



World Series of Birding

Youth Birding Challenge

New Jersey at the Crossroads of Migration

Twice a year, hundreds of species of migrating birds use the ancient flyways of eastern United States. In the fall they fly south to the winter feeding grounds. In spring they return to the northern temperate climates to reproduce and raise young. These migration periods are more stressful than any other period in their life cycle.

One of the most critical stopovers along the migratory route is our own state of New Jersey. Birds are attracted in great numbers because of the abundance and great diversity of habitats. They use our forests, marshes, grasslands, lakes, islands, river valleys, wetlands, mountains and beaches for resting, feeding, and in many cases, to breed and raise young.

One reason why New Jersey supports such an impressive and diverse array of migratory birds is the variety of physiographic regions found in our small state. The richness and beauty of New Jersey was determined millions of years ago beginning with the uplift of the Appalachian Mountains in a region of long-buried igneous and sedimentary rocks. A succession of glacial activity and erosion prepared the basins for our major watersheds. These factors along with our coastal location make us the hub of the major migratory flight lanes of the east.

In both spring and fall, birds of great number and diversity depend on a variety of habitats to ensure safe passage. When these habitats are lost, we jeopardize the existence of birds. It's that simple. The New Jersey Audubon Society believes that migratory bird habitat conservation continues to be the weak link in global protection efforts. Unless the needs of migratory birds are met, unless the places they need to rest and feed are protected, North American species will continue to decline.

Species diversity and habitat diversity are part of the intricate weave designing the quality of life in New Jersey. Quality preserved for our wildlife is quality preserved for humans and wildlife together. ■

