

# Birding the Delaware Coast

Beach Plum Island to Mispillion River



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#### **Beach Plum Island**

The southern part of this State Nature Preserve is closed to all entry. The northern most 1 mile or so is open and can have shorebirds during spring migration. In winter look for ducks, geese and seabirds on the Bay.

#### **Prime Hook NWR**

**Broadkill Beach Road** – the last couple miles of this road goes past and through salt marsh and two freshwater impoundments. Wading birds, shorebirds, waterfowl and raptors can be seen in good numbers year-round in the right season.

**Refuge Headquarters** – Look for sparrows, bluebirds, and finches year round along the entrance road and Bobolinks in both spring and fall. Several trails originate from the headquarters and provide access to all of the habitats within the refuge.

**Little Neck Road** – this road begins in farm land and ends in forest. Look for Horned Larks, Pipits and sparrows in the ag fields in winter and songbirds in the forest, especially during spring and fall migration.

**Prime Hook Beach Road** – the last 2 miles or so of this road is bounded by impoundments which attract large numbers of waterfowl in fall and winter, wading birds in summer and shorebirds during spring and fall migration.

**Cods Road/Prime Hook Creek** – this road which connects Prime Hook Beach and Fowlers Beach Roads is bounded by farm fields for most of its length except for where it crosses Slaughter Creek. The creek usually has Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons and Great Egrets (rare in winter) and ducks and geese (fall to spring). Large flocks of geese in the fields may harbor Cackling, Ross's and Greater White-fronted Geese in winter.

**Fowlers Beach** – Since the breaching of the dunes at Fowlers beach in 2008 the diversity of birds here has increased dramatically. Look for gulls and terns year round. Shorebirds can be found in large numbers during both spring (late April – early June) and fall (mid-July to early October) migration. Wading bird numbers can be impressive in early spring and late summer. Clapper Rails can be commonly seen crossing the road (with young from July to September).

#### **Slaughter Beach**

**Simpson Avenue** - the southernmost beach access road in Slaughter Beach. Two large marsh ponds directly west attract waterfowl in fall and winter and shorebirds during spring and fall migration. Scan the Bay offshore in winter for ducks including Common Goldeneye, scaup and occasionally Canvasback and Redhead.

**Fire Hall** – the picnic pavilion behind the fire hall offers a protected spot for scanning the bay for waterfowl (winter) and shorebirds on the extensive mud flats to the north (low tide) for shorebirds year-round. Shorebird diversity is greatest in May and from late July to late September. American Avocets often can be found here in early spring.

**Evans Drive** – The last beach access road at the north end of Slaughter Beach. Walk out to the beach to scan the extensive mud flats at low tide to look for shorebirds – May and late summer are the best seasons for shorebirds.

### **Lighthouse Road**

The marsh along Lighthouse Road between the F&W Boat Ramp and the Dupont Nature Center is one of the best places in Delaware to look for Seaside and Saltmarsh Sparrows. Northern Harriers (common) and Short-eared Owls (uncommon to rare) may be seen from fall to early spring. At low tide the small tidal creek crossed by the little bridge is one of the best places in Delaware to see Clapper Rails (common from spring to early fall; uncommon to rare in winter). Look for shorebirds along the road near the little bridge in May.

### **Dupont Nature Center**

The deck of the nature center overlooking Mispillion Harbor is one of the best places to see shorebirds and horseshoe crabs during May. Shorebirds can be seen again in late summer and early fall. Peregrine Falcons are common in May though they might be seen at any time of year. In winter look for Gulls, Black-bellied Plovers, Dunlin and American Avocets. Clapper Rails are often seen foraging on marsh banks at low tide in summer.