

AMERICA IN AUTUMN 2009

by
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August 28

Dull, showers

A nice introduction to American birding with Tufted Titmouse, Cedar Waxwing, Blue Jay, Song Sparrow and American Crow around the motel car park in Fairfield, New Jersey in the morning.

A brief stop at Lake Hopatcong showed a Northern Flicker and a family party of American Robins but little else.

One Bobcat ran across the road in front of us in the Delaware Gap National Recreation Area before disappearing into the trees, a most unexpected sighting. Unfortunately, a short search showed no further sign but several Grey Catbirds, a Downy Woodpecker, female Ruby-throated Hummingbird and a male Northern Cardinal seen. Several Black-capped Chickadees and a probable Palm Warbler at nearby Ramonskill Falls and many Tree Swallows, Swallows and a Cedar Waxwing hawking over the river behind the campsite late afternoon. Nearby, 2 Red-tailed Hawks showed well perched by the road.



Red-tailed Hawk, Lakota, August 2009

August 29

Low cloud in mountains, warm and sunny elsewhere

2 Red-eyed Vireos, 1 empidonax sp. and several Grey Catbirds around the Delaware Gap campsite in the morning and a Great Blue Heron by the Delaware River. Nearby, 2 Mourning Doves, 6 flyover Double-crested Cormorants and many hirundines over the river.

The morning spent photographing four packs of Wolves and 2 Bobcats in enclosures at the Lakota Wolf Sanctuary, though the poor light and chainlink fencing not making for easy photography.



Wolves, Lakota, August 2009

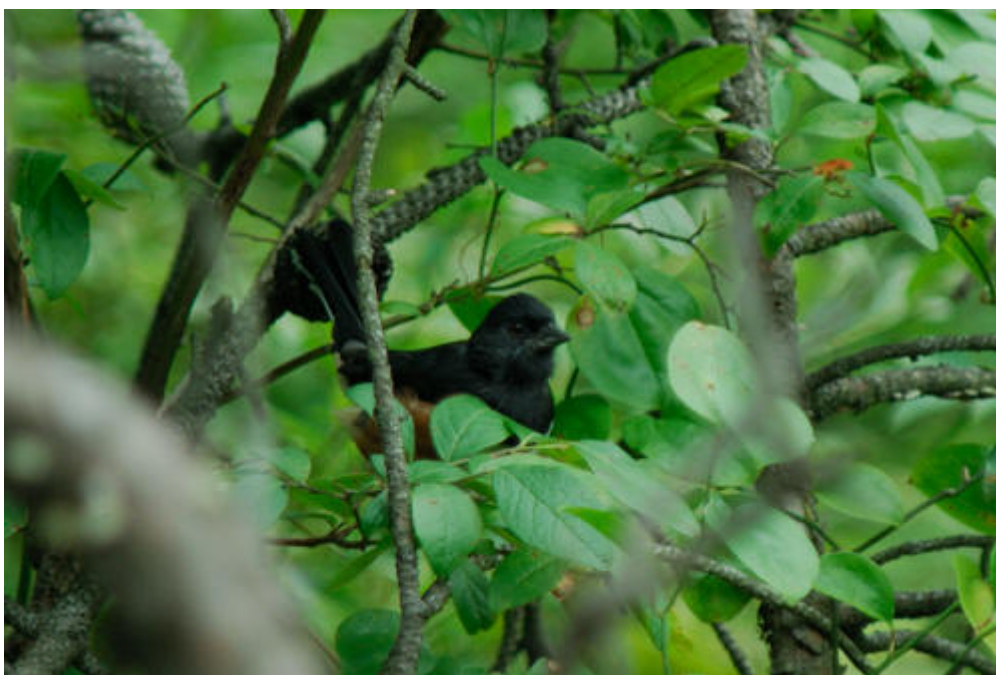


One White-breasted Nuthatch and an empidonax sp by the road to the reserve and several Turkey Vultures over the road to the south.

An improvement in the weather and also a few more birds around on a short wander around Lake Atsion, with several Purple Martins and Tree Swallows over the lake and Eastern Towhee, Carolina Chickadee, Grey Catbird and a probable brief Magnolia Warbler in the surrounding woodland and many Turkey Vultures and a Red-tailed Hawk overhead.



Grey Catbird (above) and Eastern Towhee, Wharton, August 2009



August 30

Sunny, hot

Several Laughing Gulls, 4+ Wild Turkeys, a family of American Robins and a flyover Osprey carrying a fish seen on the drive to Cape May in the morning.

A wander around the boardwalk and beach area near Cape May lighthouse was fairly quiet due to the time of day and heat but still produced a good variety of birds. Several American Black Vultures overhead with the Turkey Vultures along with Osprey,

Peregrine and a distant adult Bald Eagle. Many terns and gulls on the beach including many Laughing Gulls and Forster's and 3 Royal Terns but were flushed by the increasing number of sun worshippers.



Juvenile Laughing Gull (above) and Royal Tern (below), Cape May, August 2009



Passerines were much fewer though American Goldfinch, Red-winged Blackbird, Carolina Chickadee, Grey Catbird and 2 Prairie Warblers seen along with several Monarchs.



Monarch, Cape May, August 2009

Nearby, several Killdeers around the ferry terminal early evening showed well on the grassy areas.



Killdeer, Cape May, August 2009

An evening ferry trip across Delaware Bay was surprisingly productive with 2+ Wilson's Petrels, 6 Brown Pelicans, Little Blue Heron, Cattle Egret and 2 Ospreys seen along with several Bottlenose Dolphins and a Common Seal.

August 31

Cloudy, light showers am, sunny late pm

The north end of Assateague Island was fairly quiet though American Redstart, Great Crested Flycatcher, Northern Oriole, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Kingbird and a juvenile American Robin seen around the scrubby areas along with several Sika and White-tailed Deer.



Brown Thrasher (above) and juvenile American Robin (below), Assateague, August 2009



A drive round to the south side of the island was much more productive with large numbers of egrets and herons on the large wetland including many Little Blue Herons, Great White and Snowy Egrets, both Glossy and White Ibis, several Black Terns and some very photogenic Forster's Terns by the highway near Chincoteague.



Forster's Tern (above) and Snowy Egret (below), Assateague, August 2009



Good numbers of an assortment of waders present too, though none particularly close including Semipalmated, Least, White-rumped and Pec Sandpipers, Semipalmated Plover, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs and 2 Short-billed Dowitchers.



Adult Greater Yellowlegs, Assateague, August 2009

A roost of Willet and Marbled Godwit at the beach end of the wetland, along with many Black Skimmers though again fairly distant. Also Northern Bobwhite, Downy Woodpecker and a party of a dozen American Robins seen in the park.

September 1

Sunny, very warm

A glorious early morning walk around the north end of Assateague Island gave many excellent photographic opportunities with a small fall of American Redstarts showing well along with flyover Osprey, Brown Pelican, Caspian Tern, Great White Egrets and confiding Green Heron, Killdeer, Northern Mockingbird and Boat-tailed Grackles present.



American Redstart (above) and Osprey (below), Assataegue, September 2009



Green Heron (above) and Tricolored Heron (below), Assataegue, September 2009



Killdeer (above) and Northern Mockingbird (below), Assataegue, September 2009



Caspian Tern (above) and Red-winged Blackbird (below), Assataegue, September 2009



Also American Oystercatcher, Northern Oriole, Carolina Wren and several Northern Cardinals and Grey Catbirds seen in the area during the morning.

A return to the south end produced the same assortment of herons, egrets, ibis, terns, waders and Black Skimmers on the marsh as yesterday.



Black Skimmers (above) and Forster's Tern (below), Assataegue, September 2009



Great White Egret (above) and White Ibis (below), Assataegue, September 2009



Also Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Indigo Bunting in the woods along with 2 Delmarva Peninsula Fox Squirrels, but otherwise fairly quiet here.

September 2

Sunny, warm

A general drive around Cape May produced single Red-shouldered Hawk and a juvenile Cooper's Hawk in the morning. A late afternoon walk around the Meadows was fairly quiet with possibly the same juvenile Cooper's Hawk as earlier, 1 American Redstart and a probable Yellow Warbler in the scrub. 1 eclipse male Wood Duck on the marsh along with several Blue-winged and Green-winged Teals, 2 Killdeer, Lesser Yellowlegs, a flypast Belted Kingfisher and a posing House Sparrow.



Belted Kingfisher (above) and House Sparrow (below), Cape May, September 2009



An evening walk around Higbee Beach was also quiet with a male Prairie Warbler showing well and 3 Sanderling, including one with a leg flag, on the beach and several Bottle-nosed Dolphins present offshore.



'Leg-flagged' Sanderling, Cape May, September 2009

September 3

Cloudy am then sunny and warm

A walk round Higbee Beach first thing produced Ovenbird, 2 Northern Waterthrushes, House and Carolina Wrens, female Ruby-throated Hummingbird, male Prairie Warbler, American Redstart and Grey Catbird seen though the light was too poor for photography. The Meadows mid morning was fairly quiet though 3+ Common Yellowthroats and 2+ Yellow Warblers showed well in the scrub.



Yellow Warbler (above) and Common Yellowthroat (below), Cape May, September 2009



Much the same on the marsh as yesterday though 1 American Bittern flew over and 3 Chimney Swifts flew down the beach in a small movement of hirundines and a probable Savannah Sparrow seen very briefly on the path.



American Bittern, Cape May, September 2009

Many gulls on the beach, mostly Greater Black-backs and American Herrings but also single Lesser Black-back and 2 Ring-billed Gulls with a few Bottlenose Dolphins offshore.



Ring-billed Gull (above) and juvenile American Herring Gull (below), Cape May, September 2009



A return visit at midday showed an empidonax sp in the scrub and American Kestrel, Osprey and Turkey Vulture overhead. A short visit to Douglas Park showed 2 Blue Grosbeaks, 2 American Goldfinches and several Northern Mockingbirds in the scrub by the road and Cliff Swallow, Purple Martins and Tree Swallows overhead and on wires. 3+ confiding Least Sandpipers and 1+ Semi-palmated Sandpipers present on the breakwater allowing excellent photographic opportunities.



Juveniles of Least Sandpiper (above) and Semipalmated Sandpiper (below), Cape May, September 2009



September 4

Sunny spells, very warm

Fairly quiet on a short stop at Stone Harbour, though masses of Tree Swallows swooping over an unseen pool in the reedbed was quite a spectacle, otherwise single Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and 2 juvenile Indigo Buntings of any note.

An evening stake out for Beaver in Wharton State Forest drew a blank though a couple of parties of Pine Warblers, 2+ Eastern Phoebes, Carolina Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch and 2 Wild Turkeys seen.



Eastern Phoebe (above) and Carolina Chickadee (below), Wharton, September 2009



Two Whip-poor-Wills calling at dusk by the road and another calling overnight near the campsite.

September 5

Sunny, hot

The Whip-poor-Will calling again near the campsite in Wharton State Forest at dawn. Quite a bit around the campsite whilst we had breakfast including Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and White-breasted Nuthatch with a flock of Chipping Sparrows and several Blue Jays and Northern Flickers by the road to Batsto. A walk around the woodland trails was very fruitful with 2+ Red-bellied Woodpeckers, a cracking male Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black and White Warbler, Pine Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, 2 Red-eyed Vireos, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal and American Redstart seen and Red-bellied Turtle on the lake.



Adult male Black-throated Blue Warbler (above) and Cardinal, minus it's crest (below), Wharton



Red-bellied Turtle, Wharton, September 2009

Also 2 White-breasted Nuthatches feeding off picnic tables along with Eastern Bluebird and Eastern Phoebe in the area.



White-breasted Nuthatch, Wharton, September 2009

Many American Robins on the lawn by the nature visitor centre along with 1+ Northern Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker in the trees and c.10 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds coming to feeders.



Red-bellied Woodpecker (above) and Red-throated Hummingbird (below), Wharton, September 2009



American Robin, Wharton, September 2009

September 6

Sunny early then cloudy and breezy

The Whip-poor-Will calling very loudly at 6am right above our tent but had gone by the time I had got out. The rest of the morning spent photographing the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds seen yesterday in the better light, and also Northern Flicker and a family of Cardinals seen, and a very cute Chipmunk in the car park.



Red-throated Hummingbird (above), Cape May and Chipmunk (below), Warton, both September 2009



A drive round the Edwin B Forsythe Reserve showed a lot of birds present on the marsh but most too distant and the conditions weren't great either. The Roseate Spoonbill seen distantly before it flew further away but no sign of the American Avocets on the vast area. Several Ospreys showed well as did 3+ Hen Harriers, Peregrine and 2 (ad and juv) Black-crowned Night Herons.



Osprey, Edwin B Forsythe Reserve, September 2009

September 7

Sunny spells, warm

Not a lot seen on the long drive north to Connecticut, 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk near Egg Harbour, many Turkey Vultures overhead and a Wild Turkey about to cross the Garden State Parkway.

September 8

Sunny spells, warm

Little seen on the drive across to Cape Cod, though 1 Red-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Phoebe, Black-capped Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse around the campsite at Nickerson State Forest late afternoon.

September 9

Sunny, warm, blustery wind

Several Red-breasted Nuthatches, 2 Palm Warblers, Black-capped Chickadee, Blue Jays and a Chipmunk around the campsite in the morning. 2 (mother and calf) Humpback Whales seen on a whale watching trip out of Provincetown in very rough sea conditions and showed well alongside the boat, the calf did a brief tail breach but otherwise only the backs seen.



Humpback Whale, Cape Cod, September 2009

Also several Great, 2+ Sooty and 1 Cory's Shearwaters and 2 Wilson's Petrels seen.



Great Shearwater, Cape Cod, September 2009

September 10

Sunny, blustery wind

Many Common Terns on Chatham beach in the morning, but no sign of any Great White Sharks which had been seen in the area recently, though the sea was very rough and all the Grey Seals were sensibly out of the water on the sandbanks. Several Semi-palmated and White-rumped Sands showed very well on a pool and also Semi-palmated, Grey Plovers and Ring-billed Gulls here.



Adult White-rumped Sandpiper and juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper, Cape Cod, September 2009



September 11

Sunny spells, warm

No sign of any large mammals in the Adirondacks but quite a lot of birdlife in the area. 1 Broad-winged Hawk showed well on roadside wires before flying off when a truck came past before I could get my camera out. Several Eastern Bluebirds present around the John Brown memorial site and showed well along with a Pine Warbler and several Chipping and Song Sparrows.



Eastern Bluebird (above) and Pine Warbler (below), Adirondacks, September 2009





Chipping Sparrow, Adirondacks, September 2009

A walk around the Paul Smith reserve failed to produce any Moose though 1 Pileated Woodpecker, Belted Kingfisher, White-throated Sparrow and a very photogenic Chipmunk seen.



Chipmunk, Adirondacks, September 2009

Nearby, several Cackling Geese, 2 Wood Ducks, 1 Great Blue Heron and a Beaver Dam around Tupper Lake.



Great Blue Heron, Adirondacks, September 2009

September 12

Sunny, very warm

Very little seen on the long drive to Niagara Falls apart from the ubiquitous Turkey Vultures and a couple of Red-tailed Hawks. Not a lot around the Falls itself other than lots of Ring-billed Gulls.

September 13

Sunny, warm

Very little seen on a short walk around Buzzard Swamp in Allegheny State Forest, though 1 Scarlet Tanager in the car park and American Kestrel, a pair of Sharp-shinned Hawks and a large Beaver dam on the swamp area.



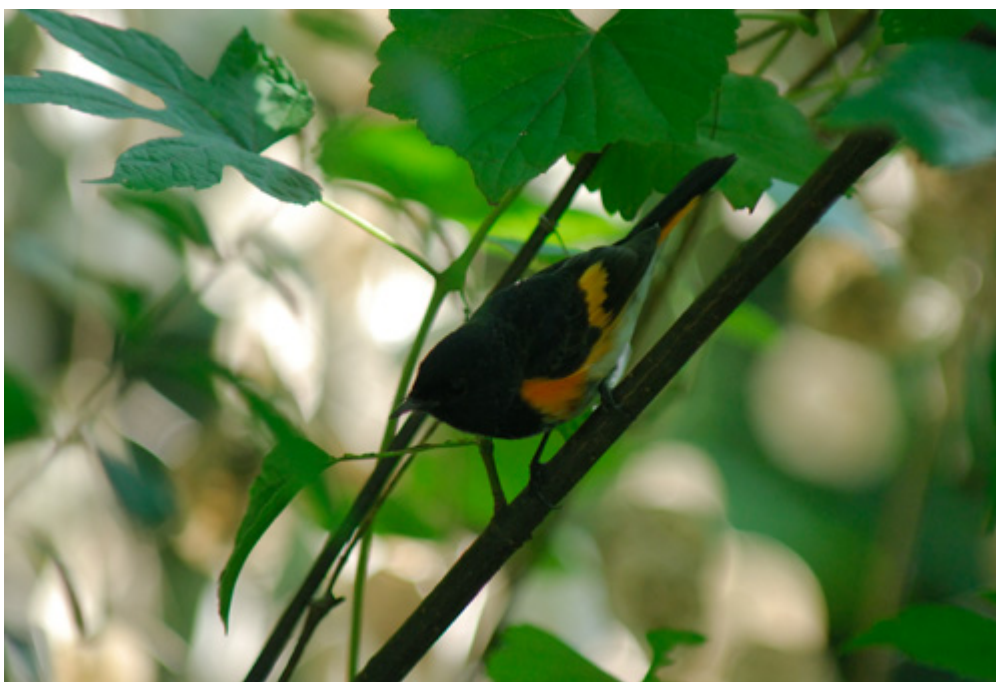
Beaver Dam, Allegheny, September 2009

A probable Broad-winged Hawk flew over Route 80 mid afternoon as did a Sharp-shinned Hawk that caught a passerine above the carriageway.

September 14

Sunny, very warm

Quite a lot around Cape May observatory mid-afternoon after a good fall of migrants into the area including several American Redstarts, Blackburnian and Black & White Warblers, Yellow-throated Vireo and Scarlet Tanager and also Carolina Wrens, Tufted Titmouse, Downy Woodpecker, Carolina Chickadees, Mourning Doves, Northern Cardinal and Common Grackles around the area.



Male American Redstart (above) and first winter Blackburnian Warbler (below), Cape May, September 2009



Downy Woodpecker (above) and Mourning Dove (below), Cape May, September 2009



American Goldfinch (above) and Tufted Titmouse (below), Cape May, September 2009



Good numbers of birds around the boardwalk too, mostly Prairie Warblers and Common Yellowthroats but also Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black and White Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and a delightfully confiding Yellow-rumped Warbler.



Black-and-White Warbler (or Humbug!, above) and female/immature Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Cape May, September 2009



Female Prairie Warbler (above) and female/immature Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler, Cape May, September 2009



Also a Pied-billed Grebe and 4 Ospreys around the pool early evening.

September 15

Sunny, hot

A return to the Edwin B Forsythe Reserve produced much the same as on the last visit with most birds too distant. The Roseate Spoonbill again present but distant and also Black-crowned Night Heron, many egrets and Double-crested Cormorants and 3 Pied-billed Grebes.



First calendar year Double-crested Cormorant, Edwin B Forsythe Reserve, September 2009

Several Ospreys still present along with 3+ ringtail Hen Harriers and a mixed flock of Red-winged Blackbirds and Starlings and an elusive flock of Savannah Sparrows.



Juvenile Starling (above) and first winter male Red-winged Blackbird (below), Edwin B Forsythe Reserve, September 2009





Savannah Sparrow, Edwin B Forsythe Reserve, September 2009

September 16

Overcast, warm

A walk round the Central Park produced Northern Cardinal, Grey Catbird, Mourning Dove, American Robin and a Peregrine on the outskirts.

Neil Calbrade, October 2010

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