

Birding the Delaware Coast

Pickering Beach to Woodland Beach



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Pickering Beach Road

The scrubby area of the Little Creek WA (small gravel lot on right approx. 1.25 mi from Rt. 9) can be good for songbirds in fall and winter. The gated unimproved road just east of the parking lot on the left leads to an impoundment that can be good for waterfowl from fall to early spring. The road through the marsh before the community of Pickering Beach can be good for marsh birds year round.

Little Creek Wildlife Area Headquarters

The dirt road to the left beyond the end of the paved road can be good for songbirds from fall through spring. A short boardwalk leads to an observation tower at the from the parking lot just before the gate. The impoundment that the tower overlooks can be good for waterfowl from fall to early spring. Look for American and Least Bittern and listen for rails in spring and summer. The impoundment on the left at the end of the road beyond the gate can be good for waterfowl (fall to spring) and wading birds (spring to fall).

Port Mahon Road

The Marsh on the north side of the road beyond the tank farm may have American Bittern (year round), wading birds (spring to fall), Northern Harrier (rare in summer, common fall to spring), Short-eared Owl (late fall to early spring, very rare in summer) and occasionally Snowy Owl in winter. The road along the Bay is susceptible to tidal flooding and damage from storm waves and can be impassable at times to low clearance vehicles. This has been one of the best places to view shorebirds in May without having to get out of your vehicle. Look for shorebirds, gulls and terns along the shoreline in late summer and early fall.

Savannah Road

This road meanders through ag fields for a little over 4 miles from just north of Little Creek to Leipsic. In winter look for raptors, sparrows, Horned Lark (common), American Pipit (uncommon), Snow Bunting (occasional) and Lapland Longspur (rare).

Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge

Bombay Hook is Delaware's best known birding destination. The refuge's 16,000+ acres of tidal marsh, man-made impoundments, fields and woodlots provide habitat for more than 270 species of birds. Water levels in the impoundments is driven by rain water. During periods of low rainfall pools can be completely dry. During unusually wet periods or following intense rainfall events water levels can be very high (excluding all but the largest shorebirds and wading birds). For shorebirds the impoundments are best viewed in the morning during high tides. Tides in the refuge run about 1.5 to 2 hours behind the tides for Leipsic.

Visitors Center – the visitor center feeders attract White-crowned Sparrows from fall to spring. Check the sighting sheet to find out what birds have been seen recently.

Raymond Pool – The Raymond Pool Tower is reached by a short trail from the first parking lot on the left after you leave the visitors center. It often provides the best views of Raymond Pool – especially in the afternoon. Raymond Pool attracts hordes of waterfowl, shorebirds and wading birds in the proper season. The Pool can also be scanned from the wildlife drive.

Boardwalk Trail – The boardwalk trails begins on the right about 0.25 miles past the Raymond Tower lot. This short trail winds past a small pond, through two small woodlots and across tidal marsh and along a tidal creek. Look for Belted Kingfisher, woodpeckers, songbirds and marsh birds.

Sheariness Pool – Sheariness Pool has similar birds to those you might see in Raymond Pool. During spring and fall migration both pools are best for shorebirds at high tide. At low tide many shorebirds chose to feed in the tidal marshes. The wide flats (at low tide) across from Shrearness Pool can be covered with shorebirds at low tide. These flats are best viewed in the afternoon when the sun is in the west. At high tide look for diving ducks and loons (uncommon to rare). The Sheariness Tower is located at the south end of the pool and is reached by a short trail from the road between Sheariness/Raymond Pool and the Visitor Center.

Parson Point Trail – The 1/2 mile (1 mile round-trip) Parson Point Trail winds through a young woodland to the back side of Sheariness Pool. Look for songbirds during spring and fall migration.

Bear Swamp Pool – A short trail leads to the Bear Swamp Tower from the parking lot on the left as you drive between Sheariness and Bear Swamp Pools. The tower provides views of the back portion of the pool that are not easily seen from the Wildlife Drive. Shorebirds are most often seen at the north and south ends in the proper season. A small group of Night-Herons (mostly Black-crowned, but look for one or two Yellow-crowned) often roosts on the small tree island at the north end from early summer to early winter. Scan the marsh opposite the pool for hunting Northern Harriers and other raptors perched along the distant tree line.

Finis Pool – This marshy pool is good for wood ducks with young in spring and early summer. Barred Owls are occasionally seen (more often just heard) in the woodlot on the left side of the road near the water control structure.

Woodland Beach

The marshes along Route 6 between Route 9 and Woodland Beach can be good for marsh birds and raptors. Stopping along the road is best done with great caution. There is a boat ramp and parking lot approximately 2 miles east of Rt 9 where you can get safely off the road. There is a Delaware Fish and Wildlife Fishing Pier in Woodland beach from which you can scan the Delaware Bay for ducks, geese and other water birds.

Taylor's Gut

Taylor's Gut is an impoundment on the west side of Rt 9 approximately 1 mile north of the intersection with Rt 6. The impoundment is managed for waterfowl in winter and shorebirds in spring and mid-summer to early fall. During shorebird seasons the water levels fluctuate with the tides. Low tide is about the same as that at Bombay Hook. Low tide is the best time to look for Shorebirds. Wading birds, terns and gulls can also be seen here at low tide from mid-summer to fall. The Aquatic Resource Education Center, just north of Taylor's Gut on Rt. 9 has a trail and boardwalk that winds along a large pond and over the tidal marsh. You should find marsh birds, terns, wading birds and waterfowl in the proper season.