

RARE AND UNUSUAL BIRDS AT ISLAND BEACH STATE PARK, NEW JERSEY

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Island Beach State Park is an area in Ocean County, New Jersey, which used to be the old Phipps Estate. It was purchased by the state of New Jersey in 1953. Island Beach is a strip of coastline which is ten miles long from Seaside Park to the inlet at Barnegat Light. The peninsula is, for the most part, less than one-half mile wide. The park is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the east and Barnegat Bay on the west. The area is about 2300 acres of natural vegetation which includes: Wild Cherry, Beach Plum, Bayberry, Catbrier, oaks, holly, Poison Ivy, Red Cedar, and Hudsonian and Pitch pines, with lesser amounts of Blueberry, sumac, Virginia Creeper, and many other plants. At most places along the island the maximum height of the trees and shrubs averages four to twelve feet. Near the beginning of the park are most of the larger trees. Holly and pine trees are twenty to thirty feet in height there. The best area for observing and banding birds is in the shorter tree area.

The park has long been recognized as an ideal feeding and resting area for migrating birds. There are a few nesting areas in the park for herons and ibis. There are also a few islands out in the bay for nesting gulls and terns. The parking areas are always good places to look for rare and unusual birds in the fall after a good night of migration for the birds. The best time for observing birds is early in the morning. You will see that all the birds are heading back north in the early morning. Lots of these birds are coming back to land after being over the ocean in the early morning. In the afternoon the birds are heading south again.

I started birding in these areas in the fall of 1951 and started banding there in the fall of 1956. This is when the Bird Banding Laboratory started a program called "Operation Recovery." This operation ran from the east coast of Canada to Florida. The purpose of this operation was to see if birds migrating south in the fall that were banded at one station could be recaptured further south at another station.

The Island Beach station holds the record for a station with the most birds banded in one year. In 1963 there were 31,676 birds of 157 different species banded. The big day was October 13, 1963, when 3,337 birds were banded in the park. The most distant recovery to date was a Semipalmated Sandpiper banded by Bruce Adams on September 2, 1963. This shorebird was recovered at Igarapa Pas Armas at the mouth of the Amazon River on April 4, 1964, a distance of approximately 3,800 miles. From 1956 until 1991, 216 species of

birds were banded in the park. From 1939 until 1991, 352 species of birds were seen in the park area.

In this article, I will give you some information on rare and unusual birds seen and/or banded in the park.

All birds with an asterisk (*) before their names were banded in the park.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) A rare species in the area, only two records for the park area. One seen December 1, 1949, by Charles E. Price Jr. and one on February 22, 1970.

Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*) Only one record. Four were seen November 26, 1965, by R. Rosche.

Greater Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*) Two records from shore. One seen on October 12, 1960, and one seen October 13, 1969, both by John C. Miller.

Audubon's Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*) Two records from shore. One on July 29, 1951, and one seen by William Russell on September 15, 1962.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) Only one record. One seen on a rock pile at the end of the island October 29, 1980.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) One seen November 10, 1946, by Bishop.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) This species started turning up in 1987. High count of forty-plus in the summer of 1990 by John C. Miller.

Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) One seen on September 25, 1989, by Robert J. Miller and John C. Miller.

Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) Only two records. One seen on February 22, 1941, by Edward Rigby and David Cutler and one on February 21, 1947, by Schiff.

King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*) Seen almost every winter in small numbers on the rock piles at the end of the island. One on February 22, 1941, by Edward Rigby and David Cutler; one on February 22, 1968, by Robert Sehl; and twelve seen on March 8, 1970, by Frank Gill.

Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) Seen each winter on the rock piles. High count for the park was ten.

* **Peregrine Falcon** (*Falco peregrinus*) This species is a common migrant in the fall at the park.

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*) Only one record. One seen during November and December 1972.

Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) One seen on September 10, 1958, by John C. Miller *et al.*

* **Purple Gallinule** (*Porphyryla martinica*) A rare species in the area. One on August 19, 1985, banded by Betsy Crozer-Jones.

- Baird's Sandpiper** (*Calidris bairdii*) Three seen on September 13, 1958; one seen November 1, 1970; and one seen September 12 and 13, 1977, all by John C. Miller. One or two seen each fall on the bay side of the island on the grass floating in the water.
- * **Red-necked Phalarope** (*Phalaropus lobatus*) One banded on September 9, 1962, by John C. Miller.
- Red Phalarope** (*Phalaropus fulicaria*) Only a few records of this species at the rock pile at the south end of the park.
- Pomarine Jaeger** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) Two seen on September 15, 1958, by Frank Frazier; ten seen September 20, 1968, by John C. Miller; two seen September 27, 1971, by John C. Miller; and one seen September 17, 1974, by Burt Murry.
- Parasitic Jaeger** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) One of the most common jaegers seen from shore at the park. Six seen September 15, 1958, by Frank Frazier; fifty seen September 20, 1968, by John C. Miller; and forty seen September 27, 1971, by John C. Miller. Many more records for the park. These are only the records of high counts.
- Long-tailed Jaeger** (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) One seen January 1, 1945, by Quintin Kramer; two seen September 20, 1968, by John C. Miller; one seen November 11, 1969, by John C. Miller; and one seen September 27, 1971, by John C. Miller. A rare jaeger to see from the New Jersey shore.
- Little Gull** (*Larus minutus*) One seen November 27, 1965, by R. Rosche.
- Common Black-headed Gull** (*Larus ridibundus*) Only two records. One January 19, 1963, by John Sawyer and one January 5, 1969.
- Black-legged Kittiwake** (*Rissa tridactyla*) A few records, all of single birds, follow: February 3, 1940, by David Cutler; December 18, 1956, by Julian K. Potter; February 13, 1961, by William Russell; January 26, 1962, by A. Skins; and September 19, 1965, by F. Welfanth.
- Ivory Gull** (*Pagophila eburnea*) One fresh dead bird found on the beach on February 3, 1940, by David Cutler.
- Gull-billed Tern** (*Sterna nilotica*) One seen on September 12, 1969, by John C. Miller.
- Sandwich Tern** (*Sterna sandvicensis*) Two seen August 24, 1991, by Robert J. Miller and John C. Miller. One was an adult and one was immature. They may have been blown in by a hurricane.
- Roseate Tern** (*Sterna doucallyi*) One seen June 22, 1969, and two seen September 19, 1974, both by John C. Miller.
- Bridled Tern** (*Sterna anaethetus*) A few birds seen from shore after Hurricane Donna on September 12 and 13, 1960.
- * **Dovekie** (*Alle alle*) Not often seen from the shores of the park. One December 31, 1940, by Quintin Kramer; 36 picked up dead from the park beaches January 21, 1945, by Quintin Kramer; two on January 1, 1966, by Harry Goldstein; and one banded on December 27, 1987, by Jode Castro.

- Common Murre** (*Uria aalge*) Only one record. One seen April 8, 1966, by Benjamin Hiatt.
- Thick-billed Murre** (*Uria lomvia*) Only one record. One seen February 25, 1940, by Millard Lindauer.
- Razorbill** (*Aica turda*) The following are a few records from the park: One seen February 11, 1939, by Quintin Kramer; one seen February 12, 1940, by Quintin Kramer; eight found dead on the beach February 25, 1940, by Millard Lindauer; one seen January 21, 1945, by Quintin Kramer; one seen January 25, 1964, by John Sawyer; and one seen April 8, 1971, by Charles Jones.
- Black Guillemot** (*Cepphus columba*) Only one record, one seen February 13, 1965, from Barnegat Light by Harry Goldstein.
- Snowy Owl** (*Nyctea scandiaca*) This species may be seen during the those winters when the birds come down from the north.
- * **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (*Aegolius acadicus*) This owl migrates through the park in good numbers each year. Many banding records.
- * **Chuck-will's-widow** (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*) A few pairs nest in the park each year. One banded on September 11, 1956, by Elaine Dickerson; one heard May 5, 1961, by John C. Miller; and one heard May 12, 1987, by John C. Miller.
- * **Black-backed Woodpecker** (*Picoides arcticus*) One record. One banded September 28, 1965, by Mabel Warburton.
- Western Wood-Pewee** (*Contopus sordidulus*) A few were seen and heard calling in September 1967 by John C. Miller and C.E. Price Jr. This species was also seen and heard the same year in September at the Ocean City Banding Station by Chandler Robbins.
- Say's Phoebe** (*Sayornis saya*) A rare species in the park. Only two records. One seen February 12, 1956, by John Sawyer, and one seen November 15, 1977, by Bob Grant.
- * **Western Kingbird** (*Tyrannus verticalis*) This species is seen each fall in the park area. One was seen on each of the following days: September 20, 1961; September 26, 1961; September 16, 1962; September 25, 1962; October 31, 1962; September 11, 1963; September 25, 1963; September 27, 1963; September 20, 1965; and October 20, 1966.
- Black-billed Magpie** (*Pica pica*) A rare species in New Jersey. Only one record for the park. One seen May 25, 1951, by Robert B. Wallace.
- Common Raven** (*Corvus corax*) A rare find in south Jersey. One seen March 30, 1934, by Brooke Worth.
- * **Bewick's Wren** (*Thryomanes bewickii*) Only one record. One banded on October 11, 1969, by Bruce Adams.
- Sage Thrasher** (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) Only one record. One seen in October 1949 by Charles E. Price Jr. and Quintin Kramer.

- Bohemian Waxwing** (*Bombycilla garrulus*) This is a rare species in the park area. Six were seen December 15, 1963, and three were seen December 1, 1968, by John C. Miller.
- Northern Shrike** (*Lanius excubitor*) This is one of the best areas in New Jersey to see this species. It is seen in the park in a good shrike year.
- * **Bell's Vireo** (*Vireo bellii*) A rare species for New Jersey. Only one record for the park, one banded on September 15, 1959, by L. Dickerson.
- * **Philadelphia Vireo** (*Vireo philadelphicus*) This vireo is a common migrant in the park area each fall. It also comes through in the spring in small numbers.
- * **Orange-crowned Warbler** (*Vermivora celata*) This warbler is a regular migrant in the spring and fall in the park, with more records in the fall than in the spring. Sixteen were banded in the fall of 1963 and one was banded in the fall of 1971.
- * **Virginia's Warbler** (*Vermivora virginiae*) A rare species in the East and the park. Two records for the park: one banded October 6, 1962, and one banded September 25, 1966, both by Jim Richardson.
- * **Black-throated Gray Warbler** (*Dendroica nigrescens*) A rare species in the East and the park area. Only three records for the park: Single birds banded September 29, 1962, by John C. Miller; September 22, 1969; and August 30, 1987.
- * **Townsend's Warbler** (*Dendroica townsendi*) A rare species in the East. Only one record for the park. One banded October 31, 1987.
- * **Cerulean Warbler** (*Dendroica cerulea*) A rare species in the park area. Only seven seen in the area over all the years. Single birds banded September 20, 1965; September 27, 1967; May 9, 1987; and May 11, 1987; and September 10, 1990. Two banded May 13, 1987.
- * **Swainson's Warbler** (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) A rare warbler in New Jersey. Only two records for the park, both banded. One on May 5, 1971, and one on May 17, 1979.
- * **Connecticut Warbler** (*Oporornis agilis*) A common migrant in the fall. We have banded up to eighty in one season in the fall.
- * **Mourning Warbler** (*Oporornis philadelphia*) A common migrant in the fall with a few records in the spring. We have found up to sixty in one season in the fall.
- * **Summer Tanager** (*Piranga rubra*) There are a lot of records for this species in the fall with a few for the spring in the park area. Dates follow: two on September 2, 1958, Frank Frazier; (1) May 9, 1987; (1) May 10, 1987; (1) September 13, 1957; (1) September 3, 1961; (1) September 29, 1962; (1) October 15, 1963; (1) September 5, 1960; (1) October 5, 1966; (1) September 13, 1963; (1) September 19, 1965, etc. There are too many records to list them all in this paper.

- Western Tanager** (*Piranga ludoviciana*) Only one record for this western species in the park area. One was seen March 10, 1938.
- * **Black-headed Grosbeak** (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) Only one record for the area. One banded November 2, 1962, by Fred Mears.
- * **Blue Grosbeak** (*Guiraca caerulea*) A regular species in the fall in the park. Here is a list of banded birds and dates for the area: (1) September 8, 1958; (1) September 19, 1958; (1) September 18, 1959; (1) September 23, 1959; (1) October 8, 1961; (1) September 26, 1962; (1) September 30, 1962; (1) October 12, 1963; (1) September 20, 1965; (3) September 24, 1964; (3) October 1, 1964; (1) October 16, 1964; and (1) September 2, 1969.
- * **Painted Bunting** (*Passerina ciris*) Three records for the park. All were banded. September 29, 1961, by M. Dickerson; September 8, 1968, by Dorothy Bordner; and May 12, 1980, by Bruce Adams.
- * **Dickcissel** (*Spiza americana*) This is a common species in the fall in the park area. Two September 11, 1958, John C. Miller; twenty on September 27 and 28, 1968. Most birds are flying over as they head south. Too many records to list in this paper.
- * **Cassin's Sparrow** (*Aimophila cassinii*) One of only three records for the East. On September 22, 1961, M. Dickerson caught this bird in a mist net. This bird was collected.
- * **Clay-colored Sparrow** (*Spizella pallida*) This western sparrow shows up each year in the fall. Dates follow: (3) April 5, 1958, F. Frazier; (1) October 19, 1987; (1) October 6, 1988; (1) September 13, 1962; (2) September 29, 1962; (2) October 1, 1963, John C. Miller; (1) September 25, 1966; (1) September 26, 1966; (1) October 8, 1966; (1) October 11, 1966; (1) September 9, 1967; (1) October 3, 1967; (1) September 18, 1970; (1) September 23, 1972; and (1) October 26, 1975.
- * **Lark Sparrow** (*Chondestes grammacus*) A sparrow that shows up almost every fall in the park. Dates follow: (1) September 8, 1958; (2) September 10, 1958, John C. Miller; (1) September 12, 1975, John C. Miller; (1) September 5, 1959, John C. Miller; (1) August 28, 1960; (1) September 13, 1961; (1) September 8, 1962; (1) August 2, 1963; (1) August 7, 1963; (4) September 21, 1961, John C. Miller; (1) October 10, 1964, G. Raymond; and (1) September 16, 1971. The best place to look for this sparrow is around the parking areas in the park.
- * **Lark Bunting** (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) Only two records for this western species in the area. One banded September 7, 1961, and one seen September 7, 1962.
- * **Harris' Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia querula*) Only one record for this western sparrow at the park. One banded by Bruce Adams October 7, 1967.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird** (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) Only two records for this species in this area. One seen September 15, 1974, by Jesse

Grantham and two seen September 15, 1977, by John C. Miller. Many more have been at the feeder right across the bay from the park.

Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*) This species is an irregular winter migrant in the park area. Only a few records for the area: Four on November 10, 1961, and twelve all winter of 1968.

Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) Only a few records for the park area. This species is a winter migrant in the area. Eight on November 24, 1968, and one October 5-12, 1989, John C. Miller.

Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*) Only one record for the area. This species must have been missed on invasion years in this area. I had two on October 13, 1969.

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