



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 plants, wildlife and the Lenape Indians. There's a bird observation area and a reptile house. Miles of surrounding trails offer many opportunities to enjoy and view nature.



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 and Bald Eagle observation area. Features include an interactive watershed map, aquarium, live animals, and a fossil wall.



Birds

of Monmouth County



"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, and you can go birding anywhere and anytime of the year.



Downy Woodpecker, Male and Female

Birds are among the most beautiful and interesting creatures in the animal kingdom, and Monmouth County is one of the premier birding locations on the East Coast. An estimated 360 species have been recorded here and most can be seen in or around our county parks.



Red Winged Blackbird

Year-Round Residents vs. Migrants

At least 40 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, Northern Cardinal



Blue Jay

Downy Woodpecker (see above), Cedar Waxwing and New Jersey's state bird, the American Goldfinch.

In the spring, the Monmouth County parks attract many migrant birds on their way to northern breeding grounds for summer.

In the fall, birds stop here en route to southern wintering areas.



Goldfinch

Wood warblers are among the most notable and numerous **migrants**. These small (4-6"), exceptionally colorful birds will bring a smile to anyone lucky enough to encounter them. At least 30 species stop to rest and feed in our parks on their journeys twice each year.



Magnolia Warbler



Yellow Warbler
(Photo by Neil Nappe)

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.



Pine Warbler

Birds of Prey: The Raptors

Two of our largest hawks (18-24") are the Red-tailed, which can be seen perched in trees, on flagpoles and fence posts or soaring above meadows and fields and the Red-shouldered, which is more of a forest-dweller.



Red-tailed Hawk (juvenile)

The Cooper's Hawk and the diminutive Sharp-shinned Hawk (10-14") have smaller heads, more rounded wings (in flight) and long, banded, rudder-like tails. They can be seen quickly maneuvering through trees and shrubs in search of prey.



Cooper's Hawk

The most common owl in NJ is the Great Horned Owl; less frequently spotted is the Barred Owl.



Great Horned Owl
(Photo by Neal Nappe)



Barred Owl

Returning from the brink of extinction, America's national icon—the regal Bald Eagle—has made a healthy comeback. In Monmouth County, eagles can be observed soaring or perched around local reservoirs (including the Manasquan Reservoir in Howell) and along area rivers.



Bald Eagle
(Photo by Dennis Ruffe)

Formerly considered a raptor, but now thought to be more closely related to the stork is the common Turkey Vulture. This large scavenger is frequently seen on the side of the road or circling overhead. Compare its distinct black and white wing pattern to that of another Monmouth County resident, the Black Vulture.



Turkey Vulture



Black Vulture

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 within our parks.



Savannah Sparrow

Species of the Jersey Shore

The Osprey has recently been removed from both the federal and state endangered lists. Known for its feet-first fishing style, it is now thriving along the banks of reservoirs and estuaries where it often nests on man-made platforms.



Osprey

Two elegant spring/summer shorebirds—the Great Blue Heron and the Egret—can be seen in wetland habitats at estuaries, reservoirs and rivers. Compare the distinctive black beak of the Snowy Egret (pictured here) to the yellow beak of the larger Great Egret (on the cover).



Great Blue Heron



Snowy Egret

Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park in Long Branch hosts two important endangered birds during spring and summer, the Piping Plover and the Least Tern. Both require open beach to lay their eggs. Park staff and volunteers take special care each year to protect the nests of these fragile species.



Piping Plover



Least Terns

"Seagulls" are possibly the birds most closely associated with the Jersey Shore, as they are the ones one that people see (or hear!) most on their summer visits to the beach.



The unmistakably noisy Laughing Gull



Great Black-backed Gull



Ring-billed Gull