

Cape May & New York, October 2015

Contributed by Jos

Last Updated Sunday, 22 November 2015

Travelling from the 16-23 October, this was a short trip to catch the best of the autumn migration on the Eastern Seaboard of the USA, splitting time between the legendary Cape May and the superb Central Park of New York City. Timing was such to catch the end of the annual warbler migration, but also the first arrivals of sparrows and, hopefully, some good movements of raptors over Cape May. Cape May is always a bit of a gamble with dates - birding success is closely linked to the prevailing weather conditions and southerly winds can see the site virtually devoid of birds for days on end, both in terms of passerines and raptors. Fortunately however, the weather was simply superb – not only unbroken sunshine from start to finish, but also a cold front pushing birds through whilst at Cape Cape, then unseasonal warmth in New York allowing me to bask in the glory of temperatures rising to 21 C.

DAILY LOG 16 October. Afternoon departure from Europe, arrival in New York's JFK at 8.00 p.m. local time. New self-service immigration channels ensured a rapid passage through US customs, equally superb online check-in with Alamo meant car pick-up was also a breeze. By 9 p.m., I was in my hired Chevrolet cruising south, somewhere approaching midnight I rolled into Cape May, adventures to begin the following morning. 17 October. Cape May.

Higbee Beach, pre-dawn, skies to the east brightening to the promise of an excellent day ahead. After several days of southerly winds, everything was set for mass movement of birds on this day - winds had shifted to light northerlies, a cold front was imminent and conditions were perfect. Specks of birds were already flitting over and I was stationed on the legendary dyke overlooking an assortment of bushes and woodland edge that would soon have birds pouring out to rise and clear the Cape May Canal to my immediate north. A quirk of geography, the predominant migration at this locality is actually in the 'wrong' direction – hesitant to cross the open waters of Delaware Bay, birds arrive at Cape May at dawn, then circle round and head north via Higbee Beach ...the so-called 'Morning Flight'. Distinctive tacks tacks of Yellow-rumped Warblers filled the air, wafts of Sharp-shinned Hawks circled and harassed passing passerines, both Osprey and Northern Harrier hugged the nearby coastline. I however was soon to understand that the dyke might not be the best place to actually watch the birds – as the trickle of warblers became something more substantial, virtually all birds were flying directly overhead, neither pausing or alighting. Shouts of 'Black-throated Blue' and 'Blackpoll' echoed out from more seasoned observers, but as a visiting birder on his first morning, it was very quickly clear that I would struggle to even pick up some of the birds, even less to appreciate the subtle beauty of the fall warblers! Time for a quick relocation! Fortunately, Higbee Beach is much more than the dyke – just to the south, an amazing set of trails lead through a series of scrubby fields with excellent woodland edge. Positioning myself on the first of these paths, the spectacle was simply amazing – as the sun caught the bushes, birds were pouring through non-stop in their hundreds, not little specks miles up in the sky, but glorious little things mere metres distant. For three hours from 7.30 a.m., masses and masses of Yellow-rumped Warblers edging northwards in large flocks, dotted with additional species such regular Ruby-crowned Kinglets and sporadic Palm Warblers. I would estimate that tens of thousands of Yellow-rumped Warblers moved through that morning, an amazing sight indeed. Also in the mix, quite a few Northern Flickers, a bunch of Eastern Phoebe, a Blue-headed Vireo, a rather stunning Yellow-breasted Chat, three Rusty Blackbirds and an Indigo Bunting, plus all the expected regulars such as Brown Thrasher, Northern Cardinal and a good sparrow cocktail to get me confused for quite a while, most of which turned out to be Swamp Sparrows and Song Sparrows! At about 10.30, almost abruptly, the Morning Flight came to a halt! Suddenly, bar a few remnant Yellow-rumped Warblers and the occasional Blue Jay, the bushes and woodland edges fell silent. The day's action was over. Or at least over at Higbee Beach. The joy of Cape May in autumn is that as the Morning Flight comes to an end, so begins the peninsula's other great avian movement ...the raptor migration! For this, it is just a short drive to an official hawkwatch platform adjacent to the lighthouse in Cape May Point State Park. Warm and sunny when I arrived, a few Monarch butterflies drifting past, a good kettle of Turkey Vultures swirling above and plenty more too. Stayed on the platform for most of the day, a steady treat of birds drifting over, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks the main birds involved, but also regular Northern Harriers and Ospreys too, plus quite a few Merlins and American Kestrels, a good buteo mix of Red-shouldered, Broad-winged and Red-tailed Hawks and, very nice indeed, both Bald Eagles and a Golden Eagle (the fourth of the season at Cape May). Totals at the Hawkwatch Platform:

Black Vulture -10

Turkey Vulture – 150+

Osprey – 26

Bald Eagle – 8

Northern Harrier – 22

Sharp-shinned Hawk – 467

Cooper's Hawk – 204

Red-shouldered Hawk – 10

Broad-winged Hawk – 13

Red-tailed Hawk – 27

Golden Eagle – 1

American Kestrel – 22

Merlin – 25

Peregrine – 3 Definitely easy birding at this locality – not only a good passage of raptors overhead, but also

a very nice waterbird mix on the pool in front, including a single Tricoloured Heron, a Great Blue Heron, a couple of Double-crested Cormorants, and a fair mix of waterfowl species, including two vagrant Eurasian Wigeons amongst the more abundant American Wigeon. Also some pretty impressive passerines on show – not only dozens of Yellow-rumped Warblers also moving through here in general, but also a clump of adjacent junipers became a little hotspot in the mid-afternoon – dancing around in the sun, six species put on a simultaneous show ...one Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, about ten Ruby-crowned Kinglets, four Blackpoll Warblers, two Pine Warblers, several Yellow-rumped Warblers and, the pièce de résistance, one simply stunning Black-throated Green Warbler ...pure wow factor! However, bird of the day for me, albeit a slightly unassuming species, was a splendid Dickcissel – associating with a House Sparrow flock attracted to a seeded area adjacent to the hawkwatch platform, this was an unexpected bonus indeed, my only new species of the trip! So that was it, day one over – 66 species in all, a magnificent Morning Flight, some rather good raptors and a new species to boot. Good to be back in the good ol' USA! Cape May. 18 October. Dawn at the Higbee Beach trails again, a chill bite to the morning. Yellow-rumped Warblers still moving in their hundreds, but numbers definitely less intense than on the previous day. However, for all the reduction in this species, there was a marked increase in the diversity of other birds on the move – among the warblers, one American Redstart, one Prairie Warbler, two Palm Warblers, one Black-throated Green Warbler, one Yellow-breasted Chat and one Common Yellowthroat. Also a noticeable upswing in Ruby-crowned Kinglets, dragging in a few Golden-crowned Kinglets, plus other odds and ends including as many as 20 Eastern Phoebes, 15 Northern Flickers, two Grey-cheeked Thrushes and a Baltimore Oriole.

At about 10 a.m., the Morning Flight again came to a halt, a few Grey Catbirds left sunning themselves on scraggly bushes for admiration, along with Brown Thrashers and my first Brown Creeper of the trip. At the field edges, Swamp and Song Sparrows still mingled, joined by Chipping, Field and White-throated Sparrows, but overall the migration was over for the day. Time to relocate to the hawkwatch platform once again. In glorious sunshine, it was pretty much a re-run of the day before with abundant Turkey Vultures lingering and a good steady passage of birds throughout the day, mostly fairly high altitude Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, but also the best day of the season thus far for Northern Harriers with an impressive 54 passing over. Totals at the Hawkwatch Platform:

Black Vulture - 2
 Turkey Vulture – 100+
 Osprey – 15
 Bald Eagle – 10
 Northern Harrier – 54
 Sharp-shinned Hawk – 255
 Cooper's Hawk – 166
 Red-shouldered Hawk – 14
 Broad-winged Hawk – 10
 Red-tailed Hawk – 48
 American Kestrel – 24

Merlin – 32 Also took a walk around the South Cape May meadows and pools, adding a small assortment of ducks and other birds, most notably a female Redhead, a few Ruddy Ducks, three Pectoral Sandpipers and abundant Tree Swallows. 19 October. Cape May & Forsythe NWR. Crisp and cool at dawn, a light frost touching the woodland edges at Higbee Beach. Quite a notable reduction in passage on this day, Yellow-rumped Warblers in their mere dozens now. Still enjoyable however, a stripy humbug of a Black-and-White Warbler creeping up and down trunks, a couple of Common Yellowthroats in luxuriant ground vegetation and both Palm and Blackpoll Warblers amongst the Yellow-rumped Warblers. For all the relative lack of warblers though, sparrows and their allies were certainly compensating - an marked influx of this lot not only saw the woodland edges alive with smart White-throated Sparrows, at least 80 present, but also additional Swamp and Song Sparrows, along with a few Dark-eyed Juncos and singles of both Lincoln's Sparrow and Eastern Towhee. A nice cocktail to wade through! Also present on this day, a dozen Northern Flickers, both Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, one Red-breasted Nuthatch, one Blue-headed Vireo and, in the skies above, an unexpected Red-throated Loon flying directly overhead. Highlight of the morning though was not a bird, but two exceptionally cute young Raccoons sunning themselves on an old tree trunk, peering round to watch me as I passed, eyes twinkling in the sunlight. Also added a couple of Grey Squirrels and three White-tailed Deer. As the Morning Flight again dropped off from about 10 a.m., I decided this day to give the hawk watch platform a miss and instead journey a little further north of the Cape May peninsula, stopping first at the seawatching point at Avalon ...not a classic pelagic site offering heaps of tubenoses, nor anything on a par with sites in Massachusetts that are just stunning for their concentrations of assorted sea ducks and auks, but this New Jersey hotspot was certainly a pleasant place to while away a couple of hours. I managed to coincide my visit with one of the first mass Black Scoter movements of the season, many hundreds passing south almost non-stop, quite a number of Surf Scoters also. Even more remarkable however, the day was marked by a record-breaking passage of Double-crested Cormorants - the day's total of 26,000 smashing the previous highest set over 15 years earlier. Also a bunch of Parasitic Jaegers harassing the abundant Forster's Terns and gulls, plus quite a few Royal Terns, three Wood Ducks heading south, six Red-throated Loons also southbound and a single Northern Gannet. With my fill of beachside entertainment, I then resumed my travel north, traveling an hour or so up the Garden State Parkway to the extensive wetlands of Forsythe NWR. Having previously visited this site in the frozen depths of winter, when Snow Geese and Brants abound, it was quite pleasant to wander around in the sultry sunlight, a rich assortment of returning waterfowl already present and Northern Harriers quartering the dykes. Finding little in the

woodlands around the visitor centre, the main attraction was the nine-mile auto drive that loops around a series of fresh and brackish pools - Northern Pintail, Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Black Duck, all present in their hundreds. Amongst them, smaller numbers of Gadwall and American Wigeon, plus a few Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup and Ruddy Ducks. Had expected a few early Snow Geese, but instead had to content myself with three early returnee Brants instead. Also of interest, a Black-crowned Night Heron amongst a small roost of Snowy Egrets, a smattering of waders such as Western Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher and both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and, great humongous things, four Peregrine Falcons - two adults and two juveniles, perhaps locally bred, but their size suggesting northern birds already down to winter. Other odds and ends that enlivened the loop, several Savannah Sparrows, flocks of both Red-winged Blackbirds and Boat-tailed Grackles and, presumably gathering to roost, masses and masses of Tree Swallows. As sun began to dip, I returned to the Garden State Parkway and motored back to Cape May, pausing at McDonalds to round the day off with House Sparrows and Starlings. 20 October. Cape May & Jamaica Bay. Happy Birthday to me! With a return of south-westerly winds, my present was a day of virtually non-existent migration! Higbee Beach at dawn was eerily quiet, an Indigo Bunting and a few Field Sparrows the undoubted highlight in an otherwise lackluster morning of traipsing the hedgerows and woodland edges. Yellow-rumped Warblers were just a trickle, White-throated Sparrows had largely evacuated the area! Maybe better at the hawkwatch platform? Nope, the skies were almost totally empty! Sunshine and a pleasant 20 C, but barely a raptor to disrupt horizon-to-horizon expanses of blue. Gave it about an hour, a Merlin skittling through, an occasional Sharp-shinned Hawk making an appearance, then decided to cut my losses and go to New York, my earlier than planned departure giving me opportunity catch up with some Fish Crows in the nearby marina and to visit Jamaica Bay on route to New York. Not a bad decision, Jamaica Bay was actually quite birdy - not only did the extensive shrubbery support a whole range of common birds from American Robins and Hermit Thrushes to Eastern Towhees and Eastern Phoebes, but the Eastern Pool was absolutely heaving with birds. Didn't really have sufficient time to do the place justice, but Ruddy Ducks numbered at least 800 and dabbling ducks many times more, the great bulk being American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall and Northern Pintail. Also a few Greater Scaup and Redhead. Flights of Black Brant also winged over, but most of these settled on the West Pools, about 400 or so sitting there by late afternoon. And with this, I returned the car to the adjacent JFK airport, took the subway to New York City and emerged in downtown Manhattan to wander through the lights and sights of Broadway and Times Square, always a mesmerizing experience. Part two of the mini-trip about to begin, birding amongst the towering blocks of this amazing city. 21 October. New York City. With a return of southerly winds, I was expecting Central Park to be rather devoid of birds. How wrong I was! In a splash of unseasonal warmth, temperatures soaring to a very pleasant 22C, the next three days were simply superb with an abundance and variety of birds quite amazing. Day one started in the far north of the park, entering from 110th West Street and soon vanishing into the extensive North Woods. As day broke, birds were already spilling out onto the winding tracks, American Robins in abundance, Grey Catbirds commonplace and Common Grackles in noisy collectives. My initial goal on this morning was to locate the so-called Ravine, home to a small stream that had been harboring a Sora Rail over the previous days. Finding and then wandering down the trickling watercourse to a backdrop of thick woodland, the towering blocks, noise and hustle of Manhattan could have been a million miles away, here the only disturbances were Hermit Thrushes and hordes of White-throated Sparrows rustling in the leaf litter and flocks of Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Yellow-rumped Warblers flitting through. A quite stunning male Black-throated Blue Warbler dropped to bath in the stream, dozens of American Robins doing likewise, so too a few Northern Cardinals, several Common Grackles and a couple of Blue Jays and an Eastern Towhee. Not entirely sure where the Sora Rail had been lurking, I actually reached the end of the stream without either spotting the bird or understanding where it should be. Fortunately however, retracing my footsteps, I soon came across a slightly more open area where the stream was edged by clumps of overhanging vegetation. And there, quietly nosing along the water, one adult Sora Rail ...a rare bird indeed for Manhattan!

Sitting on a convenient boulder, this turned out to be a most confiding bird, regularly wandering in very close. The whole experience was further enhanced by a fine Rose-breasted Grosbeak that chose adjacent shrubbery to feed upon for the duration of my stay, a couple of Blackpoll Warblers nipping in and a regular filtering through of Ruby-crowned Kinglets and other odds and bobs. Also quite a few dead cute Eastern Chipmunks darting about, seemingly quite common in the northern parts of the park. From the North Woods, I then moved south, first crossing an area of lawns dotted by an abundance of fine tree specimens. Dog walkers and joggers out in force, a healthy variety of sizes and forms of both canine and human on show! Also American Robins and Mourning Doves still commonplace, occasional Northern Mockingbirds too. Added here a Red-bellied Woodpecker, my first Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers of the trip and both Brown Creeper and White-breasted Nuthatch ...not bad at all for for what was essentially a manicured lawn! Now donning a tee-shirt, a very unexpected luxury for late October, my next stop was at the park's main waterbody. Water sparkling in the sunshine, autumn colours of neighboring oaks and maples, a late Monarch floating past, skyscrapers of Fifth Avenue rising beyond, this was the the setting to the Reservoir, the centerpiece of Central Park dating back to 1857. Numerous joggers here too, but not an issue, flocks of birds drifted on the waters aside, a Red-tailed Hawk circled overhead. No massive arrivals of winter waterfowl as yet, but still a small selection to look through ...a hundred or so Ruddy Ducks, along with assorted other ducks, mainly Mallard, Shoveler and Gadwall, and abundant Ring-billed Gulls.

And that was just about that for the birding on this day, via one male Wood Duck in the south of the park, the route then took me into lower Manhattan and an afternoon of general touristy type things in New York City, culminating with a fine evening performance of the Lion King on Broadway, my first ever musical and, I have to say, most impressive! 22 October. New York City. Another excellent day in Central Park, this time concentrating on the central section of the park and sharing the pleasure with New York resident Wolfgang, a fine birder. Started the morning off however with a slight

navigation error that, a mere five minutes before the appointed meeting time, saw me end up at the Hudson River instead of the edge of Central Park! A mad dash across the Upper West Side of Manhattan was somehow achieved, arriving at the rendezvous point only about ten minutes late, apologies to Wolfgang! An ultra tame Blue Jay providing the first entertainment of the morning, initially hopping around our feet, then landing right on my head! Plenty of Hermit Thrushes around on this morning, plus a couple of Eastern Phoebes and the usual Grey Catbirds, Common Grackles et al. Our basic destination was the area known as the Rambles, a meandering set of trails leading through excellent woodland. On arrival, dozens of White-throated Sparrows were rooting about in the leaf litter, so too Common Grackles, an Eastern Towhee and the ever-present American Robins. One Brown Thrasher appeared in a bush, a Blackpoll Warbler too. Small flocks of Yellow-rumped Warblers were still present, along with both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets. In the middle of the Ramble, House Finch and Black-capped Chickadees attended bird feeders. Now late October, clearly the main passerine migration was nearing its end, but still Central Park was about to kick up a parting treat. In the so-called Maintenance Field, a small meadow at the eastern edge of the Ramble, quite a lot of bird activity was immediately apparent. With woodland edges bathed in pleasant sunshine, this was a super spot - one Blue-headed Vireo in a small mixed flock of kinglets and Yellow-rumped Warblers, an Eastern Phoebe flicking out from shrubbery, Chipping Sparrows in woodland top and yet still more White-crowned Sparrows rooting about below, occasional Hermit Thrushes too. Superstars of the morning however, flying in and out and gathering in tree tops just opposite, was a gathering of Cedar Waxwings, corking birds indeed. Adults and youngsters, about 15 birds in all, these really would have been the icing on the cake ...had it not been for the next little fellow to appear! A flash of bright yellow in bushes adjacent, then a cocktail of subdued blues and greens, a Northern Parula on the scene, nice. Also seen in this general area, Red-tailed Hawks overhead and one American Kestrel.

Onward, ambled past Belvedere Castle and its lake, the soupy waters home to a bunch of turtles, then arrived at Shakespeare Gardens, a late Red-eyed Vireo an unexpected bonus here, along with a Blackpoll Warbler and a few other odds and ends. From here, we departed Central Park. Across at Columbus Avenue, Wolfgang introduced us to one of New York's culinary highlights, the Shake Shack - classy burgers and milkshakes on the menu, several rungs up from the standard. Rather good I must admit. Bidding farewell to Wolfgang, the next couple of hours were spent in the Natural History, gawking at dinosaurs and wandering through the butterfly house, then we headed downtown, walking over Brooklyn Bridge to the small park adjacent - cracking views of the Manhattan skyline, plus Eastern Towhee and two Palm Warblers amongst the birds present.

No more birding this day, mostly spent around lower Manhattan and Times Square area. 23 October. New York City. Final day in New York, spent again in Central Park. Sora Rail still in the North Woods, abundant White-throated Sparrows, American Robins and Hermit Thrushes all over the place, plus a selection of birds similar to those in the previous couple of days. Additions though on this day included a very impressive flock of 34 Palm Warblers feeding on the lawns of North Meadow, a Hairy Woodpecker and a couple of Tufted Titmice in adjacent trees and a couple of Common Yellowthroats in rank vegetation aside Bow Bridge. Perhaps the most notable birds however were all on the Reservoir - not only a large increase in Ruddy Duck numbers, but also three very fine male Buffleheads, a splendid pair of Hooded Mergansers and a single Pied-billed Grebe. All in all, as middle afternoon approached, this last day in the park had proved most productive, the day total of 46 species being higher than on either of the previous two days. An hour or so later, via a coffee in the park with European Starlings and House Sparrows jumping all over the table, I was on the subway heading out towards JFK. And with that, so ended this mini-break to the USA. I boarded a British Airways flight for London, arriving early next morning, later connections taking me on to Eastern Europe. SPECIES LIST A total of 137 species were seen during the week, 113 in the Cape May area and 80 in New York. Among the highlights were 12 species of warblers, including an impressive morning flight of many thousands of Yellow-rumped Warblers. Also memorable, some very good movements of raptors at Cape May and the general spectacle of Central Park chockablock with birds! Special mention should also go to a very nice Dickcissel, a new bird for me. Brant. Three birds noted at Forsythe NWR, a minimum of 400 at Jamaica Bay. Canada Goose. Fairy common at most wetlands visited, including around Cape May, Forsythe NWR, Jamaica Bay and, in smaller numbers, on the pools in Central Park, New York. Mute Swan. Common on the the pools at Cape May, Forsythe NWR and Jamaica Bay. Wood Duck. Three on migration over the sea at Avalon, one male in Central Park. Gadwall. Common in the Cape May area and Jamaica Bay, several also seen at Forsythe NWR and on the main reservoir in Central Park. Eurasian Wigeon. Two males with the American Wigeon at Cape May. American Wigeon. Common to abundant in the Cape May area, Forsythe NWR and Jamaica Bay. Black Duck. Three at Cape May, common at Forsythe NWR. Mallard. Common at most wetlands visited, including in the Cape May area, Forsythe NWR, Jamaica Bay and Central Park. Northern Shoveler. Common in the Cape May area, Forsythe NWR, Jamaica Bay and on the main reservoir in Central Park. Northern Pintail. Three at Cape May, abundant at Forsythe NWR and Jamaica Bay. Green-winged Teal. At least 40 at Cape May, about 15 at Avalon, common at Forsythe NWR and abundant at Jamaica Bay. Redhead. One female at Cape May, five at Jamaica Bay. Ring-necked Duck. Three at Forsythe NWR. Greater Scaup. 12 at Jamaica Bay. Lesser Scaup. Eight at Forsythe NWR. Surf Scoter. Several noted offshore at Avalon, a few close in Black Scoter. Large numbers migrations offshore at Avalon. Bufflehead. Three males on the main reservoir in Central Park. Hooded Merganser. One pair in Central Park. Ruddy Duck. Eight at Cape May, ten at Forsythe NWR, a minimum of 800 at Jamaica Bay and about 150 in Central Park. Red-throated Loon. One flying overhead at Higbee Beach, six migrating at Avalon. Pied-billed Grebe. One on the main reservoir in Central Park. Northern Gannet. One at Avalon. Double-crested Cormorant. Record numbers at Avalon - 26,000 migrated south on the day I was present, the highest ever day total for this locality. Also fairly common around Cape May, Forsythe NWR, Jamaica Bay and, in smaller numbers, in Central Park. Great Blue Heron. One at Cape May, one at Forsythe NWR. Great Egret. Four at Cape May, common at Forsythe NWR and two at Jamaica Bay. Snowy Egret. Common at Forsythe NWR and about six at

Jamaica Bay. Tricolored Heron. One at Cape May. Black-crowned Night Heron. One adult at Forsythe NWR. Black Vulture. Far less common than Turkey Vulture - all records were of birds on roadside verges in Cape May town: three on the 17th, two on the 19th and three feeding on a dead dog on the 20th. Turkey Vulture. Common in the Cape May area, with daily flocks of up to 150 over the hawkwatch platform and smaller totals of 10-20 elsewhere on the peninsula, including at Higbee Beach. Osprey. Small numbers noted migrating at the hawkwatch platform - on the two days I watched (17th & 18th October), official totals were 26 and 15 birds respectively. One also at Higbee Beach. Bald Eagle. Recorded on both days from the hawkwatch platform at Cape May - eight birds on the 18th, ten on 19th. Northern Harrier. Good numbers noted - as well as counts of 22 and 54 at the Cape May hawkwatch platform, several were also seen at Higbee Beach, about ten at Forsythe NWR and one at Jamaica Bay. Sharp-shinned Hawk. Most abundant raptor at the Cape May hawkwatch platform, migration counts of 467 and 255 recorded on the two days. Also a minimum of 50 over Higbee Beach on the 17th, falling to about 20 on the 18th, four on the 19th and two on the 20th. Elsewhere, sporadic individuals were seen over the Golden State Parkway on the drive between Cape May and New York. Cooper's Hawk. Common at the Cape May hawkwatch platform, with counts of 204 and 166 on the two days. Also a few at Higbee Beach, one at Jamaica Bay and one in Central Park. Red-shouldered Hawk. Only recorded at the Cape May hawkwatch platform, with counts of 10 and 14 on the two days. Broad-winged Hawk. Only records were at Cape May hawkwatch platform, where totals were 13 and 10 on the two days. Red-tailed Hawk. Most common Buteo, counts of 27 and 48 were recorded at the Cape May hawkwatch platform, with one also noted at Higbee Beach and two over the Golden State Parkway. The resident birds in Central Park were also seen several times, with a maximum of three together on the 22nd. Golden Eagle. The fifth individual of the season, an immature bird passed over the Cape May hawkwatch platform on the 17th. American Kestrel. Migrating birds were noted at the Cape May hawkwatch platform, with totals of 22 and 24 on the two days. One also seen in Central Park. Merlin. Recorded at the Cape May hawkwatch platform, with counts of 25 and 32 on the two days. One also noted at Higbee Beach. Peregrine Falcon. Two adults and two juveniles seen at Forsythe NWR - very large birds, presumably northern migrants. Sora Rail. A rare bird in Central Park, a very confident individual had been found in the North Woods area of the park a couple of days prior to my visit and was present through my stay. American Coot. Small numbers seen on the pools at Cape May, as well as Forsythe NWR and Jamaica Bay. One also seen in Central Park. Black-bellied Plover. Six seen at Forsythe NWR. Semi-palmated Plover. One at Forsythe NWR. American Oystercatcher. One at Jamaica Bay. Greater Yellowlegs. Six seen on the pools at Jamaica Bay. Lesser Yellowlegs. One at Jamaica Bay. Ruddy Turnstone. One flying over at Forsythe NWR. Western Sandpiper. A flock of about 15 noted at Forsythe NWR. Rather more distant, a flock of about 40 small calidrids at Jamaica Bay remained unidentified. Pectoral Sandpiper. Three birds in flight over the Cape May hawkwatch platform and one single at Forsythe NWR. Dunlin. A minimum of 35 noted at Forsythe NWR. Short-billed Dowitcher. One seen at Forsythe NWR. Laughing Gull. Common in the Cape May, Avalon and Forsythe NWR areas. Ring-billed Gull. Common at Forsythe NWR and Jamaica Bay, fairly common also on the main reservoir in Central Park. American Herring Gull. Common at all coastal sites visited, with good numbers also on the reservoir in Central Park. Great Black-backed Gull. Small numbers at Avalon and Jamaica Bay, with several also in the reservoir in Central Park. Caspian Tern. One at Avalon. Forster's Tern. Abundant offshore at Avalon. Royal Tern. Common offshore at both Cape May and Avalon. Parasitic Jaeger. A total of about six seen at Avalon, harrying the gulls and terns. Feral Pigeon. Abundant in New York and surroundings. Eurasian Collared Dove. Two at Jamaica Bay. Mourning Dove. Moderately common, daily counts of up to 15 at both Cape May and in New York. Red-bellied Woodpecker. Two over the hawkwatch platform at Cape May, one at Forsythe NWR, one to two per day in Central Park. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Up to three daily in Central Park. Downy Woodpecker. Two at Higbee Beach and one at Jamaica Bay. Hairy Woodpecker. One in Central Park on 23rd. Northern Flicker. At Cape May, up to 15 a day were noted migrating at Higbee Beach and up to ten over the hawkwatch platform. One also seen in Central Park. Eastern Phoebe. Common at Higbee Beach, with counts of ten to twenty per day. Six also seen at Jamaica Bay and a total of five in Central Park. Blue-headed Vireo. Singles seen at Higbee Beach on the 17th and 19th, three in Central Park on the 22nd. Warbling Vireo. One bird was seen at Higbee Beach on the 18th. Red-eyed Vireo. One in Central Park on the 22nd. Blue Jay. Small numbers migrating at Higbee Beach, a maximum of 15 on the 17th, with two to four birds daily thereafter. Also common in Central Park, where up to 25 per day were seen. American Crow. Several noted at Cape May and in Central Park. Fish Crow. Common in the Cape May area, including flocks over the marshes and small numbers in the marinas. Tree Swallow. Common over the marshes in the Cape May, Forsythe NWR and Jamaica Bay areas, with many hundred noted on occasion. Also a couple seen at Higbee Beach. Barn Swallow. One seen over the marshes at Cape May. Carolina Chickadee. Pairs were seen at Higbee Beach on two occasions. Black-capped Chickadee. Singles noted in Central park on two occasions, both near the feeders in the Ramble. Tufted Titmouse. A single and a pair were seen at Higbee Beach and a pair in Central Park. White-breasted Nuthatch. Up to four birds daily in Central Park. Red-breasted Nuthatch. One at Higbee Beach on the 19th. Brown Creeper. Singles were seen twice at Higbee Beach and twice in Central Park. House Wren. Singles noted on three occasions at Higbee Beach and once in Central Park. Winter Wren. A total of three birds seen in Central Park. Carolina Wren. One seen at Higbee Beach. Blue-grey Gnatcatcher. One feeding in bushes adjacent to the hawkwatch platform at Cape May on the 17th. Golden-crowned Kinglet. Small numbers associating with the numerous Ruby-crowned Kinglets at Cape May and in Central Park. Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Heavy migration at Higbee Beach, particularly on the 18th when many hundreds moving through. Dozens seen on all other days at Higbee Beach and elsewhere in the Cape May area. Also common in Central Park, with a minimum of 60 per day. Grey-cheeked Thrush. Two birds seen at Higbee Beach on the 18th and two in Central Park on the 21st. Swainson's Thrush. One seen at Jamaica Bay on 18th. Hermit Thrush. Common in Central Park, 25 to 35 birds seen daily. Three also seen at Jamaica Bay. American Robin. Abundant in Central Park, with hundreds seen daily. Elsewhere, the only record in the Cape May area was of four migrating over Higbee Beach on the 18th, while four were also seen at Jamaica Bay on the 20th. Grey Catbird. Common at Higbee Beach and in Central Park,

up to 20 per day in both localities. Northern Mockingbird. Two noted at Higbee beach, two at Jamaica Bay and four in Central Park. Brown Thrasher. A fairly secretive bird, heard frequently at Higbee Beach, but also up to five a day seen. One also seen in Central Park. European Starling. One flock of about 25 at Higbee Beach, with several other small flocks noted in the Cape May area. Fairly common in Central Park and neighboring areas of New York. Cedar Waxwing. In Central Park, a flock of about 15 were found feeding in trees at the eastern edge of the Ramble. Black-and-white Warbler. One seen at Higbee Beach on the 19th. Common Yellowthroat. A total of three were seen at Higbee Beach (on 18th and 19th) and two in Central Park (on 23rd). American Redstart. One female seen at Higbee Beach, Cape May on the 18th. Northern Parula. One was seen in the Ramble, Central Park on the 22nd. Blackpoll Warbler. One adjacent to the hawkwatch platform at Cape May on the 17th, one at the nearby Higbee Beach on the 19th. Four scattered individuals also seen in Central Park on the 21st and 22nd. Black-throated Blue Warbler. One female at Higbee Beach on the 18th, then an impressive male on the 21st along the Ravine in the North Woods area of Central Park. Palm Warbler. Associated with the large influx of Yellow-rumped Warblers, 15 were noted at Higbee Beach on the 17th, with two the 18th and a single on the 19th. Two were also noted in Brooklyn Bridge Park on the 22nd and a remarkable flock of 34 feeding on a lawn in Central Park on the 23rd. Pine Warbler. Two feeding adjacent to the hawkwatch platform on the 17th, one at Higbee Beach on the 18th. Yellow-rumped Warbler. A massive movement of tens of thousands moving through Higbee Beach on the morning of the 17th, many hundreds also on the move the following morning. Also abundant throughout the Cape May area on the same days. In subsequent days, the intensity of the migration reduced with mere dozens recorded on the morning flights at Higbee Beach on the 19th and 20th. Also common in Central Park, where upwards of 50 were seen per day. Prairie Warbler. One bird recorded at Higbee Beach on the 18th. Black-throated Green Warbler. One adjacent to the Cape May hawkwatch platform on the 17th and one at Higbee Beach on the 18th. Yellow-breasted Chat. Singles seen at Higbee Beach on the 17th and 18th. Eastern Towhee. One at Higbee Beach, one in Jamaica Bay, one in Brooklyn Bridge Park and up to four daily in Central Park. Chipping Sparrow. Three seen at Higbee Beach on the 18th, then in Central Park, three on the 22nd and at least 20 on the 23rd. Field Sparrow. At Higbee Beach, a single was seen on the 17th and four together on the 20th. One was also seen feeding with House Sparrows adjacent to the hawkwatch platform on the 18th. Savannah Sparrow. At least ten noted at Forsythe NWR. Song Sparrow. Fairly common at Higbee Beach, with about ten seen daily. Small numbers seen elsewhere in the Cape May area and in Central Park. Lincoln's Sparrow. A single bird noted at Higbee Beach on the 19th. Swamp Sparrow. Common at both Higbee Beach and Jamaica Bay, with at least 15 seen daily at both localities. Several also seen in Central Park. White-throated Sparrow. A big influx at Higbee Beach saw the arrival of about ten birds on the 18th and at least 50 on the 19th. By the following day however, only four were noted. Elsewhere, two were feeding with House Sparrows adjacent to the Cape May hawkwatch platform, about ten at Jamaica Bay. Abundant in Central Park, many hundreds present. Dark-eyed Junco. Up to five seen daily at Higbee Beach, four at Jamaica Bay 10 Northern Cardinal. Small numbers seen at Higbee Beach (five-eight per day) and in Central Park (up to 15 daily). Rose-breasted Grosbeak. One in the North Woods area of Central Park on the 21st. Indigo Bunting. Singles were noted at Higbee Beach on the 17th and 20th. Dickcissel. One bird seen at Cape May, an individual feeding with House Sparrows adjacent to the hawkwatch platform. Red-winged Blackbird. A flock of about 20 birds recorded over Higbee Beach on the 17th. Small flocks were also noted in the Cape May marshes and at Forsythe NWR. Rusty Blackbird. Three birds seen migrating over Higbee Beach on the 17th. Common Grackle. Abundant in Central Park, with numerous small flocks daily. Also one bird seen near the marina in Cape May. Boat-tailed Grackle. Appeared quite common at Forsythe NWR, flocks of about 20 noted along the auto drive. Brown-headed Cowbird. A flock of six noted at Higbee Beach on the 18th. Baltimore Oriole. A single bird noted at Higbee Beach on the 18th. House Finch. Two singles were seen in Central Park, one near the feeders in the Ramble, the other east of the Ramble. American Goldfinch. Variable numbers at Higbee Beach, best total about 20 on the 17th. Several also seen in Central Park. House Sparrow. Abundant in New York, common in Cape May.