

The Birds of Middlesex County, New Jersey

Report by David Wheeler
Checklists by David Wheeler, Angela Gorczyca and Diana Morgan



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I. Introduction

As one of the most highly developed counties in the most densely populated state in the nation, Middlesex County hardly should qualify as a birding hot spot. And while this central New Jersey crossroads may not outshine the state's more well-known locations like Cape May and nearby Sandy Hook, Middlesex County is truly a microcosm of New Jersey. With a wide range of habitats in a small area packed with people, Middlesex offers birders the chance to see a diversity of species in just a few hours.

In fact, 308 species of birds have been sighted in Middlesex County. That's about one different bird species for each of the county's 309 square miles. Amazingly, that puts Middlesex County in the company of locations such as Yellowstone National Park, which has 318 species of birds in an area ten times as large. The entire state of Pennsylvania has had 394 species of birds sighted—in nearly 45,000 square miles.

A host of avian friends—from the majestic bald eagle to the ruby-throated hummingbird, from the fearsome peregrine falcon to the pileated woodpecker—make their homes here, joining over 790,000 people. Indeed, with over 2,400 people per square mile, the county is one of the most densely populated areas in the United States. By contrast, the national average is 80 people per square mile. Yet in this crossroads of civilization lies a healthy bird population that livens our skies with beauty, brightens our backyards with color, and fills our ears with the songs of spring and fall.

Middlesex County has served as the nation's most important transportation crossroads, hosting the main thoroughfares between New York City and Philadelphia, and beyond. Our proximity to these two metropolitan centers and location along the Raritan River—which drains into the greater New York estuary and is the longest river solely in New Jersey—made Middlesex County an industrial leader from the earliest days of our nation's history. We became the "Chemical Belt," providing modern America with many of the products that promised better living—a fate that also carried an industrial legacy that destroyed our waterways and turned many of our natural areas into contaminated sites.

Yet the last 25 years have brought an ecological recovery that would have once seemed impossible, thanks largely to stronger environmental laws, a local corporate shift away from heavy industry, and an active citizenry befitting one of the oldest settled areas in the United States. While Middlesex County will never be mistaken for a pristine eden, we are setting a model for post-industrial ecological recovery, as we transform former industrial brownfields into vibrant greenfields of wildlife habitat and hiking trails.

After more than a century of being off-limits to the public, our county's lifeblood, the Raritan River, is making great strides towards becoming a healthy recreational area. Fish populations have rebounded, osprey, peregrine falcon and bald eagle patrol the skies above the river, and beaver and snapping turtle ply its tributaries. Middlesex County offers no shortage of habitats: from our urban and suburban backyards, to the riverine, lakefront and wetland habitats, to the Raritan Bayfront, to old-growth and regenerating hardwood forests, to farmlands and meadows, and even to Pine Barrens-like habitat in the southern part of the county.

Each season offers its own unique birdlife. In the winter, the coastlines are particularly promising for gulls and winter rarities—the Raritan Bayfront, Raritan River, Arthur Kill, and lakes and ponds across the county. Inland, winter finches and owls make for exciting sightings that are a little bit easier without the vegetation and leaves blocking our views. The spring migration brings waves of birds through the area, with waterfowl and gulls followed by raptors and songbirds.

Summertime offers our many breeding birds, with shorebirds beginning their migration in late July and songbirds starting theirs in August. Fall is the best birding season of all in Middlesex County, with September the peak for songbirds, October the peak for hawks and other raptors, and waterfowl also gracing our coasts and waterways.

II. Middlesex County Birding Hotspots

Our 25 municipalities offer an abundance of birding hotspots, including:

- The **Raritan Bayfront** of South Amboy, Sayreville, and Old Bridge ranks as a frequent favorite, thanks to the seabirds and occasional rarities that visit its shores. Over 200 birds have been sighted at the bayfront's varying habitats, which include the bay, beach, mudflats, salt marsh, and freshwater marsh and ponds. For more details and directions, www.njaudubon.org/Centers/SHBO/SoAmboy.html.
- The **Dismal Swamp Conservation Area** in South Plainfield, Edison and Metuchen offers 660 acres of freshwater wetlands and hardwood forest as a largely undiscovered birding oasis in an ocean of suburban sprawl. Over 175 birds have been spotted at this largely unexplored birding hotspot, including the threatened and endangered grasshopper sparrow and yellow-crowned night-heron. The Dismal Swamp is best accessed from the Triple C Ranch on Tyler Road in Edison. Visit www.edisonwetlands.org/newsite/aboutus/programs/tripranc.php for more details.
- **Cheesequake State Park** brings a range of easily accessible habitat with hiking trails and highly visible osprey nests over 1,569 acres of coastal salt marsh, freshwater marsh, white cedar swamp, Pine Barrens habitat, hardwood forest and fields. Adding to the birding

diversity is Cheesequake's transitional zone between northern and southern New Jersey habitat. Visit www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/cheesequake.html for more details.

- The New Jersey Audubon Society formally established the **Plainsboro Preserve** in Plainsboro just a few years ago, but its 150-plus resident birds have long enjoyed its over 1,000 acres of mature beech woods, McCormack Lake and Devil's Brook, and meadows. Snowy owl, pileated woodpecker, and peregrine falcon have been sighted here, and the five miles of trails make birding accessible. Visit www.njaudubon.org/Centers/Plainsboro for more details.
- The **Raritan River** flows tidally through 10 different towns in Middlesex County, including East Brunswick, Edison, Highland Park, New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Piscataway, Sayreville, South Amboy, South River and Woodbridge. In each place, the Raritan offers unique opportunities for birding, with American oystercatcher, bald eagle, osprey, peregrine falcon and a wide range of gulls being among the regular sightings from the river. Among the many access points for the Raritan are the Johnson Park floodplain, Highland Park Meadows and Donaldson Park in Highland Park; Boyd Park and Buccleuch Park in New Brunswick; Edgeboro Landfill in East Brunswick; Edison Boat Basin; Sayreville's Julian Capik Nature Preserve, and Keasbey in Woodbridge. Even the bridges over the Raritan River bring chance sightings of peregrine falcon and other birds perched on the light poles. For more details on some of the birds and locations along the Raritan, visit www.leoraw.com/hpenv/biod/index.html and www.njnaturenotes.com.
- The **Rutgers Ecological Preserve** in Piscataway, Highland Park and Edison holds the region's best old-growth forest and a number of spring-fed brooks, just across the Raritan River from downtown New Brunswick. Over 150 species of birds have been sighted on the preserve's 370 acres, including a range of woodpeckers, owls and hawks. Visit www.freporg.org for more details.
- Jamesburg Park Conservation Area and Helmetta Pond in East Brunswick, Helmetta and Monroe offers over 3,000 acres of Pine Barrens habitat. Its sandy pitch-pine woods, cedar bogs, Atlantic white-cedar forest and Manalapan River wetlands provide the northernmost point in New Jersey to regularly see birds like Whip-poor-will typical of the Pine Barrens in southern New Jersey. Visit <http://nynjctbotany.org/njptofc/helmetta.html> for details.
- In South Plainfield, **Highland Avenue Woods Reserve** is good for spring and fall migrants, and among the species sighted is the loggerhead shrike. Another great South Plainfield area is **Veteran's Park** at the confluence of Bound Brook and Cedar Brook, with riparian habitat that holds an abundance of night-herons and warblers. For more details, visit www.geocities.com/friendsofhighlandwoods/.
- As the largest preserve in the Middlesex County Parks system, the **John A. Phillips Open Space Preserve** in Old Bridge offers 1,728 acres of sandy soil Pine Barrens, wetlands, vernal ponds, forested uplands and tributaries of the South River. A number of trails lead through varied habitat with a wide range of birdlife. For details, visit <http://www.co.middlesex.nj.us/parksrecreation/john.asp>.

- **Other promising birding locations** in Middlesex County include:
- Dallenbach Park in East Brunswick;
 - Kingston at the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park in South Brunswick;
 - Carteret's and Port Reading's Arthur Kill tidal wetlands;
 - Bound Brook and Green Brook riverfronts in Middlesex, S.Plainfield and Piscataway;
 - the Piedmont Plains habitat of Pigeon Swamp State Park in South Brunswick;
 - Farrington Lake in North Brunswick;
 - the Tamarack Hollow wetland trails in East Brunswick;
 - Mill Pond in Milltown;
 - Thompson Park's Manalapan Lake and hiking trails in Monroe and Jamesburg;
 - Ambrose and Doty's Brooks Park in Piscataway;
 - the Middlesex Greenway running through Perth Amboy, Woodbridge, Edison, Metuchen and South Plainfield;
 - Ireland Brook Park in East Brunswick and South Brunswick;
 - Mountain View Park in Middlesex Borough;
 - the Millstone Riverfront in Cranbury and Plainsboro;
 - Helmetta Pond in Helmetta;
 - Rutgers Display Gardens in North Brunswick;
 - New Market Pond in South Plainfield;
 - Lawrence Brook's scenic waterways in South and North Brunswick;
 - Duhernal Lake in Spotswood;
 - Alvin P. Williams Memorial Park at Sewaren Peninsula in Woodbridge;
 - Davidson's Mill Pond Park in South Brunswick;
 - Columbia Park in Dunellen, and
 - the Rahway River headwaters of northern Edison's North Inman Preserve.

Bird sightings can also be found in abundance at the 18 county parks run by Middlesex County covering 6,600 acres, in municipalities throughout the county. As for local rarities, they can be found just about everywhere—South River and Sayreville have each had sightings of the Wood Stork, and Cranbury had a sighting of American White Pelicans.

III. Checklist of Birds of Middlesex County

Following is a checklist of the birds of Middlesex County, New Jersey, compiled through extensive research by David Wheeler, Angela Gorczyca and Diana Morgan. An exhaustive number of formal and informal lists of sightings were examined to compile this checklist, some of which include birds spotted many years ago. As such, the reader is advised that all birds noted here are not necessarily expected to be found in a given year.

The list notes the likelihood by season of spotting each bird in the most likely habitat and area of the county. We have also included rarities that may have as little as one recorded sighting in the county; more details will follow on these rare birds in the next section. Like the birds themselves, this checklist is not assumed to be static. We expect there will be additional past sightings, as well as new ones, that were not available to us and are not included. As such, we encourage readers to submit additional information to us at the address at the end of the document, as we will be revising this list as necessary to reflect updated information.

The Birds of Middlesex County

Bird Name	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
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~Loons-Grebes~

Common Loon	C	R	C	C
Red-throated Loon	U	R	U	U
Horned Grebe	C	_	C	C
Pied-billed Grebe**	U	R	U	U
Red-necked Grebe	R	_	R	R
Western Grebe*	_	_	_	_

~Gannets-Pelicans-Cormorants~

Northern Gannet*	_	_	_	_
American White Pelican*	_	_	_	_
Double-crested Cormorant	A	A	C	C
Great Cormorant	U	_	U	U

~Bitterns-Herons-Ibises~

American Bittern**	R	R	R	R
Least Bittern	R	R	R	_
Great Blue Heron	C	C	C	C
Great Egret	A	A	C	_
Snowy Egret	A	A	C	_
Little Blue Heron	R	R	R	_
Tricolored Heron	O	O	O	_
Cattle Egret	U	U	U	_
Green Heron	C	C	C	_
Black-crowned Night Heron**	C	C	C	U
Yellow-crowned Night Heron**	U	U	U	_
Glossy Ibis	C	C	R	_

~Storks~

Wood Stork*	_	_	_	_
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~Geese-Swans-Ducks~

Greater White-fronted Goose*	_	_	_	_
Barnacle Goose*	_	_	_	_
Snow Goose	R	_	R	R
Canada Goose	A	A	A	A
Brant	C	U	C	C
Mute Swan	U	U	U	U
Tundra Swan	O	_	O	_

Wood Duck	U	U	U	O
Gadwall	C	U	C	C
American Wigeon	C	_	C	C
American Black Duck	C	U	C	C
Mallard	A	A	A	A
Blue-winged Teal	U	O	U	_
Northern Shoveler	U	R	U	U
Northern Pintail	R	_	R	R
Green-winged Teal	U	O	U	U
Canvasback	R	_	R	R
Redhead	O	_	O	O
Ring-Necked Duck	R	_	R	R
Greater Scaup	C	_	C	C
Lesser Scaup	R	_	R	R
Harlequin Duck*	_	_	_	_
Surf Scoter	R	_	R	R
White-winged Scoter	R	_	R	R
Black Scoter	R	_	R	R
Long-tailed Duck	R	_	R	R
Bufflehead	C	_	C	C
Common Goldeneye	U	_	U	U
Barrow's Goldeneye	_	_	_	O
Hooded Merganser	U	_	U	R
Common Merganser	R	_	R	R
Red-Breasted Merganser	C	_	C	C
Ruddy Duck	R	O	R	R

~Vultures-Hawks-Falcons~

Turkey Vulture	C	C	C	C
Black Vulture	R	R	R	R
Osprey**	U	U	U	_
Swallow-tailed Kite*	_	_	_	_
Bald Eagle**	R	O	R	R
Northern Harrier**	U	O	U	U
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	U	_	U	U
Cooper's Hawk**	U	R	U	U
Northern Goshawk**	O	_	O	O
Red-shouldered Hawk**	R	O	R	O
Broad-winged Hawk	U	O	U	_
Red-tailed Hawk	C	C	C	C
Rough-legged Hawk	_	_	_	R
Golden Eagle	O	_	O	_
American Kestrel	U	R	U	U
Merlin	U	_	U	R
Peregrine Falcon**	U	O	U	R

~Grouse-Turkey-Quail~

Ring-Necked Pheasant	R	R	R	R
Ruffed Grouse	–	O	–	–
Wild Turkey	U	R	U	U
Northern Bobwhite	–	O	–	–

~Rails-Cranes~

Virginia Rail	R	O	R	O
Clapper Rail	C	C	R	O
King Rail*	–	–	–	–
Sora	O	O	O	–
Common Moorhen	R	O	R	–
American Coot	U	–	U	U
Sandhill Crane*	–	–	–	–

**~Plovers-Sandpipers-Oystercatchers-
Stilts~**

Black-bellied Plover	C	R	U	R
Semipalmated Plover	U	R	R	O
Killdeer	C	C	C	R
Piping Plover**	O	O	O	–
Short-billed Dowitcher	C	O	R	–
Hudsonian Godwit	O	O	O	–
Whimbrel	O	O	O	–
Greater Yellowlegs	C	R	C	U
Lesser Yellowlegs	C	R	C	O
Solitary Sandpiper	U	O	U	–
Spotted Sandpiper	C	U	C	–
Willet	C	U	C	O
Ruddy Turnstone	U	O	U	R
Red Knot**	R	–	R	O
Sanderling	C	O	C	U
Semipalmated Sandpiper	C	O	C	–
Western Sandpiper	O	–	O	O
Least Sandpiper	C	O	C	–
White-rumped Sandpiper	O	–	R	–
Pectoral Sandpiper	O	–	O	–
Curlew Sandpiper*	–	–	–	–
Dunlin	C	O	C	U
Stilt Sandpiper	O	–	O	–
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	O	–	O	–
Baird's Sandpiper*	–	–	O	–
American Woodcock	U	O	R	O
Common Snipe	R	–	O	–

Red Phalarope*	-	-	-	-
American Oystercatcher	U	U	U	-
Black-necked Stilt*	-	O	-	-

~Jaegers-Gulls-Terns-Skimmers~

Parasitic Jaeger*	-	-	-	-
Ring-billed Gull	A	C	A	A
Great Black-Backed Gull	C	C	C	C
Glaucous Gull	-	-	-	O
Iceland Gull	-	-	-	R
Herring Gull	A	A	A	A
Lesser Black-backed Gull*	O	-	R	R
Black-headed Gull	O	O	-	O
Bonaparte's Gull	U	R	R	U
Laughing Gull	A	A	C	-
Franklin's Gull*	-	-	-	O
Sandwich Tern	-	-	O	-
Caspian Tern	R	O	O	-
Royal Tern	R	R	R	-
Common Tern	C	U	U	-
Arctic Tern	O	-	-	-
Forster's Tern	A	C	C	-
Least Tern**	U	R	R	-
Black Tern	O	-	O	-
Black Skimmer**	U	R	R	-

~Doves-Parrots-Cuckoos-Owls~

Rock Dove	A	A	A	A
Mourning Dove	A	A	A	A
Monk Parakeet	O	O	O	O
Black-billed Cuckoo	R	O	R	-
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	U	U	R	-
Common Barn Owl	O	R	O	O
Eastern Screech Owl	C	C	C	U
Great Horned Owl	C	C	C	C
Barred Owl**	-	-	-	-
Northern Hawk Owl*	-	-	-	-
Boreal Owl*	-	-	-	-
Northern Saw-Whet Owl	-	-	-	O
Long-eared Owl**	O	O	O	O
Short-eared Owl**	O	-	O	O
Snowy Owl*	-	-	-	O

~Nightjars-Swifts-Hummingbirds~

Common Nighthawk	U	R	R	-
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Chuck Will's Widow	R	R	O	_
Whip-poor-will	U	U	O	_
Chimney Swift	A	A	A	_
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	U	U	U	_
Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird*	_	_	_	_

~Kingfishers-Woodpeckers-Flycatchers~

Belted Kingfisher	U	U	U	U
Red-headed Woodpecker**	O	O	O	O
Red-bellied Woodpecker	A	A	A	A
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	R	O	R	R
Downy Woodpecker	A	A	A	A
Hairy Woodpecker	U	U	U	U
Northern Flicker	C	C	C	U
Pileated Woodpecker	R	R	R	R
Olive-sided Flycatcher	O	_	O	_
Eastern Wood-Pewee	C	C	U	_
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	O	_	O	_
Alder Flycatcher	O	O	O	_
Willow Flycatcher	U	U	R	_
Least Flycatcher	R	_	R	_
Eastern Phoebe	C	C	C	O
Great-crested Flycatcher	C	U	U	_
Western Kingbird	O	_	O	_
Eastern Kingbird	C	C	C	_
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher*	_	O	O	_

~Shrikes-Vireos~

Northern Shrike*	_	_	_	O
White-eyed Vireo	U	U	O	_
Yellow-throated Vireo	R	R	O	_
Blue-headed Vireo	U	O	U	_
Warbling Vireo	U	U	R	_
Philadelphia Vireo	_	_	O	_
Red-eyed Vireo	C	U	C	_

~Jays-Crows-Larks-Swallows~

Blue Jay	A	A	A	C
American Crow	A	A	A	A
Fish Crow	A	A	A	A
Common Raven	_	_	_	_
Horned Lark	R	O	R	U
Purple Martin	R	R	O	_
Tree Swallow	C	C	C	O
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	U	U	R	_

Bank Swallow	U	U	O	_
Cliff Swallow	O	O	O	_
Barn Swallow	C	C	C	_

~Chickadees-Nuthatches-Wrens~

Carolina Chickadee	C	C	C	C
Black-capped Chickadee	C	C	C	C
Tufted Titmouse	C	C	C	C
Red-breasted Nuthatch	R	O	R	R
White-breasted Nuthatch	C	C	C	C
Brown Creeper	R	_	R	R
Carolina Wren	C	C	C	C
Winter Wren	R	_	R	O
House Wren	A	A	C	_
Marsh Wren	A	A	C	O

~Kinglets-Thrushes-Thrashers~

Golden-crowned Kinglet	C	O	C	R
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	C	_	C	O
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	C	U	C	_
Eastern Bluebird	U	R	U	R
Veery	U	O	U	_
Gray-cheeked Thrush	O	_	O	_
Bicknell's Thrush	O	_	O	_
Swainson's Thrush	U	_	U	_
Hermit Thrush	U	_	U	R
Wood Thrush	U	U	R	_
American Robin	A	A	A	C
Gray Catbird	A	A	A	O
Northern Mockingbird	A	A	A	A
Brown Thrasher	U	U	R	O

~Starling-Pipits-Waxwings~

European Starling	A	A	A	A
Cedar Waxwing	U	U	U	U
American Pipit	R	_	R	O

~Warblers~

Blue-winged Warbler	U	R	U	_
Golden-winged Warbler	O	O	O	_
Tennessee Warbler	U	_	U	_
Orange-crowned Warbler	_	_	O	O
Nashville Warbler	U	_	U	_
Northern Parula Warbler	C	O	C	O
Yellow Warbler	C	U	R	_

Chestnut-sided Warbler	U	O	U	_
Magnolia Warbler	U	O	U	_
Cape May Warbler	O	_	R	_
Black-throated Blue Warbler	U	O	U	_
Yellow-rumped Warbler	C	O	C	U
Black-throated Green Warbler	U	_	U	_
Blackburnian Warbler	U	_	U	_
Yellow-throated Warbler	O	_	O	_
Pine Warbler	U	U	R	O
Prairie Warbler	U	R	R	_
Palm Warbler	U	_	U	_
Bay-breasted Warbler	R	_	R	_
Blackpoll Warbler	U	_	C	_
Cerulean Warbler	O	O	_	_
Black and White Warbler	C	U	C	_
American Redstart	C	O	C	_
Prothonotary Warbler	O	O	O	_
Worm Eating Warbler	R	O	O	_
Ovenbird	U	U	U	_
Northern Waterthrush	R	O	R	_
Louisiana Waterthrush	R	R	O	_
Kentucky Warbler	O	O	O	_
Connecticut Warbler	_	_	R	_
Mourning Warbler	R	_	O	_
Common Yellowthroat	C	C	C	O
Hooded Warbler	R	O	O	_
Wilson's Warbler	R	_	R	_
Canada Warbler	U	O	U	_
Yellow-breasted Chat	O	O	O	O

~Tanagers-Sparrows-Cardinals~

Scarlet Tanager	U	R	U	_
Summer Tanager	O	O	_	_
Western Tanager*	_	_	_	_
Eastern Towhee	C	U	U	O
Spotted Towhee*	_	_	_	_
American Tree Sparrow	U	_	R	U
Chipping Sparrow	A	A	C	R
Clay-colored Sparrow	_	_	O	_
Field Sparrow	U	U	U	O
Vesper Sparrow**	_	_	O	_
Lark Bunting*	_	_	_	_
Savannah Sparrow**	U	O	U	U
Seaside Sparrow	U	U	R	O
Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow	U	U	R	R

Grasshopper Sparrow**	O	O	_	_
Fox Sparrow	U	_	U	O
Song Sparrow	A	A	A	A
Lincoln's Sparrow	O	_	R	_
Swamp Sparrow	C	C	C	R
White-throated Sparrow	C	_	C	A
White-crowned Sparrow	R	_	R	R
Black-throated Sparrow*	_	_	_	_
Dark-eyed Junco	C	_	A	A
Lapland Longspur	_	_	O	O
Snow Bunting	_	_	O	R
Northern Cardinal	A	A	A	A
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	U	R	R	_
Blue Grosbeak	O	O	_	_
Indigo Bunting	A	C	U	_
Painted Bunting*	_	_	_	_
Dickcissel	_	_	O	O

~Blackbirds-Finches~

Bobolink**	O	O	R	_
Red-winged Blackbird	A	A	A	C
Eastern Meadowlark	R	O	O	O
Western Meadowlark*	_	_	_	_
Yellow-headed Blackbird	_	_	_	O
Rusty Blackbird	R	_	R	O
Brewer's Blackbird*	_	_	_	_
Common Grackle	A	A	A	R
Boat-tailed Grackle	R	R	R	R
Brown-headed Cowbird	C	C	C	R
Orchard Oriole	R	R	O	_
Pine Grosbeak	_	_	_	O
Purple Finch	R	_	R	R
Baltimore Oriole	C	C	U	_
House Finch	A	A	A	C
American Goldfinch	C	C	C	C
Evening Grosbeak	_	_	_	O
Common Redpoll*	_	_	_	O
House Sparrow	A	A	A	A
Pine Siskin*	_	_	O	O
White-winged Crossbill*	_	_	_	O
Red Crossbill*	_	_	_	O

BIRD SIGHTINGS KEY:
Seasons
Spring - Mid-April through early June Summer - Mid-June through early August Fall - Mid-August through early November Winter - Mid-November through early April

Likelihood of sighting in proper habitat
A – Abundant - hard to miss C – Common - likely to see U – Uncommon - may see with repeated visits R – Rare - very lucky to find O – Occasional - 1 out of 100 visits * - Accidental Vagrant ** - State or federally threatened or endangered

IV. Rare Bird Sightings in Middlesex County

The rare birds listed below have only been reported three times or less in Middlesex County, New Jersey. In addition, while not accepted on the official record, sightings of escapees/exotic birds in Middlesex County have included bar-headed goose, Egyptian goose, Orinoco goose, chukar and cackling goose.

RARITIES OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY			
Common Name	Dates	Locations	Accidental Vagrant
Painted Bunting	1/6/2005 2002	Woodbridge, NJ Parlin, NJ	X
White-winged Crossbill	2/28/2002	Woodbridge, NJ	
Harlequin Duck	2/15/1996 1/4/1995	Perth Amboy, NJ Perth Amboy, NJ	X
Red Knot	6/1/1999	South Amboy, NJ	
Barnacle Goose	10/27/1993 12/26/2002 11/27/2002	Highland Park, NJ Monroe, NJ Plainsboro, NJ	X
American White Pelican	12/16/2004	Cranbury, NJ	X
Wood Stork	11/14/2000 10/10/2001	South River, NJ Sayreville, NJ	X
White-rumped Sandpiper	7/28/1993	Jamesburg, NJ	
Golden-winged Warbler	9/7/1993	Helmetta Pond, NJ	
Red Phalarope	10/23/1991	Dayton, NJ	
Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird	11/10/2005 8/9/2006	New Brunswick, NJ Monroe, NJ	X

Northern Shrike	1/10/1996	East Brunswick, NJ	
Black-and-White Warbler	4/24/1991	New Brunswick, NJ	
Sandhill Crane	4/7/2004	South Amboy, NJ	X
Franklin's Gull	11/18/1998	South Amboy, NJ	X
	11/25/1998	South Amboy, NJ	
	4/23/1997	South Amboy, NJ	
Black-necked Stilt	5/5/1993	Cheesequake, NJ	X
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	5/26/1993	South Amboy, NJ	
	6/22/1993	South Amboy, NJ	
	1/10/1996	Cheesequake, NJ	
Blue Grosbeak	5/15/2003	Plainsboro, NJ	
	6/19/2003	Plainsboro, NJ	
Tundra Swan	10/30/2003	Plainsboro, NJ	
Snowy Owl	12/11/2001	Plainsboro, NJ	
King Rail	5/13/1999	Cheesequake, NJ	
American Pipit	12/11/2003	Conaskonk Point, NJ	
Parasitic Jaeger	10/24/2002	Old Bridge, NJ	X
Chuck Will's Widow	6/29/1994	Old Bridge, NJ	
Baird's Sandpiper	9/4/1991	Dayton, NJ	
Common Redpoll	1/12/1994	Raritan Estuary, NJ	
Pine Siskin	1/12/1994	Raritan Estuary, NJ	

V. About Edison Wetlands Association

Founded by Bob Spiegel in 1989, Edison Wetlands Association (EWA) is a leading New Jersey environmental organization dedicated to protecting human health and the environment through the cleanup of hazardous waste sites and the preservation of open space and wildlife habitat in central New Jersey. EWA personnel have testified before the U.S. Senate on the federal Superfund program three times, and the organization was featured in a 2002 national bestselling book by the late Molly Ivins.

As part of our conservation program, EWA is the state leader in Brownfield-to-Greenfield projects, in which former industrial or commercial sites are remediated and transformed into thriving ecosystems and wildlife habitat with limited public access for passive recreation such as hiking and birdwatching. In fact, many of the best birding spots in Middlesex County are current or former brownfields—from the bald eagles spotted at Edgeboro Landfill in East Brunswick and Industrial Land Reclaiming Landfill in Edison to the bridges and towers used as perches by peregrine falcons and a wide range of hawks.

Spiegel and EWA saved the last farm in Edison, the Triple C Ranch, from development. The Triple C Ranch now offers a petting zoo, ecotours, environmental education, volunteer nature cleanups, and a new bird blind in the heart of the Dismal Swamp Conservation Area, the largest open space left in northern Middlesex County and home to over 180 species of birds. Through the Triple C Ranch and other areas, EWA works to introduce the public and schoolchildren to the nature in their backyards. For more information, visit www.edisonwetlands.org.

VI. Acknowledgments

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- Bob Spiegel, Melanie Worob, and Anna Malinowski from Edison Wetlands Association;
- Chris Aquila from Duke Farms Foundation for sharing his unparalleled knowledge of Middlesex County birds;
- the New Jersey Audubon Society's Sandy Hook Bird Observatory, New Jersey Breeding Bird Atlas, and South Amboy checklist, as well as their weekly lists and hotline of rare bird sightings across the state,
<http://www.njaudubon.org/Tools.Net/Sightings/VoiceOf.aspx>;
- the New Jersey Bird Records Committee List of Accepted Records of Rare Birds in New Jersey through 2005, compiled by Jennifer Hanson,
<http://www.princeton.edu/~llarson/ARL.pdf>;
- the Princeton University LISTSERV mailing lists run by Laurie Larson: NJBirds,
<http://www.princeton.edu/~llarson/njb/njbirdstxt.html>, and JerseyBirds,
<http://www.princeton.edu/~llarson/njb/jbird.html>;
- the Highland Park Environmental Commission's bird sightings compilations by Joanne Williams, www.leoraw.com/hpenv/;
- the East Brunswick Environmental Commission, www.njnaturenotes.com;
- the staffs at Plainsboro Preserve and Cheesequake State Park;
- the Raccoon Ridge Bird Observatory's New Jersey Breeding Bird Atlas Project,
<http://www.raccoonridgebirdobservatory.com/njbbatlas.htm>;
- the Friends of Rutgers Ecological Preserve, www.freporg.org, and
- the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish & Wildlife,
<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/tandespp.htm>.

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The following publications were vital resources for this report:

Boyle, William J. A Guide to Bird Finding in New Jersey (Revised and Expanded Edition). Rutgers University Press. 2002, 492 pgs.

Leck, Charles F. The Status and Distribution of New Jersey's Birds. Rutgers University Press. 1984, 214 pgs.

Lehman, Paul, ed. Records of New Jersey Birds. New Jersey Audubon Society.

Peterson, Roger Tory. A Field Guide to the Birds: Of Eastern and Central North America. (Peterson Field Guides). Houghton Mifflin Company. 2002, 427 pgs.

Pettigrew, Laurie. New Jersey Wildlife Viewing Guide. Falcon Press in coordination with

Defenders of Wildlife and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's
Division of Fish and Wildlife. 1997, 160 pgs.

Sibley, David Allen. The Sibley Guide to Birds. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. October 2000, 544 pgs.

Walsh, Joan, Vince Elia, Rich Kane, and Thomas Halliwell. Birds of New Jersey. New Jersey
Audubon Society. June 1999, 704 pgs.

Cover photo credit: Stephen Bahr, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

VII. Reporting Future Rare Sightings

We encourage anyone spotting a bird in Middlesex County that is either listed as a rarity on this list, or is not included at all, to contact Edison Wetlands Association for inclusion on subsequent versions of this list. Please contact us via one of the following methods:

Email: ewainfo@edisonwetlands.org
Mail: 2035 Route 27, Suite 1190, Edison, NJ 08817
Telephone: 732-287-5111
Fax: 732-287-5129

We also encourage you to report sightings of rare New Jersey birds to New Jersey Audubon Society's hotline at 732-872-2500. For more information on reporting rare sightings, please visit the New Jersey Bird Records Committee site at <http://www.princeton.edu/~llarson/reportto.html>.