BIRDS
of the
Outer Banks
NORTH CAROLINA
BIRDS of the OUTER BANKS

Over 400 species of birds have been sighted within Cape Hatteras National Seashore and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. This impressive number is due to several factors, which include: the rich diversity of habitats; the fact that the ocean off the Banks is biologically rich, in part because of the mixing of subtropical waters from the south with the temperate waters from the mid-Atlantic; and the limited extent of land, which tends to concentrate vagrants. In spite of its rich potential, the Banks is actually underbirded. In fact, sometimes a visiting birder discovers a species that has never been recorded in this area before.

The area covered by this list includes all of Cape Hatteras National Seashore, from Nags Head south to Ocracoke village, to include Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. Also included is the Fort Raleigh National Historic Site on Roanoke Island. Note that the bar-graph statuses provided in this list are based on the sites where species are easiest to find. For instance, the statuses given for most waterfowl species are based on their abundances at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. Some resident landbird species that are easy to find at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site are much harder to find further south on the Banks, e.g. Brown-headed Nuthatch.

WHEN and WHERE

Birding is always exciting on the Outer Banks though the greatest variety of species occurs during spring and fall migrations. For those seeking out migratory shorebirds, the various inlet tidal flats, the ponds at Pea Island and Bodie Island, and the salt pond at Cape Hatteras Point offer the greatest concentrations. However, the ponds at Pea Island and Bodie Island offer the greatest variety, and typically the best chance of seeing one of the rarer species.

Landbird migration in fall can be excellent, but typically only after strong cold fronts. The best areas to look for these migrants is along the dikes at Pea Island; the northern tip of Pea Island, near the Oregon Inlet bridge; and at Fort Raleigh, especially in and around the Elizabethan Gardens and along the section of the hiking trail that ends at Croatan Sound.

In winter, ocean-watching is generally best from Cape Hatteras northward. Occasionally in winter, especially in severe weather, Cape Hatteras Point may be almost blanketed with gulls, providing the opportunity to see several of the rarer species. Often in late May, impressive numbers of pelagic birds—storm-petrels, shearwaters, jaegers—may be seen in northward migration passing just off the tip of Cape Hatteras Point.

 Even if you visit the Outer Banks during a slower period, don’t forget that exciting birds can turn up any time.
LOONS
- Red-throated Loon
- Pacific Loon
- Common Loon

STORM-PETRELS
- Wilson's Storm-Petrel
- Leach's Storm-Petrel

SHEARWATERS
- Cory's Shearwater
- Sooty Shearwater
- Great Shearwater
- Manx Shearwater
- Audubon's Shearwater

PELICANS & ALLIES
- Magnificent Frigatebird
- Brown Booby
- Northern Gannet
- Anhinga
- Great Cormorant
- Double-crested Cormorant
- American White Pelican
- Brown Pelican

BITTERS & HERONS
- American Bittern
- Least Bittern
- Great Blue Heron
- Great Egret
- Snowy Egret
- Little Blue Heron
- Tricolored Heron
- Reddish Egret
- Cattle Egret
- Green Heron
- Black-crowned Night-Heron
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

IBISES
- White Ibis
- Glossy Ibis

VULTURES
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture

HAWKS & EAGLES
- Osprey
- Swallow-tailed Kite
- Northern Harrier
- Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Cooper's Hawk
- Bald Eagle
- Mississippi Kite
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Broad-winged Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Rough-legged Hawk
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LONGSPURS & SNOW BUNTING
- Lapland Longspur
- Snow Bunting

SPARROWS & ALLIES
- Grasshopper Sparrow
- Lark Sparrow
- Chipping Sparrow
- Clay-colored Sparrow
- Field Sparrow
- Fox Sparrow
- Dark-eyed Junco
- White-crowned Sparrow
- White-throated Sparrow
- Vesper Sparrow
- Seaside Sparrow
- Nelson’s Sparrow
- Saltmarsh Sparrow
- Savannah Sparrow
- "Ipswich" Savannah Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- Lincoln’s Sparrow
- Swamp Sparrow
- Eastern Towhee

CHATS
- Yellow-breasted Chat

BLACKBIRDS & ORIOLES
- Yellow-headed Blackbird
- Bobolink
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Orchard Oriole
- Baltimore Oriole
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- Rusty Blackbird
- Common Grackle
- Boat-tailed Grackle

WARBLERS
- Ovenbird
- Worm-eating Warbler
- Northern Waterthrush
- Golden-winged Warbler
- Blue-winged Warbler
- Black-and-white Warbler
- Prothonotary Warbler
- Tennessee Warbler
- Orange-crowned Warbler
- Nashville Warbler
- Connecticut Warbler
- Mourning Warbler
- Kentucky Warbler
- Common Yellowthroat
- Hooded Warbler
- American Redstart
- Cape May Warbler
- Northern Parula
- Magnolia Warbler
- Bay-breasted Warbler
- Blackburnian Warbler
### WARBLERS (CONT)
- Yellow Warbler
- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Blackpoll Warbler
- Black-throated Blue Warbler
- Palm Warbler
- Pine Warbler
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Yellow-throated Warbler
- Prairie Warbler
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Canada Warbler
- Wilson’s Warbler

### TANAGERS
- Summer Tanager
- Scarlet Tanager

### CARDINALS & ALLIES
- Northern Cardinal
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- Blue Grosbeak
- Indigo Bunting
- Painted Bunting
- Dickcissel

### FIELD NOTES
**Very Rare/Accidental Species**

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck
- Fulvous Whistling-Duck
- Greater White-fronted Goose
- Cackling Goose
- Garganey
- Cinnamon Teal
- White-cheeked Pintail
- Ring-necked Pheasant
- Clark’s Grebe
- Common Ground-Dove
- Antillean Nighthawk
- Eastern Whip-poor-will
- Common Swift
- Anna’s Hummingbird
- Purple Gallinule
- Pacific Golden-Plover
- Common Ringed Plover
- Snowy Plover
- "Eurasian" Whimbrel
- Bar-tailed Godwit
- Black-tailed Godwit
- Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
- Curlew Sandpiper
- Little Stint
- Spotted Redshank
- Great Skua
- Common Murre
- Thick-billed Murre
- Atlantic Puffin
- Sabine’s Gull
- Franklin’s Gull
- Heermann’s Gull
- Common Gull
- Bridled Tern
- White-winged Tern
- Arctic Tern
- "Cayenne" Tern
- White-tailed Tropicbird
- Red-billed Tropicbird
- Yellow-nosed Albatross
- White-faced Storm-Petrel
- Band-rumped Storm-Petrel
- Northern Fulmar
- Black-capped Petrel
- Wood Stork
- Masked Booby
- "Great White Heron"
- White-faced Ibis
- Roseate Spoonbill
- Golden Eagle
- Northern Goshawk
- Swainson’s Hawk
- Snowy Owl
- Burrowing Owl
- Long-eared Owl
- Crested Caracara
- Ash-throated Flycatcher
- Tropical Kingbird
- Fork-tailed Flycatcher
- Olive-sided Flycatcher
- Say’s Phoebe
- Vermilion Flycatcher
- Black-whiskered Vireo
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Northern Shrike
- Common Raven
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- Bewick’s Wren
- Sage Thrasher
- Northern Wheatear
- Sprague’s Pipit
- Evening Grosbeak
- Common Redpoll
- Red Crossbill
- White-winged Crossbill
- Chestnut-collared Longspur
- Thick-billed Longspur
- Lark Bunting
- American Tree Sparrow
- Harris’s Sparrow
- LeConte’s Sparrow
- Western Meadowlark
- Shiny Cowbird
- Brewer’s Blackbird
- Louisiana Waterthrush
- Swainson’s Warbler
- Cerulean Warbler
- Black-throated Gray Warbler
- Townsend’s Warbler
- Painted Redstart
- Western Tanager
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Please report unusual sightings at the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center or at the Hatteras Island Ranger Station.

Compiled By:
John Fussell, Ill

Revised By:
Ricky Davis
April 2023

Cover Design & Calligraphy
Courtesy of:
Patricia J. Moore

Leaflets Courtesy of:
Eastern National & Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society

Please Visit Our Websites At:
Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/pea-island/

Cape Hatteras National Seashore
http://www.nps.gov/caha