

Birding the Delaware Coast

Rehoboth Beach to Lewes



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Lake Gerar

This small freshwater lake at the north end of Rehoboth Beach may have a variety of water birds in winter. Look for Great Blue Herons, Canada Geese, puddle ducks and American Coots.

Cape Henlopen State Park

Gordons Pond – Gordons Pond provides a diversity of habitats that provide excellent birding year round. Brown-headed Nuthatch is fairly common here in all seasons. The pond attracts large flocks of Snow Geese in winter as well as a nice mix of ducks including all of the puddle ducks, Red-breasted and Hooded Mergansers, Bufflehead and Ruddy Ducks. A diversity of shorebirds is usually present during spring and fall migration. Piping Plovers and American Oystercatchers usually nest on the overwash flats on the ocean side of the pond. In late summer impressive numbers of terns often roost on exposed mudflats in the pond. Among the hundreds of Royal, Common and Forster's Terns you should be able to find at least a few Caspian and possibly Sandwich (uncommon to rare) and Black Terns (uncommon). Large aggregations of herons and egrets are usually present in late summer and early fall. Rarities that have been seen here include White Ibis, American White Pelican and Eurasian Wigeon. The **Observation Platform** – a 0.75 mile walk from the parking lot offers excellent views of the pond and overwashes on the ocean side of the pond.

Herring Point – this access point in the main section of Cape Henlopen State Park provides an excellent elevated viewing site for scanning the ocean. Birding can be productive at any time of year. Lesser Black-backed Gulls can usually be found on the beach to the north. Purple Sandpiper can sometimes be found on the two groins below the overlook (though only when the seaward ends are exposed and surrounded with water). Look for Wilson's Storm-Petrels from late May through August (especially during periods of onshore winds). Rarities that have been seen from here include Sooty Shearwater, Little and Black-headed Gull, Thick-billed Murre and Razorbill.

Dune Overlook Trail/Saltmarsh Spur – The 3 mile Dune Overlook loop and Salt Marsh Spur Trail pass through upland pine forest, red-maple forested wetland and tidal marsh. A wide variety of birds may be found along the trail year-round. Brown-headed Nuthatch is easy to find except during the height of nesting season in May. Look for songbirds during spring and fall migration. Sedge, Winter and Marsh Wren and Virginia and Clapper Rail may be found in the marsh in winter. The marsh in summer is home to Marsh Wren, Seaside and Saltmarsh Sparrows, Clapper Rail and feeding wading birds.

Fort Miles/Great Dune – The Fort Miles area of the Great Dune can be very good for migrating songbirds in spring and fall – especially sparrows. The edge of the pine forest behind the barracks, along the bike trail and the scrubby habitat between the orientation building and Battery 519 usually have the most activity. Early morning is usually the best time to look for birds. The overlook in front of Battery 519 offers great views out over the ocean and north across the park. During spring and fall hawk viewing can be quite impressive. This is a great place to look for whale spouts at any time of year.

Campground – the campground can be good for songbirds during the winter months when there are no campers. Look for sparrows, nuthatches and other songbirds. Crossbills (very rare and usually only present in Delaware during invasion years) have been seen here.

Hawk Watch – The hawk watch is manned during both spring (mid-March to early May) and fall (September through November). Hawk watching is best in spring during light (< 15 mph) winds from a westerly direction. In fall the best flights occur on light northwesterly winds following cold fronts. American Kestrels, Merlins and Sharp-shinned Hawks are the most common migrants. In fall Osprey, Sharp-shinned Hawk and American Kestrel are usually the most abundant migrants. Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier and Cooper's Hawk can also be seen in good numbers. The first week of October is usually the time to see the greatest diversity of raptors. Flights in November usually begin later and end earlier than earlier in the fall – but offer the chance to see a Golden Eagle, Northern Goshawk or Rough-legged Hawk. Seabird watching can also be very good from this location. Large numbers of loons and scoters pass by in late October. Jaegers are possible anytime from late September through October. Gannets pass by in large numbers in November and again in March and April.

Point Parking Lot – The upper point parking lot (beyond the pilot tower) provides another great elevated site for scanning the Ocean and the mouth of Delaware Bay. Look for Wilson's Storm-Petrel off the ocean side of the point from late May through August (most common in early June). At low tide the exposed sandbars on the bay side are often covered with terns, gulls and shorebirds in spring and late summer. Look for Roseate Tern (very rare) in May and early June. Sandwich and Black Terns are usually present from late summer to early fall among the hundreds of Common, Forster's, Royal, Caspian and Least Terns. In winter scan the base of the inner breakwater for eiders and possibly Harlequin Duck. The bay side of the point is the best place in Delaware to find Piping Plover. Adults are present from early April through August. Young birds may be seen with adults from late May to August.

Cape Henlopen Point – the point of Cape Henlopen is open to pedestrians from October 1 to February 28. A walk around the point in winter will allow birders to get closer to the birds that rest on the bayside. There is usually a large flock of Snow Buntings on the point that often forages (mostly) near the tip of the point. From the tip of the point birders can scan the outer breakwater and birds feeding in the strong tidal currents that flow around the point.

Seaside Nature Center – the area around the Seaside Nature Center is most productive when the feeder station is being maintained (late fall to early spring) and during spring and fall migration. The feeders attract a mix of songbirds including Brown-headed (common) and Red-breasted (common some years rare in others) Nuthatches, House and Purple (rare) Finches, Pine Siskin (rare) and sparrows. Rarities that have occurred here include Red and White-winged Crossbill, Dickcissel, Evening Grosbeak and White-winged Dove.

Fishing Pier – the fishing pier offers another opportunity to scan the Delaware Bay and inner breakwater. Look for the same birds mentioned under **Point Parking Lot** above.

Lewes Public Beach

Lewes public beach is best for birds in fall and winter. The beach attracts large flocks of loafing gulls and terns in fall. This flock often allows close approach for excellent photographic opportunities. Look for Black Skimmer among the Royal Terns and gulls.

Roosevelt Inlet

Roosevelt Inlet can be birded from either the parking lot at the end of Cedar Avenue or from the end of Pilottown Road. From the lot at Cedar Avenue you can view the inlet, part of the harbor and the Delaware Bay. From Pilottown Road you can view the inlet, all of the harbor and the Great Marsh and Canary Creek. From the Fish and Wildlife Boat Ramp you can view the Broadkill River and the south end of Beach Plum Island. Look for nesting Ospreys from late March to July. Willet are common in summer. A variety of ducks, waterbirds, gulls and terns are possible in the proper season.