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## Atlantic Delaware/Maryland Birding Tour

### 3 DAY/ 2 NIGHT TOUR

#### OVERVIEW

The Delmarva Peninsula (named derived for the three states composing it (**DEL**aware, **MAR**yland, and **VirginiA**), flanked by the Chesapeake Bay to the west (the United States' largest estuary) and the famed Delaware Bay to east, where tremendous numbers of threatened Red Knots and Ruddy Turnstones feast on horseshoe crab eggs during stopover in spring (May/June), is no less wonderful in fall. Thousands of sandpipers, plovers, and other shorebirds use the expansive tidal flats to fuel their southward migration. In addition, during late summer and early fall, good numbers of post-breeding herons, egrets, and ibises fill the marshes. Not to be outdone, middle-late September is also the peak abundance and diversity of Neotropical passerine migrants heading to their southerly wintering grounds. One can expect to see an excellent diversity of migrating wood-warblers, flycatchers, thrushes, vireos, tanagers, sparrows and grosbeaks in the forests and shrublands bordering the marshes and flats creating the possibility of seeing 75-100 species daily.

The birding sites of the Delmarva Peninsula are easily accessible from the large metropolitan areas of Washington DC, Baltimore and Philadelphia making this area a welcome contrast to the urban centers nearby.

We will begin along the shoreline of Delaware Bay in Delaware and follow it as it transitions to the Atlantic Ocean, birding several large national wildlife refuges and finishing with Assateague Island National Seashore, home to a relic population of wild horses.

#### DAILY SUMMARY

DAY 1	Bombay Hook and Prime Hook NWR
DAY 2	Cape Henlopen and Delaware Seashore State Park
DAY 3	Assateague Island National Seashore and evening departure

## DETAILED DAILY ITINERARY

### DAY 1: Bombay Hook and Prime Hook NWR

After meeting at 06:00 at PHL airport, we drive one hour south to Bombay Hook NWR (morning effort) and then Prime Hook NWR (afternoon effort). Both are large tidal marshes with surrounding crop, grassland, and forest areas. At these wildlife refuges, we will search the flats and marshes for Canada Goose, Snow Goose, Mute Swan, dabbling ducks (Mallard, American Black Duck, American Wigeon, Blue- and Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler), Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Clapper Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, and Common Gallinule.

Of particular interest will be the shorebirds and waders. We will look for: Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, American Oystercatcher, plovers (Black-bellied, American Golden-, Semipalmated, and Killdeer), Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin, sandpipers (Least, Semipalmated, White-rumped, Western, Pectoral, and Stilt), Short- and Long-billed Dowitchers, Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and Willet. Waders of interest include: Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Cattle Egret, Green Heron, Black- and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, Glossy Ibis as well as possibly White Ibis and Tricolored Heron.

In the upland areas, particularly the grassland plantings at Bombay Hook NWR, we will look for Northern Bobwhite, Blue Grosbeak, Eastern Meadowlark, Indigo Bunting, Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow and possibly roosting Barn Owls. In the forested areas, any number of migrants could be possible including 25+ species of wood-warbler, 12 species of sparrow, 6 species of thrush, and 6 species of vireo among other possibilities.

Lunch will be in Dover, DE.

 **Accommodation: Lewes, Delaware**

Sunrise: 06:55, Sunset: 18:50

High tide: 09:25; 21:47

Low tide: 03:53; 16:05

## DAY 2: Cape Henlopen and Delaware Seashore State Park

After another relatively early breakfast (06:00), we will visit Cape Henlopen State Park, a sandy, pine-covered peninsula formed by the long-shore currents of the Atlantic Ocean. Cape Henlopen is directly across Delaware Bay from the well-known migratory stopover site of Cape May, NJ. In the morning we will bird the park and shoreline looking for migrants but focusing more on birds of the open ocean and sandy shorelines like Piping Plover (late), gulls (Laughing, Ring-billed, Herring, Lesser Black-backed, Great Black-backed) and terns (Caspian, Common, Forster's, Royal and possibly late Black) as well as Black Skimmer and Brown Pelican. As well, we will look for some of the first ocean-wintering ducks to have arrived including Surf and Black Scoters as well as Red-breasted Merganser. We may also see the first Common Loons and Northern Gannets moving south.

Cape Henlopen is an example of the long-leaf pine ecosystem which is found more extensively further south in the Atlantic Coastal Plain. On account of this, we will be able to find the enigmatic Brown-headed Nuthatch. Cape Henlopen is also home to a hawk watch known for good numbers of Black and Turkey Vultures, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, American Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon making passage. We will visit in the late morning when thermals have formed.

Lunch will take place in Lewes, DE.

During the afternoon, we will drive along the Delaware Coastal Highway, a narrow dunescape between the ocean and the tidal marshes. We will look for more gulls, terns, shorebirds, and waders. We may even view Parasitic Jaegers along this stretch. We'll check the tidal marshes for Seaside and Saltmarsh Sparrows. Boat-tailed Grackles and Fish Crows will be common throughout.

We may finish the day at Ocean City Inlet, a rock-lined passageway that provides a resting place for loafing gulls, terns, and shorebirds.

### **Accommodation: Ocean City, Maryland**

Sunrise: 06:54, Sunset: 18:47

High tide: 08:48; 21:11

Low tide: 02:28; 14:47

### **DAY 3: Assateague Island National Seashore and evening departure**

Our last morning will begin with breakfast at the hotel (06:00) and a short visit to Ocean City's Sunset Park nearby to check for migrants. The rest of the morning into early afternoon (01:00) will be spent checking the various environs of Assateague National Seashore for migrants and additional gulls, terns (possibility of Sandwich Tern), shorebirds, and waders.

After a late lunch, we will depart for PHL airport.

Sunrise: 06:55, Sunset: 18:46

High tide: 08:52; 21:20

Low tide: 02:29; 14:54

**Thank you for choosing Nature Travel Birding.**