape May and Environs. On our first morning we will depart Philadelphia for Cape May. We may stop to bird en route or, if conditions look good for a big flight in Cape May, we may head there directly. We will have four full days, plus portions of two others, to experience the Cape May area. Since bird migration is very weather-dependent, our daily activities will be planned to take best advantage of local conditions. If winds are from the northwest, we will likely begin by seeking migrant landbirds in the woods near Higbee's Beach. Late September is the season of peak migrant diversity and a good cold front should produce a long list of woodpeckers, swallows, warblers, and flycatchers. During our early morning birding we should also see our first hawks, mostly Sharp-shinned and Cooper's, as they prowl the brush for a morning meal.

As the sun gets higher, we will head to Cape May Point, the prime vantage point for observing the passage of southbound raptors. Here, land abruptly ends where the Atlantic Ocean meets Delaware Bay. Birds making their way south along the coast arrive at the Point and must decide whether or not to strike out over open water. A few, particularly Peregrine Falcon, Northern Harrier, and Bald Eagle, continue unhesitatingly, but many "stack up" over Cape May and size up the situation more carefully. As a result, one can often see hundreds, sometimes thousands, of hawks in a single day. Raptor diversity is also excellent in late September and, with luck, we could see the peak movement of Merlin and Peregrine.

There is no place in the United States which can best Cape May as an outdoor classroom for learning to identify raptors. One of the real pleasures of birding here is feeling one's skill at separating various species of hawks on the wing increase by the hour. We will spend time discussing the different species and families of raptors and learning many useful identification techniques. In Cape May, one can easily see more hawks in a day than one might encounter elsewhere in a year!

The Cape May area is also good for other kinds of avian migrants, whether they be waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, terns, swallows, or warblers, for here the movement of birds is virtually constant. Other birding hotspots that we may visit include The Nature Conservancy's South Cape Migratory Bird Refuge, Cox Hall Creek Wildlife Management Area, The Beanery, and Stone Harbor. A back-bay cruise aboard the "Osprey" will give us an intimate look at the vast South Jersey saltmarshes, and an up-close look at a variety of shorebirds, herons, and other marsh birds. We will also likely head up the coast to Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, popularly known

by its old name, “Brigantine.” Here, freshwater impoundments may harbor hundreds of shorebirds and waterfowl, and in the surrounding saltmarshes lurk secretive Clapper Rail, and Saltmarsh and Seaside sparrows. Fall is also the best time of year to witness butterfly and dragonfly migration. The dunes can become a highway for passing Monarchs while Merlins and American Kestrels zip around Cape May Point chasing dragonflies. Louise has had over twenty years of experience coordinating the Cape May Monarch Monitoring Project. She will share her knowledge and perform a Monarch tagging demonstration in a local butterfly garden.

NIGHTS: La Mer Beachfront Inn, Cape May

September 22, Day 6: Cape May and Return to Philadelphia. After a final full day in the Cape May area, we will return to our original hotel near the Philadelphia International Airport.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Philadelphia Airport

September 23, Day 7: 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 may not always have a window seat and you will be asked to rotate daily.

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

TOUR LEADERS: 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 owner of Swallowtail Studio at West End Garage in Cape May. 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*, and is primary author of *Larkwire*, an online and handheld application for learning bird sounds. 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 the tour is **\$2,195** per person in double occupancy from Philadelphia. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 7, 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.

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The single supplement for this tour is **\$460**. 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.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$300** per person. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, 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 the initial deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with Visa, MasterCard or American Express at the time of registration. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: Initial tour deposits may be made by American Express, MasterCard, Visa, check, money order, or bank transfer. All other tour payments, including second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc., must be made by check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). 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 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.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing.

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.

TRIP INSURANCE: **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* (800-243-3174 or www.travelinsured.com)** 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.

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.

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: To prevent crowding in the vehicles, we ask participants to limit their luggage to one medium sized bag per person, plus one carry-on bag. As a precaution, if you are flying to meet the tour and checking luggage, we urge you to pack a change of clothes, your binoculars, any medication, toiletries, and other essentials in your airline carry-on bag.

CLIMATE & CLOTHING: Fall on the East Coast tends to be the most pleasant weather of the year. Expect mild-to-warm afternoons, with chilly mornings and evenings. It is wisest to dress in layers, beginning the day with a light jacket or windbreaker over a sweatshirt 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 are most practical for this tour. Choice of footwear is largely a matter of personal preference. Sneakers or tennis shoes are generally quite suitable, though it might be a good idea to bring rubber boots as well, in case the going gets wet.

Though we will hope for blue skies and sun throughout, it is likely that we will have some rain. Be prepared with a raincoat or poncho. A warm jacket, a hat, and some light gloves will be useful if we get a good, strong cold front. Of course, a good, strong cold front is exactly what we want in order to have the best birding. 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.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars in good condition, along with a day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, etc.). If you are trying to decide which pair of binoculars to use, you would probably do well to bring a versatile pair like 7 or 8 X 42. Migrating hawks often pass at moderate to great distance, but songbirds can be observed relatively close. Your leader will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. 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 can sometimes be undependable.
- A water bottle which holds at least one pint.
- Mosquitoes can sometimes be annoying in the early morning. Repellent may be desirable.
- There is an excellent bookstore at Cape May Bird Observatory, so a little spending money may come in handy.

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.

PHYSICAL EXERTION: Our tour will involve little strenuous physical activity. Days with some walking, some driving, and some sitting at lookout points will be the norm.

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SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Field guides:

Any of the popular North American or Eastern North American guides will suffice, though the National Geographic and Sibley Eastern books are probably the most useful and certainly the most current:

National Geographic Society. *A Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. 6th ed. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2011.

Sibley, David A. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*. Chanticleer Press, 2016.

Reading and Reference:

Connor, Jack. *Season at the Point*. Chronicles a year's fall migration at Cape May and the birders who are drawn to it.

Dunne, Pete, David Sibley and Clay Sutton. *Hawks in Flight*. 2nd edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2012.

Written by three men who have birded Cape May extensively for years, this book describes in great detail the techniques used by hawk-watching devotees to separate this often confusing group. Unlike most bird guides, which emphasize colors and patterns of feathering, this book explains the use of less tangible marks like shape and flight pattern. It is heavily biased toward hawks of the eastern United States.

Liguori, Jerry. *Hawks From Every Angle*. Princeton University Press, 2005. One of the foremost experts on the field identification of hawks in North America, Jerry spent three years as Cape May's hawk counter.

O'Brien, Michael, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson, *The Shorebird Guide*, Houghton Mifflin. Boston 2006. A photographic guide that presents a holistic approach to shorebird identification.

Sutton, Clay and Pat. *Birds and Birding at Cape May*. Stackpole Books, 2006. A complete guide to birding, bird finding, and the ornithological history of Cape May by local authors.

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.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, 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 tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

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 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 November 12, 2016, 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.

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