



NJ Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory Celebrates 50 Years

Supporters and friends gather to remember 5 decades of bird conservation

Bernardsville, NJ (September 29, 2026)— New Jersey Audubon announces a successful 50th year celebration for their Cape May Bird Observatory at Rea Farms. Donors, volunteers, staff, board, and special guests gathered at an event to share memories, and recognize decades of protecting birds and the habitat they live in.

For half a century the Cape May Bird Observatory (CMBO) has been monitoring migration, teaching people about birds and nature, restoring vital habitats, nurturing the next generation of environmental leaders and advancing New Jersey Audubon's mission to inspire and empower people to care about nature throughout New Jersey and beyond. CMBO is part of a long tradition of studying and appreciating the abundance and diversity of birds in Cape May. With the founding of the Cape May Bird Observatory, New Jersey Audubon identified the need to study and protect the region's local avian populations and those migrating through.

"New Jersey Audubon has celebrated many anniversaries and milestones over the years. Yet the 50th anniversary of the Cape May Bird Observatory feels especially meaningful. For half a century, CMBO has connected people to the wonder of bird migration, building one of the most prominent centers for avian research, conservation, and education." Said Alex Ireland, PhD, The President & CEO of New Jersey Audubon.

The historical core of CMBO's research is the Cape May Hawkwatch. Fifty years ago, CMBO's founder, Pete Dunne sat on a lifeguard's chair to document massive numbers of raptors. Today the hawkwatch has become a destination for birders across the world. Thousands of visitors flock to the multi-tiered platform overlooking the marshes of Cape May Point. The platform provides optimal viewing, and CMBO staff are on hand and eager to deepen the viewing experience for both casual and skilled birders. CMBO's research expanded, with ongoing migration watches that include the Monarch Monitoring Project, Avalon Seawatch, Morning Flight songbird count, Cape May Songbird Stopover Banding Project, and Cape May Springwatch, keeping the observatory's finger on the pulse of migration.

The recently renovated Northwood Center, CMBO's homebase, adjacent to Lily Lake is another birding hotspot, also has an interesting past. Originally a residential home owned by Anne and D'Arcy Northwood, prominent members of the Cape May birding community, the center has undergone numerous changes over the past five decades. In 1979, the office space was one room of the home. As CMBO grew the space expanded, taking over more of the residence. In 1990, upon Anne's passing, the residence was bequeathed to New Jersey Audubon and, over the past year-and-a-half, has undergone a major renovation and expansion that was a decade in the planning. The center now provides a modern level of accessibility, comfort, and functionality to staff and visitors.

"I thank the talented staff and volunteers that have filled a multitude of roles as naturalists, counters, and banders putting in countless hours and becoming the next leaders in conservation. The community has provided support every step of the way." states Cape May Bird Observatory Director, Brett Ewald

About New Jersey Audubon:

New Jersey Audubon is a privately supported, not-for profit, statewide membership organization. Founded in 1897, and one of the oldest independent conservation organizations, New Jersey Audubon Inspires and empowers people to care for nature throughout New Jersey and beyond. We protect New Jersey's wildlife and plants, especially those species at risk by promoting the preservation of New Jersey's valuable natural habitats.