



CAPE COD CERTIFIED

CAPE COD PURSUITS

Birding on Cape Cod: Where to Go, What to See & When to Go

A free field guide from the people who actually live here.



capecodcertified.com/guides/birding-cape-cod

Few places on the East Coast offer the sheer variety of birding experiences that Cape Cod does. The peninsula juts some thirty miles into the Atlantic Ocean at the crossroads of the Atlantic Flyway, one of the continent's primary migration corridors.

Why Cape Cod Is a Premier Birding Destination

The Atlantic Flyway funnels billions of migrating birds along the eastern seaboard each spring and fall. Cape Cod sits at the elbow of this flyway in a uniquely advantageous position: birds moving south along the coast naturally concentrate at the tip of the peninsula before crossing open water or turning back inland.

Top Birding Spots

Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary — Wellfleet

Mass Audubon's sanctuary encompasses roughly 1,100 acres of salt marsh, tidal flat, upland forest, freshwater pond, and barrier beach. Consistently considered the best shorebird spot on Cape Cod.

Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge — Chatham

One of the finest shorebird staging sites on the entire Atlantic coast. Accessible only by boat. Best visited July through September.

Nauset Marsh — Eastham and Orleans

One of the most visually dramatic birding sites on Cape Cod. Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Tricolored Herons, and Osprey through the warmer months.

Province Lands — Provincetown

In September and October, migrating raptors move through in concentrations. In May, the Beech Forest becomes one of the Cape's premier warbler traps.

Sandy Neck — Barnstable

A six-mile barrier beach backed by one of the largest salt marshes on Cape Cod. Piping Plovers nest on the beach; Northern Harriers hunt the marsh.

Fort Hill — Eastham

The Red Maple Swamp Trail loops through freshwater swamp before opening onto elevated views across Nauset Marsh.

What to See by Season

Spring (April–May): Yellow Warbler, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Osprey, Whimbrel, Dunlin.

Summer (June–August): Roseate Tern, Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher, Cory's Shearwater, Wilson's Storm-Petrel.

Fall (August–October): The full suite of Atlantic shorebirds; Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon; Surf Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Common Eider.

Winter (November–March): Long-tailed Duck, Common Eider, Purple Sandpiper, Snowy Owl in irruption years.

Tools and Resources

eBird is essential for real-time sighting data. MASSBIRD is the Massachusetts rare-bird alert listserv. Binoculars and a spotting scope significantly improve the experience at open-water sites.

◆ THINGS TO DO

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