



The Monmouth County Park System has two environmental centers dedicated to nature education. Each center has a trained staff of naturalists who answer visitor questions about area wildlife and natural history.

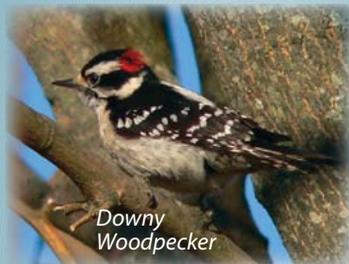
The **Huber Woods Environmental Center**, on Brown's Dock Road in the Locust Section of Middletown, features newly renovated exhibits and activities about wildlife and the Lenape Indians. There's a bird observation area, wildlife displays, and a reptile house. Nest boxes in adjacent fields attract Bluebirds and Tree Swallows.



Specializing in Monmouth County's wetland species, the **Manasquan Reservoir Environmental Center**, on Georgia Tavern Road in Howell, has water-related wildlife displays, hands-on activities and a bird observation area. Featured displays include the Osprey, Great Horned Owl, Great Blue Heron, Virginia Rail, Screech Owls and Bald Eagle.



Birds of Monmouth County



Downy Woodpecker



American Goldfinch



Carolina Chickadee

"Birding" has become one of the fastest growing outdoor activities in the nation, with an estimated 50 million people participating each year. This rise in the number of "birders" is due in part to the simplicity of the hobby. A pair of binoculars and a bird identification book are the only tools you need to get started. Also, you can go birding anywhere and anytime of the year, as birds inhabit virtually every place on the planet.

The birds themselves are, of course, the main reason behind this movement. Birds are among the most beautiful and interesting creatures in the animal kingdom.

Monmouth County is one of the premier birding locations on the East Coast. An estimated 360 species of birds have been recorded in the county and most can be seen in or around our county parks.

Year-Round Residents vs. Migrants

At least forty bird species are considered year-round residents of Monmouth County. These include the Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, American Crow, Blue Jay, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing and New Jersey's state bird, the American Goldfinch.



Northern Cardinal, seen at all the parks

In the spring, the Monmouth County parks attract many migrant birds on their way to northern breeding grounds for the summer. In the fall, birds stop here with their young en route to southern wintering areas.

Wood Warblers

Wood warblers are some of the most notable and numerous migrants. More than thirty species of warblers stop to rest and feed in our parks

on their journeys twice each year. These small (4-6"), exceptionally colorful birds will bring a smile to anyone lucky enough to encounter them, as they move in large flights containing many different species.



Black-and-White Warbler at Huber Woods Park

Many warblers nest in Monmouth County, as well. The Blue-winged Warbler, Northern Parula, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Black-and-White Warbler, American Redstart and Yellow Warbler all spend their summers here. They depend on our parklands and other natural areas for food and shelter for their young.



Common Yellowthroat at Huber Woods Park

Birds of Prey: The Raptors

Raptors include hawks, falcons, eagles and owls. Red-tailed Hawks and Red-shouldered Hawks are two of our largest hawks (18-24"). The Red-tailed Hawk can be seen perched in trees, on poles and fence posts, or soaring above meadows and



Red-shouldered Hawk at Huber Woods Park

fields, whereas the Red-shouldered Hawk is more of a forest-dweller. The Red-shouldered hawk is on NJ's endangered species list.



Red-tailed Hawk at Thompson Park

Returning from the brink of extinction, America's national icon—the regal Bald Eagle—has made a healthy comeback. Their numbers are increasing steadily, and recent nesting surveys show as many as 69 active nests throughout New Jersey. In Monmouth County, eagles can be observed soaring or perched around local reservoirs and along the area's many rivers. There has been an active, nesting pair at the Manasquan Reservoir in Howell since 2001.



A Bald Eagle at the Manasquan Reservoir

The Cooper's Hawk and the diminutive Sharp-shinned Hawk (10-14") are two smaller hawks that live in our parks. Look for their short, rounded wings and long, rudder-like tails. They can be seen quickly maneuvering through trees and shrubs in search of their prey, smaller birds and mammals.



The Cooper's Hawk can be seen at Holmdel Park

The most common owl in NJ—and the largest at 18-24"—is the Great Horned Owl. It can be seen locally at Thompson Park, Huber Woods Park and the golf course at Hominy Hill.



Great Horned Owl
Photo by Neil Nappe

Grassland Species

Monmouth County parks also offer a safe haven for species that depend on a rapidly diminishing resource: grasslands. The Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, Vesper Sparrow, Bobolink and Savannah Sparrow have all been spotted in parks with preserved grassland such as Dorbrook Recreation Area in Colts Neck, Thompson Park in Lincroft, and Crosswicks Creek Greenway in Upper Freehold.



Savannah Sparrow

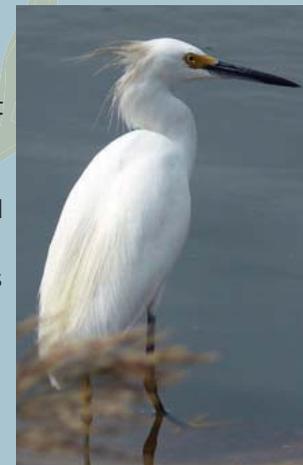
Species of the Jersey Shore

The Osprey has recently been removed from both the federal and state endangered lists. It is now thriving along the banks of county reservoirs and estuaries. This bird is known for its distinctive feet-first fishing style. Ospreys have adapted to human involvement and readily accept man-made nesting platforms that have been placed throughout our area.



Osprey on a nest at the Manasquan Reservoir

The Snowy Egret with its black beak and yellow feet is a common resident of estuaries, reservoirs and rivers in Monmouth County during spring and summer. Look for this small egret at Fisherman's Cove, Hartshorne Woods Park and the Manasquan Reservoir.



Snowy Egret



The Piping Plover at Seven Presidents

During the spring and summer months Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park in Long Branch is host to two important endangered species, the Piping Plover and the Least Tern. Both require open beaches for nesting purposes. Park staff take special care each year to isolate some beach areas to protect these tiny, fragile birds that lay their eggs in a shallow depression in the sand.



Two Least Terns

Look for this smaller Bonaparte's Gull (12-14") during the winter months at the Jersey Shore. Check out the black spot behind the eye, a sign that this bird is not in breeding plumage. (In breeding plumage, this gull has a black hood.)



Bonaparte's Gull at the Manasquan Reservoir