

THE GREAT OUTDOORS



Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Drive skirts the impoundments of the Refuge allowing for many wildlife observations. The skyline Atlantic City is in the background. Photo: USFW Service.

Jersey's Eastern Shore

The off-season is on at the Jersey Shore. Now that the tourists have, it's our time to explore and enjoy.

By J. Morton Galetto (collaborator C. Brown), CU Maurice River

Christine, one of my fellow nature comrades, and I took to New Jersey's east coast to check out prospective wild places that you might like to explore. We will share a mixture of favorites and other locations worthy of a visit. Our narrative journey will begin on the mainland in Oceanville (Galloway Twp.) and travel south to Cape May, beginning and ending with two of the

State's premier wildlife sites: Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge and Cape May Point State Park.

The off-season at the Jersey shore boasts some of the best weather and nature exploration that the state has to offer. Fall is a great time to enjoy resident wildlife or watch migrations heading to southern climes. Our suggested ventures can give you days of active or passive recreational opportunities. Each narrative is only a snippet of what is available at each of the sites. These are intended to whet your appetite, so pack your binoculars, a nature book or two, maybe some bug repellent, don a few layers, and head to our sandy coast.

Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, at 47,000 acres, is by far the largest of these locations. The Refuge stretches from Brick Township for 50 miles to just north of Atlantic City. By far the most popular place to access the refuge is 800 Great Creek Rd. in Galloway Township. There you will find a small visitor center giving you an introduction to the Refuge and orienting you to a number of trails and the famous Wildlife Drive. Forsythe is best known for its year-round birding opportunities for both forest and wetland species. Here migrations of all kinds abound. There are two very small

trails near the center: the Akers Woodland and the Leeds Eco-Trails. The Bristow and Jen's Birding Trails intertwine, offering about 3.5 miles of hiking or shorter loop options.

The Friends of Forsythe NWR have recently put together a nice audio tour that you can listen to as you drive the 8-mile Wildlife Drive; access it on [Soundcloud.com](https://www.soundcloud.com). This internationally-known loop is great for observing birds in all seasons, especially in spring and fall. The wintering waterfowl populations are something to quack about as well. You'll be sure to want to get a birds' eye view from the two wildlife observation towers. Remember your camera; wildlife photo ops abound along the drive.



Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge's vast impoundments. Photo: by Author.



Photo credit: Jack Mace

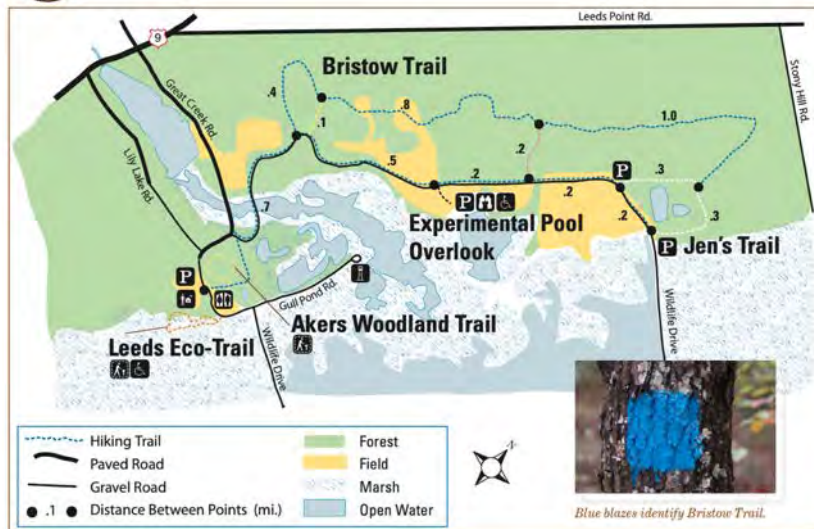




Previous page top down: Black skimmers, brant and sometimes snowy owls will use the Forsythe Refuge. Photos: by Author.



Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge
Hiking Trails Galloway



The 800 Creek Rd. Access, in Galloway Township has a visitor's center and marked trails. It also is the entrance to the famous Wildlife Drive. Map: Refuge website.

Let's move out to our barrier islands for a stop in Brigantine at the Marine Mammal Stranding Center. Although visitors can't visit the mammalian

rehabilitees, there is a very tiny museum and gift shop in which interns offer wonderful interpretations of the marine models that festoon the dome-like ceiling. Since 1978 the center has been rescuing and rehabilitating sick and injured marine mammals and sea turtles. Recovered animals are returned to the wild. It is the only federally authorized animal hospital in the State of NJ and their efforts are remarkable. As of 8/11, strandings for 2022 that the staff has addressed include 36 dolphins, 50 seals, 19 turtles, and 3 whales. Visiting the museum, gift shopping, or making a donation goes toward their mission of helping marine mammals in need.





Marine Mammal Stranding Museum Intern Jarett Portle tells a family about the various fishes displayed in their exhibit. Photos: by Author.

Looking to add a little something quirky to your nature check list? Just nine miles south of the Stranding Center you'll find New Jersey's most famous pachyderm – Lucy the Elephant. Right now she is literally under wraps as she is being renovated and getting a new paint job. This is my teaser for a late fall early winter visit when her renovation is unveiled. Stay tuned; I'm a sucker for whimsical destinations.



Lucy the elephant is currently under wraps as it is being renovated. Photo:by Author.

A few weeks ago our article covered the Ocean City Welcome Center where we enjoyed viewing the heron rookery about 8 road miles south of Lucy. So we'll advance to the southern tip of Ocean City's barrier island and its 341 acre jewel – Corson Inlet State Park. Here you can spend the day on the beach, ocean side or on the bay, without beach tags, however no swimming is allowed. You can cast a fishing line from either area. Also New Jersey residents can launch a boat for \$12 a day, or \$60 for the season. And after Labor Day launching is free! There is boat trailer and car parking, and two valued portable potties. On August 16 the protected oceanside areas that had been roped off for endangered piping plovers and other beach nesting birds were reopened.



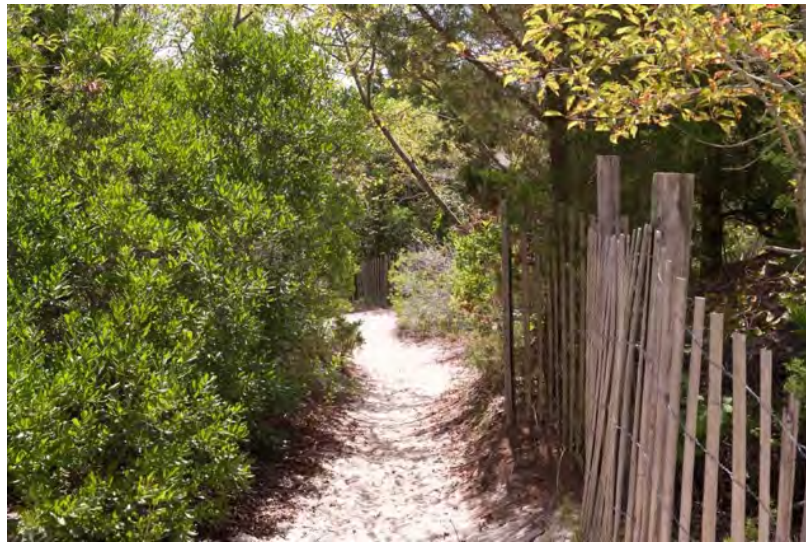
Windswept sands at Corson's Inlet State Park are a telltale sign of the harsh climate along the beachfront. Photos: by Author.



Corson's Park bayfront beach. Photos: by Author.

At Corson's, Christine and I opted to take the yellow trail walk over the dune system, about .7 mi out and back. This allowed us to transition from bayfront to ocean front through the forested ecotone dune. Scissor-grinder cicadas were advertising for mates and their

raspy drone ruled the soundscape. On this short stretch of snow-fence lined trail we were amazed by the diversity of vegetation. We noted horse nettle, evening primrose, bayberry, red cedars, prickly pear, yarrow, black cherry, blackberries, beach plum, rough cocklebur... and yes, lots of poison ivy. On the beach front edge of the dune there were patches of sea rocket.



Bayberry lined yellow trail Corson's Inlet State Park. Photo: by Author.



Corson's Inlet's yellow trail is well marked. Photo: Author.



The yellow trail leads to the beachfront. Photo: Author.



Horsemint is just one of the many native plants along the yellow Trail walk at Corson's Inlet. Photo: Author.

The stiff off-ocean wind caused especially rough waves but kindly kept the bugs at bay. The drought has left vernal pools dry but there are plenty of wetland acres on the site, so, as with most of these locations, carrying some bug repellent is in order.

The barrier island towns of Strathmere and Sea Isle City, at their southern tip, are separated from the next island south, home to Avalon and Stone Harbor, by Townsend's Inlet. There at 94th Street and Landis Ave. is the Townsend's Inlet Waterfront Park. It allows access to the interface between the ocean and bay beaches. The Park offers parking, a nice shade pavilion, a couple of picnic tables, surf fishing, and a short walking path which leads to the Inlet's beach. Once again there are the much-treasured travelers' porta-loos.



Townsend's Inlet Park shade pavilion (top) and Bridge and beach (lower). Photos: Author.

Crossing the Townsend's Inlet bridge, your visit lands you at the northern end of Avalon and the 8th Street jetty. A portion of the jetty's rocky crevices is filled with concrete, allowing for walking the section that juts into the Atlantic. If the surf is rough this is ill-advised.

New Jersey Audubon has a seabird watch between 8th and 9th Streets.

Because the north end of Avalon famously projects out about one mile further than the barrier islands to the north, southbound seabirds following the coast pass closer to this beach point. New Jersey Audubon explains the avian passage as such: "The migration of seabirds along the coast of New Jersey is spectacular, and an average of almost 800,000 seabirds are counted at the Avalon Seawatch annually. In some years the count approaches one million birds."

The height of activity is from October 7th to November 14th, but groups of birds can pass through at any time.



Avalon's 8th Street jetty is an excellent vantage point to spot migrating birds. Photo: Author.

The Wetlands Institute is located about six miles south of the Seawatch, at 1075 Stone Harbor Blvd. in Stone

Harbor. It has been conducting research for 50 years, in part to further enlighten the public. The most well-known of their activities is terrapin sea turtle protection. Part of their mission is educating the public about the importance of the environment and how it impacts our well-being. They host educational programs that make a stop well worth the visit. Check out their aquarium display, documentaries, and giftshop. The bulk of their youth programming is in the summer. The Institute is open weekends in the fall and winter.

Our next spot southbound is about 6 miles past the Institute – Hereford Inlet Lighthouse. The 1874 lighthouse is on the list of National Parks Service’s National Register of Historic Places and was designed by Paul J. Pelz who went on to plan out the US Library of Congress. The exhibits have some interesting relics that give insight into the treacherous waters of Hereford Inlet.

The lighthouse’s beautiful gardens have been featured in Coastal Living magazine and recognized by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. They have also been declared Certified Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation, providing the four basics food, water, cover, and places to raise

young. They are eye candy to be sure, but I would challenge them to incorporate more native species.



Hereford Inlet Lighthouse and surrounding gardens beckon history buffs and nature enthusiasts. Photo by Author.



*Hereford Light shade pavilion and garden entrance.
By Author.*



Rescue devices like this Breeches Buoy are on display in the Hereford lighthouse. Photo: Author.

We will resume our southward itinerary with the Cape May National Wildlife Refuge's Two Mile Beach Unit. Our leap-frogging down the coast is not a single day endeavor, but is intended to give context to your adventures – and even return trips. For many of us, these outdoor adventures are a lifelong enjoyment. We hope you will pick up the story where we left off next week.

With all of the suggested locations, check websites for fall and winter hours. You may wish to call in advance to verify.