



**February 2021**

# **Feathered Friends Part 1: Bird is the Word**



This is part one of Feathered Friends, providing some educational resources about birds and explaining how bird feeding and bird watching can be a healthy hobby.

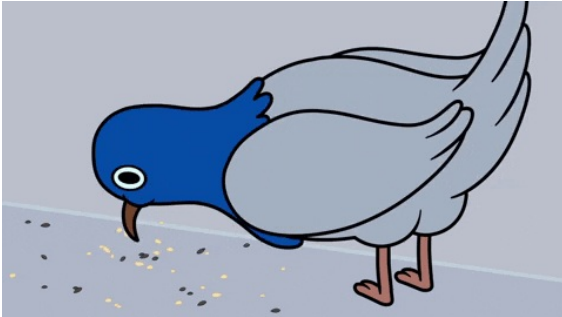
- February is National Bird Feeding Month; feeding birds is particularly important in the wake of cold, snowy winters.
- Taking an interest in birds can provide many benefits for you as well as the birds.
- It is important to keep in mind what kinds of food make up a

good bird diet so your feathered friends stay healthy, too.

After you're done reading, [don't forget to listen to our webinars every Tuesday! You can find registration links and recordings here.](#)

We are also holding Healthy Lifestyles Project: LIVE events, every Wednesday at 11 AM and Friday at 1 PM. [Register here.](#)

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# National Bird-Feeding Month

## History

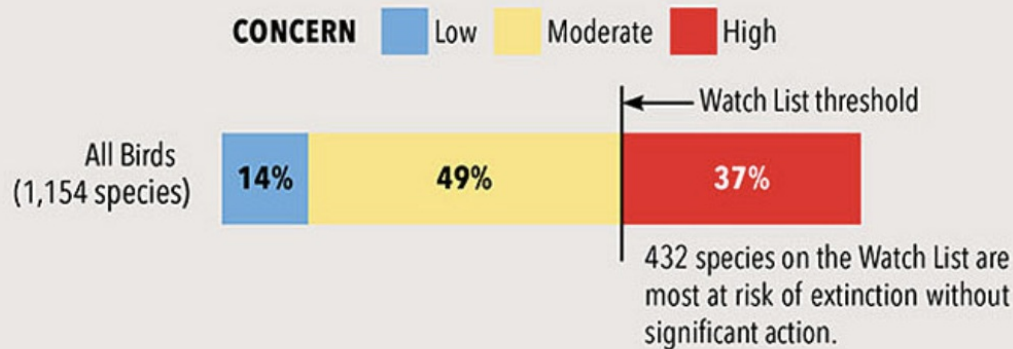
- On February 23, 1994, John Porter (a U.S. Representative for Illinois) proclaimed February as National Bird-Feeding Month when he read a resolution into the Congressional Record.
- February is one of the most difficult months in the United States for wild birds.
- People are encouraged to provide food, water, and shelter to help wild birds survive.
- According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, more than 50 million North Americans feed wild birds.

## How It Helps Birds

- According to the [2016 State of North America's Birds report](#), one-third of all our continent's bird species need urgent conservation action. More than 400 birds are on the report's Watch List of species considered most at risk of extinction.
- For most birds, food supplies become greatly reduced in winter just when food is most required as fuel for keeping them warm.
- Birds need to maintain an elevated body temperature, generally about 105°F—in order to stay active. This can be difficult in the winter, especially for species that do not migrate somewhere warmer.
- Feeding birds is particularly important in the wake of cold, snowy winters. Migrating species on the East Coast returning to snow-covered soil prompt wildlife groups to ask for the public's help in feeding.
- To survive the winter, most birds follow a simple formula: maximize calories ingested while minimizing calories spent.
- Providing a consistent, safe source of food can help these birds thrive in the colder seasons.



# ONE-THIRD OF ALL NORTH AMERICAN BIRD SPECIES NEED URGENT CONSERVATION ACTION



SOURCE: <http://www.audubonpark.com/discovery-center/feeding-the-birds-is-good-for-you-too/>  
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/how-do-birds-survive-the-winter/>  
<http://www.audubonpark.com/discovery-center/national-bird-feeding-month/>



## A Healthy Hobby

### Nature Improves Our Health

- Study after study shows that connecting with nature is good for you, and you don't have to be out in the forest in order to benefit. Even viewing nature has its benefits (like seeing birds at your feeder!).
- Studies show that just five minutes of activity in natural areas improves your self-esteem and mood.
- Short periods of time spent in nature can help reduce depression symptoms.
- Access to trees and green spaces calm us and help to alleviate stress.
- Even a short amount of time outside can reverse fatigue and concentration issues.
- Dementia patients have decreased symptoms following time spent in a garden.
- Hospital patients who spent time in a garden reported higher levels of hope and energy.

### Build a Natural Connection

- You can connect with nature in many ways, whether it's in the forest, your backyard, or simply looking out your window.
- Bird feeding is a wonderful way to connect with nature and wildlife. It is a mindful and meditative activity that brings people so much joy.
- In fact, a recent "Let's Feed the Birds" survey found that the number one reason people feed the birds today is joy.
- Bird-feeding provides a needed break from today's frantic lifestyles. Enjoy the

relaxation and peacefulness afforded by watching birds — nature serves to relieve the stress and can get one's day going on a tranquil note.

## Affordable, Family Fun

- Backyard bird-feeding is an entertaining, educational, and inexpensive pastime enjoyed by children and adults.
- Young children are naturally drawn to the activities involved in feeding wild birds, which can serve as excellent educational tools.
- Children can identify different species of birds with a field guide and can learn about the birds' feeding and living habits. These observations can then provide excellent research opportunities for school projects and reports.
- Feeding wild birds in the back yard is an easy hobby to start and need not overtax the family budget.
- It can be as simple as mounting a single feeder outside a window and filling it with birdseed mix. For many people, the hobby progresses from there. They discover the relationship between the type and location of feeders, and the seeds offered in them, and the number and varieties of birds attracted.
- Parents can challenge an inquisitive child's mind as they explore together these factors in trying to encourage visits by their favorite birds.

SOURCE: <http://www.audubonpark.com/discovery-center/feeding-the-birds-is-good-for-you-too/>

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## Bird Feeding Tips

### Seed

- There are dozens of blends of bird seed available and experimenting with these can bring new and different birds to your feeders.
- Try blends with whole nuts or dried fruits, and see who comes to visit.
- Make sure your feeders are suited to the size of the seeds so the feed is easily accessible through the holes.
- Some species won't come to hanging feeders, but you can accommodate them with a platform feeder or by putting seed directly on the ground.
- Pressed seed cakes are another convenient option. They come in several shapes and sizes, including bells, rectangles, and circles. There are small sizes that fit into a suet cage and round "doughnut" shapes that can hang on a simple post.
- Rake or sweep regularly, so that the seed doesn't attract unwanted four-legged visitors.

### Other Options

- Mealworms are another fun way to attract different birds, such as Eastern Bluebirds.
- These are sold live at specialty stores, but for convenience (and for those who are squeamish), there are now dried mealworms available at most places that sell wild bird seed.



- Suet is technically defined as the hard fat around the kidneys and loins in beef and mutton, but in common usage, most kinds of beef fat are also called suet and can safely be fed to birds. Suet is particularly attractive to woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, jays, and starlings.
- Most people think of suet as a winter food, to help birds find quick fat and calories in the hard, snowy months. But you can offer it year-round. No-melt suet is a good alternative in the summer. These formulations won't melt in the heat, and they provide extra nutrition to nesting birds and hatchlings.
- Click the image below to make your own vegetarian suet for the birds in your area!



### Make Your Own Suet

With this vegetarian version of suet (traditionally it's made from rendered animal fat) you can provide the perfect winter substitute for birds that normally feast on insects. This lipid-rich treat can help prepare year-round residents for the...

[Read more](#)

[www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

## Sweets (in moderation)

- As a sweet treat, you can offer fruit, including watermelon, oranges, diced apples, and berries, such as dried cranberries and cherries, along with raisins and currants.
- Putting out a small amount of grape jelly may attract birds such as orioles if they are in your area. Look for kinds that are made without high-fructose corn syrup and with a low sugar content.
- Be sure that the container of jelly won't allow the birds to get sticky, because sticky feathers can be deadly for birds.
- Another possibility is to offer sugar water, a favorite of hummingbirds. Use 1 part sugar to 4 parts water and no food coloring.
- These sweets should only be offered as rare treats, and are best offered during migration when birds need rich energy sources to refuel along their migratory routes.

## What's Bad For Birds

- Keep in mind that it's critical to feed birds the right food.
- Much as you wouldn't feed a starving child a bag of potato chips or cookies, you don't want to feed the birds foods that will actually hurt them rather than nourish them. Here are five common food choices that are harmful to birds:

- Spoiled or stale seed – Be sure to replace the food often. Damp seed gets moldy, and birds don't like food that's been sitting around any more than you do.
- Bread – This provides very little nourishment to birds.
- Potato chips – The salt and processed nature of these snacks is unhealthy for birds.
- Popcorn – Again, the salt is bad for them as are the processed oils used for popping.
- Sweets – Baked goods and candy are not good because of all the sugar and processed ingredients.

SOURCE: <http://www.audubonpark.com/discovery-center/healthy-snack-food-for-birds/>

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# Let's Stay Healthy!



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Looking to learn more about healthy living?  
Email [NJSAP@ArcNJ.org](mailto:NJSAP@ArcNJ.org) or call **732-749-8514** to  
schedule a virtual training.

You can also visit the NJ Self-Advocacy Project  
[Training homepage](#) to submit a training request.





Don't see what you're looking for? We can create a custom training based on the needs and interest of your group!



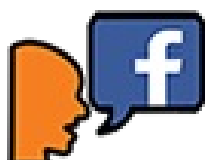
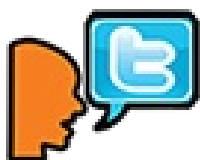
*The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey*



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A program of The Arc of New Jersey since 1983

Promoting Advocacy and Independence for People  
with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



# Positive Pulse

Your monthly dose of advice on healthy living

## February 2021

### Feathered Friends Part 2: Birds of NJ



This is part two of Feathered Friends, providing some educational resources about birds and explaining how birdwatching can be a healthy hobby.

- There are a variety of bird species you may find right in your own backyard!
- You can set up birdhouses and bird feeders in your yard to attract your favorite birds more often.
- There are many amazing spots to go bird watching right here in

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# Common Bird Species in NJ

## Red-bellied Woodpecker

- If you hear a loud repetitive knocking noise (aka drumming), check the trees in your backyard and look for this bird's distinctive red stripe. With its zebra back pattern the Red-bellied Woodpecker can be found all year round in residential forests. You can tell the male and female apart by the longer red stripe on the male's head.
- Drumming (hammering against a loud or resonant object) is the woodpecker equivalent of singing.
- The Red-bellied Woodpecker's most common call is a shrill, rolling *kwirr* or *churr* given by both sexes. You might also hear a gruff, coughing *cha cha cha* sounding through the woods, usually a contact call between mates, or a throaty growl exchanged when birds are close together.
- [Click here to hear what it sounds like.](#)



## Tufted Titmouse

- If you hear a bird with an echo-y voice, it is probably a Tufted Titmouse. These super cute birds love to show up on birdfeeders, so make sure to keep it well stocked and have your camera ready.
- The Tufted Titmouse's song is a fast-repeated, clear whistle: *peter-peter-peter*.
- Titmouse calls are nasal and mechanical. A scratchy, chickadee-like *tsee-day-day-day* is the most common.
- [Click here to hear what it sounds](#)





[like.](#)

## American Goldfinch

- This is the NJ State bird, so don't be surprised if this bright yellow guest is a frequent visitor in your yard. Their distinctive sunny color makes them easy to spot, and if you want to attract them, sunflower seeds are the way to go.
- Males sing a long and variable series of twitters and warbles that can be several seconds long.
- The American Goldfinch's most common call is its contact call, often given in flight. It sounds like the bird is quietly saying *po-ta-to-chip* with a very even cadence.
- [Click here to hear what it sounds like.](#)



## Chickadee

- You can tell the difference between the chickadee and other small birds by looking for its distinctive black cap and bib, white cheeks, and grey wings. They are easy to attract but they especially love suet, sunflower seeds, and peanuts.
- In most of North America, the song is a simple, pure 2 or 3-note whistled *fee-bee* or *hey - sweetie*.
- Chickadees make their *chickadee-dee-dee* call using increasing numbers of *dee* notes when they are alarmed.
- [Click here to hear what it sounds like.](#)



## Northern Cardinal

- Those brilliant red cardinals you see are all males. Female cardinals are a pale brown overall. Still, these beautiful birds are definitely eye-catching, and will be more likely to hang out if you supply sunflower seeds.
- Both male and female Northern Cardinals sing. The song is a loud string of clear down-slurred or two-parted whistles, often speeding up and ending in a slow trill.
- Scientists have described at least 16 different calls for the Northern Cardinal, but the one you'll hear most commonly is a loud, metallic chip.
- [Click here to hear what it sounds like.](#)



# Gray Catbird

- The all gray catbird has a call that you won't ever forget, because it sounds a lot like a cat! You are most likely to see these if you've got a bunch of fruit trees in your back yard. If you don't, keep your eyes open when you head to pick-your-own places.
- Male Gray Catbirds sing a long, halting series of short notes collected into "phrases," which combine to make a song. The notes often are imitations of other birds as well as of frogs and mechanical sounds.
- The most common call is a raspy *mew* that sounds like a cat. Catbirds also make a loud, chattering *chek-chek-chek* and a quiet *quirt*.
- [Click here to hear what it sounds like.](#)



SOURCE: <https://www.njfamily.com/the-birds-of-nj-heres-how-to-figure-out-what-youre-seeing-in-your-backyard/>  
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/>



## Bird Houses for Your Yard

### Choosing The Right Bird House

- It is important to know before buying or building a bird house just which bird species you want to attract. Many small birds that use bird houses are picky about the size, shape, and entrance hole of their nests.
- Entrance Holes: Holes are needed for ventilation and drainage. Ideal hole sizes for birds are 1 1/8" for wrens, 1 1/2" for bluebirds, and 1 1/4" for chickadees and titmice.
- Size: The more eggs a bird lays, the larger a base the bird house will need to accommodate each egg safely and comfortably.
- Materials: The nesting box may have painted, stained, or metal details, but the interior of the house should be untreated. Look for bird houses made of red cedar or bald-cypress. Pine and plywood also work but expect to replace it more often. A great option is a Gazebo feeder.
- Thick Walls: Make sure your bird houses have strong foundations. Thick walls constructed of untreated wood for insulation ensure a lasting experience for nesting birds.
- Sloped Roof: An extended and sloped roof is used to keep out the rain, preventing internal damage to the bird house.



- Baffle: Squirrels, raccoons, snakes, and house cats and other predators can steal eggs and chicks from nests. Baffles are used to keep these predators away. One of the best baffles is made from a length of stovepipe.

## Where Should You Put The Birdhouse?

- The location of the bird house is just as important as the size of the box in attracting specific birds. Depending on the species, some birds may prefer wooded, shady, open, or grassy areas.
- Most birds prefer a sunny, open space, so dense shade isn't recommended. There are many locations to account for when you try to attract certain birds to your yard.
- Some bird species, such as woodpeckers and wood ducks, want their nesting boxes attached to the trunks of trees. To them, bird houses are good substitutes for tree cavities.
- Most of the time, bird houses should be mounted on sturdy poles or posts to keep predators like rodents or cats away.
- To further discourage predators, wrap the post with sheet metal guard. This covering prevents predators from easily climbing up the post. You can also have a piece of stovepipe around the pole to serve as a baffle.
- Bird houses hung in trees should be from 5 to 30 feet above the ground where enemies can't access it. Bird houses should be located in areas because birds like to have a clear flight path to the entrance for delivering food.
- Open fields that are far enough away from gardens serve as great feeding grounds for birds like Purple Martins and American Robins.

## How To Attract Birds To Bird Houses

- There are many components that go into attracting birds to your bird houses. Your bird house environment must provide the basic necessities, or else birds won't stay for long.
- Food: The primary source of food for most birds would be seeds like black oil sunflower seeds, but also specialized foods like suet and mealworms can attract certain birds.
- Water: Freshwater for drinking and bathing is absolutely needed for all birds. Whether you use basic bird baths or bird bath fountains for the splashing sounds and bright sparkles, you will be able to attract birds.
- Shelter: The most attractive shelters for nesting birds include evergreen trees and various native plants. Some birds like woodpeckers prefer dead trees that have cavities in them.
- Landscaping: Provide native plants and naturalized areas for your birds to feel comfortable. Don't use too many pesticides or other chemicals, or else birds won't be able to feast on insects, nor will there be enough spider silk available for nesting.
- Nesting Material: Provide various sources of nesting material such as twigs, leaves, and weeds. Try not to be too excessive in providing nesting material because some birds prefer to build their own nests from scratch.



### 53 Free DIY Bird House & Bird Feeder Plans that Will...

If you're a gardener, you might think that birds are a pest for your garden. Most of them are not. In fact, some birds like the Bluebirds, Chickadees, and Nighthawks are one of the best natural pest controls; they eat insects like moths, bugs,...

[Read more](#)  
[morningchores.com](http://morningchores.com)

SOURCE: <https://morningchores.com/bird-house-plans/>  
<https://www.perkypet.com/articles/types-birdhouses-types-birds>  
<https://www.worldbirds.org/best-bird-houses/>



## Birding Spots in NJ

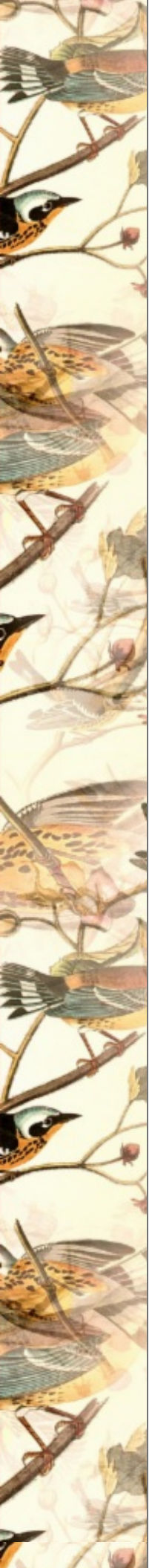
### World Series of Birding

- Each May, the New Jersey Audubon Society holds a one-day competition called the World Series of Birding.
- In some years, the winning team has recorded more than 230 species over the course of just 24 hours.
- The reason the World Series yields such big numbers is the great diversity of habitats in such a relatively small state.

### [Cape May](#)

- Cape May's avid birders (and there are many) would argue that this peninsula where Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean is the birding capital of the nation.
- Migrants naturally congregate here both northbound and, especially, southbound,





creating days in spring and fall where it seems every tree and shrub is full of birds in places like the Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge or Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area. The hawk watch here is legendary, with thousands of raptors passing Cape May State Park on some days in September and October.

- Birding is at its best at Cape May in spring and fall, and the Bird Observatory's website has information on the very popular festivals held at those seasons, with expert speakers and field trips.

## Island Beach State Park

- One of New Jersey's finest natural areas, and one of the state's best birding sites, Island Beach State Park encompasses 3,000 acres of nearly undeveloped barrier island. The park includes more than 10 miles of dunes, as well as woodland and marsh. Sandy beaches face the Atlantic Ocean, and marsh borders Barnegat Bay.
- Many factors contribute to the park's lengthy bird list. Shorebirds feed on its beaches and marshes, and some nest. Seabirds such as scoters, loons, Northern Gannet, and Great Cormorant can be spotted in and over the Atlantic from fall through spring. Migrants including raptors and songbirds follow the coastline and are concentrated by the island's narrow width. Waterfowl and wading birds frequent the wetlands and coastal marsh.

## Sandy Hook

- This narrow peninsula extends for six miles off the New Jersey coast toward Lower New York Bay. Much of it is administered by Gateway National Recreation Area, and it's very popular with summer beachgoers. Birders visit mostly from fall through spring, when the human population declines.
- Sandy Hook's birding reputation is based on several things. It's an excellent place in migration, when traveling birds are concentrated on this thin spit of land. In both spring and fall, wind generally from the west pushes migrants to the coast. Many migrants have appeared here, from Townsend's Solitaire to Townsend's Warbler.


## Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge


- One of the best-known birding locations on the Atlantic Coast, this refuge is located less than ten miles north of Atlantic City. More than three-fourths of the area's 47,000 acres is salt marsh, creating a perfect habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, gulls, and terns.
- The most popular birding activity here is cruising around the eight-mile wildlife drive, which passes alongside diked impoundments where water level is managed to benefit birds. Well over 300 species have been seen on this route alone, testifying to the richness of these wetland habitats and the refuge's location along the shore on a major migratory path.

## Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

- Located less than 25 miles from Manhattan, Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is a 7,768-acre swath of forest and wetlands surrounded by suburban neighborhoods and shopping centers. Once destined to be a major airport, it was saved by conservationists in the 1960s. It's a fine destination for birding anytime of year.
- A local volunteer group operates a visitor center on Pleasant Plains Road just northwest of the refuge, with information on the area and a nature trail. The main site for natural interaction is a boardwalk on Long Hill Road, with adjoining trails. The longest trails are found east of Long Hill Road, in a mostly undeveloped part of the refuge. Nearly all birding here is done on foot, as the refuge's location means it lacks the long auto tour routes of many national wildlife refuges.

## High Point and Stokes State Forest

- These areas in the northwestern corner of New Jersey are noted for beautiful forests, scenic views, a section of the Appalachian Trail, and, of course, for the highest point in the state at 1,803 feet. Birders know them for hosting several
- 



nesting species, some of northern affinity, that are rare or uncommon elsewhere in the state.

- Miles of trails crisscross High Point and Stokes, providing access to many different habitats. A good trail for some of High Point's notable birds is the Cedar Swamp Trail, looping around a high-elevation bog where Atlantic white cedar grows profusely.

## [Clinton Wildlife Management Area and Spruce Run Reservoir](#)

- These two adjacent areas in central New Jersey provide fine birding year-round for a wide range of species. Spruce Run Reservoir, north of the town of Clinton, is accessed off Van Syckles Road. The wildlife management area lies to the west, and can be entered from parking areas on Van Syckles Road or Charlestown Road (Road 635). The Black Brook trail is a favored birding site.

## [Heislerville Wildlife Management Area](#)

- New Jersey's coast on Delaware Bay is rich in marshes and other wetlands, many protected as hunting sites or other natural areas. One favorite birding destination here is Heislerville Wildlife Management Area, located off Highway 47 near the community of the same name. Its bird list leans heavily toward waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, gulls, and terns attracted to its impoundments and marsh and mudflats.
- Matt's Landing Road leads to the prime birding spots, and roads loop through the area for several miles. In May, look for common shorebirds such as Semipalmated Plover, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Short-billed Dowitcher, to name just a few. With birders keeping regular watch here, rarities such as Ruff and Curlew Sandpiper have been spotted.


## [Delaware Water Gap Recreation Area](#)

- Named for the "gap," or valley where the Delaware River cuts through a part of the Appalachian Mountains, this National Park Service site takes in areas on both sides of the river, in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. It combines splendid scenery, recreation, and history.
- The favorite birding activity in the park is a drive along Old Mine Road, which parallels the river from Interstate 80 heading north. For most of the way, the road is narrow, tree-lined, and lacking almost all development. Old Mine Road runs about 25 miles to Dingmans Ferry, but some of the best birding is in the first 12 miles from I-80.

## [Garret Mountain Reservation](#)

- This tract of high ground is known among birders basically for one thing: the amazing number and variety of migrant species that can be present on a good day in May. Garret Mountain birding entails searching the woodland in spring, and to a lesser extent fall, for birds that stop to rest and feed in this patch of greenery amid an urban landscape. It can also be good for migrant raptors.
- Located south of Paterson, the 568-acre park is easily accessible, as roads wind up through woodland to bluff overlooks with far-reaching views. Eight miles of trails are available for exploring the area. Garret Mountain has been designated an Audubon Important Bird Area and a National Natural Landmark.

## [New Jersey Birding and Wildlife Trails](#)

- Developed by the New Jersey Audubon Society, these trails reveal the Garden State's remarkably rich birdlife.
  - One completed route winds through Cape May and the southern Delaware Bay shore, comprising one of the continent's most famous regions for observing
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migratory birds. The massive flocks of red knots and other shorebirds that gather here in spring have drawn both international acclaim and focused conservation concern. The autumn flights of raptors at Cape May are world-class, offering glimpses of everything from speedy little sharp-shinned hawks to powerful peregrine falcons and huge golden eagles.

- Farther north, another completed trail shines a spotlight on a very different region: the Meadowlands. Just a few miles from the heart of New York City, the Meadowlands play host to more than 200 bird species, from Great Blue Heron and bald eagles to colorful little warblers and finches.
- On the Skylands Trails in New Jersey's northwestern highlands, you'll find cool evergreen forests cradle nesting birds of northern affinities, like blue-headed vireo singing their short whistled phrases and northern waterthrushes teetering back and forth alongside creeks.

SOURCE: <https://www.audubon.org/news/birding-new-jersey>

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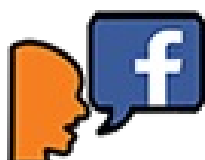
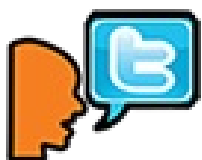


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