

## **Birding the Bayshore**

New Jersey's Delaware Bayshore is one of the best places for bird watching on the East Coast. With a wide variety of habitats from sandy beaches to Pine Barrens to saltmarsh and wild rice marshes, it's no wonder migrating birds chose this place to rest and resident birds chose this place to call home. This itinerary will take you on an adventure that will introduce you to the wide open spaces of the Bayshore and all the wildlife that can be found here.

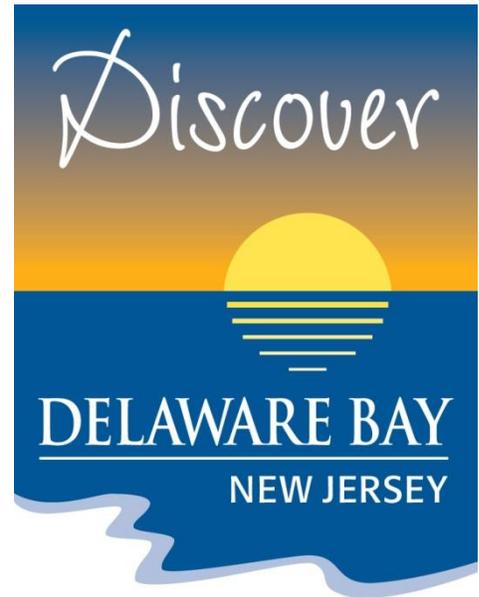
Remember different birds will be in different habitats at different times of the day, and especially different seasons. Generally, spring and fall are excellent because in addition to residents you will find migrating birds. We also recommend early morning and dusk for peak bird activity, but bird watching can also be good at other times.

For more options and information on birding trails visit [NJ Audubon's Birding and Wildlife Trails](#).

This trip is a two-day trip with 14 stops, but if the birding is good, you may not make it to all the sites!

1. Thompson's Beach
2. Moore's Beach
3. East Point Lighthouse
4. Matt's Landing/Heislerville Wildlife Management Area
5. Maurice River Diner
6. Harold N Peek Preserve
7. Maurice River Bluffs Preserve
8. Winfield's Restaurant
9. Belleplain State Forest
10. Commercial Township Wetlands Restoration Site
11. Bayshore Center at Bivalve/Oyster Cracker Café
12. Turkey Point Nature Drive
13. Money Island
14. Lakehouse Grill

Our [interactive Google Map](#) will assist you in navigation for your trip!



## **Notes**

***Be aware of high tides times when traveling and parking in tidal areas. Many roads, particularly roads close to the Bay will flood.***

***If your visit is in the summer, you are in for a treat as the Bayshore is beautiful at that time, but be sure to be prepared for gnats and biting insects.***

***Several beaches and trails may have seasonal/temporary closures to protect sensitive species, please respect this closures.***

## **Day One**

Start your birding weekend in Cumberland County at Thompsons Beach. Best known as a great horseshoe crab spawning beach and excellent place to see migrating shorebirds like Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Dunlin, and many more, but there is more to this wilderness in New Jersey than shorebirds and horseshoe crabs. You'll follow Thompson's Beach Rd to the parking lot with an observation deck over the vast salt marsh where you are guaranteed to see osprey, waders, and the occasional Black Skimmer. The old road out to the beach is no longer accessible with vehicles, but it's a lovely 0.7 mile walk with salt marsh and mud flats on either side. Arrive early morning, so the air still rings with the sounds of the Clapper Rail.

If the walk out to Thompson's Beach is not quite your speed, the neighboring Moore's Beach might be a better stop for you. But be aware, the road can be rough and will flood on the high tide. If you make the trip, you'll be glad you did as this is another one of those 'Wilderness in New Jersey' beaches. You'll feel like it's just you, the shorebirds, and the horseshoe crabs.

While you are in Southern Cumberland County make a quick stop at East Point Lighthouse. This historic lighthouse was constructed in 1849 and is the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest lighthouse in New Jersey. It is currently the only functioning "onshore" lighthouse on the Delaware Bay. Check with the Maurice River Historical Society for tour times. Besides the lighthouse, this small beach will be teeming with birds and other wildlife. Keep your eyes open for terrapins in June. They are bound to be out, laying eggs in the high ground.

If you are making this trip in the fall or winter, you might also include Matt's Landing and Heislerville Wildlife Management Area. The impoundments here are definitely one of the best places for waterfowl on the Bayshore. A popular region for crabbing and fisherman, there is also a driving loop and several trails.

Lunchtime! The parking lot is typically full at the Maurice River Diner on Rt. 47 in Dorchester, and for good reason. The service is quick, selection is wide, and the servings are plentiful, so it's a staple for locals and visitors alike.

Next up is the Harold N. Peek Preserve. Owned by the Natural Lands Trust, this preserve has wild rice marsh, pine barren, and cedar swamps. When the field office is open, be sure to stop in and get the scoop on the latest sightings which will likely be a long and diverse list of warblers, raptors, and many more. One important note - while open daily from dusk to dawn, the entrance gate could close at any time of day, as it depends on staff. Park on the outside of the entrance gate to avoid being locked inside.

After your visit to Peek Preserve, head over to another protected area, the Maurice River Bluffs Preserve, owned by the Nature Conservancy of New Jersey. With 4.5 miles of river frontage along the "Wild and Scenic" Maurice River, besides the majestic bluffs overlooking the river, you'll be enjoy some of New Jersey's largest contiguous wild rice marshes. With multiple trails, a floating dock, 35-foot bridge, and a birdwatching blind this 500-acre preserve is a bird-watching dream.

You're bound to be tired and hungry after this adventurous tour of Cumberland County, treat yourself to a nice dinner in downtown Millville at [Winfield's Restaurant](#). To rest you weary feet for the night, there are many [hotels](#) in the Millville area. If you would like to continue the spirit of the day, you might consider camping at [Belleplaine State Forest](#) which has campsites, yurts, and cabins available year- round.

## **Day Two**

If you go with camping as your lodging, you'll wake up in one of the best birding spots the Bayshore. Over 22,000 acres of hardwood and pine forests, white cedar and hardwood swamps, wetlands, grassy fields, and lakes; provide diverse habitat for countless birds and other wildlife. Spring and Fall are sure to bring you more warblers than you can identify.

After exploring a few of the trails in Belleplaine, head down to Bivalve for more saltmarsh birding at the Commercial Township Wetland Restoration Site at Strawberry Ave in Port Norris. With two miles of walking trails and boardwalks, you'll easily be able to explore this newly restored marsh. Keep your eyes peeled for eagles, waterfowl, and a few unusuals like the American Avocet and Black-necked Stilt.

Convenient to the Bayshore Center at Bivalve, you're just a short hop from the [Oyster Cracker Café](#). Locally sourced and yummy, a stop here will fuel you for the rest of the day. And of course, take a quick spin around the fantastic museum and art gallery to learn more about the history and culture of the Bayshore.

On to Turkey Point! Arguably one of the must-see places on the Bayshore for any nature lover. Snow Geese in the winter; warblers, waders, and shorebirds in the spring and fall; and bald eagles year round. There are three trails along Turkey Point Rd and an observational platform and foot bridge at the end of the road.

Wrap up your weekend with a visit to the beach near the Money Island community. Located at the end of the road south of the community, this small beach will surely be

abound with wildlife, but you may also be ready to just relax, stick your feet in the water, and enjoy the sunset.

Wrap up your weekend at the [Lakehouse Grill](#) on Laurel Lake.

*Thanks for coming to the Bayshore!*

We love feedback!

Try another itinerary at [DiscoverDelawareBay.org](http://DiscoverDelawareBay.org)