

**New Jersey, September 24-
October 10, 2015 Vladimir Dinets**

I had to spend two weeks in Princeton, New Jersey, mostly babysitting while my wife was attending a conference. I've also been to NJ for a few days in the fall of 2003 and 2013, and in winter of 2016. Here's what I learned.

New Jersey Wildlife Viewing Guide by Laurie Pettigrew (1998, Falcon Publ., hereafter *NJWVG*) lists numerous sites for **Virginia opossum**, **little brown myotis**, **big brown bat**, **coyote**, **grey and red foxes**, **river otter**, **American mink**, **striped skunk**, **American black bear**, **Northern raccoon**, **bobcat**, **white-tailed deer**, **Eastern cottontail**, **American beaver**, **Northern porcupine**, **Eastern gray**, **pine** and **Southern flying squirrels**, **Eastern chipmunk**, **white-footed mouse**, and **muskrat**. *NJWVG* also mentions Alpine Boat Basin as the only site for Eastern woodrat (now **Allegheny woodrat**), Dot and Brooks Evert Memorial Nature Trail and Wharton State Forest for **long-tailed weasel**, and Island Beach State Park for **grey** and **harbor seals** and **bottlenose dolphin**. Pequest Wildlife Management Area is said to have **bat** boxes, while emergencies of multiple bat species including **Indiana myotis** can be seen at Hibernia Mine in Wildcat Ridge Wildlife Management Area (but note that *NJWVG* was published before the WNS outbreak).

Other locations I've read about but haven't checked out are Sandy Hook in Gateway National Recreation Area for **grey** and **harbor seals** (winter only), Trenton for white-morph **Eastern grey squirrel**, and United Methodist Church in Tranquility for **little brown bat**. There is a variety of whale- and dolphin-watching tours from Cape May, Atlantic City and other locations; they usually go after **bottlenose dolphins** and **humpback whales**, but occasionally get also **fin** and **minke whales**, **Cuvier's beaked whale**, **short-beaked common** and **striped dolphins**, and other species. Try longer pelagic birding trips with *capemaywhalewatch.com*.

NJ is a small, overpopulated state. Despite its size, the mammalian fauna differs a bit between northern and southern parts. In the north are the Appalachian Mountains where **Eastern water shrew**, **hairy-tailed-mole**, **Eastern small-footed myotis**, **Northern flying squirrel**, and (more recently) **fisher** occur at higher elevations. Sunrise Mt. in Highest Point State Park (the highest in NJ) has limestone outcrops where **long-tailed shrew** and **ermine** have been collected, although not recently. In the south are the Pine Barrens, an area of pine forests growing on sand, famous for herping. Check out Greenwood Forest Wildlife Management Area, which, according to *NJWVG*, has **masked shrew**, **Eastern mole**, **woodland** and **Southern red-backed voles**, and **meadow jumping mouse**; and Belleplaine State Forest, where I saw a **least shrew** and a **grey fox** in 2003, and **Southern red-backed vole** occurs according to *NJWVG*. The southernmost point of NJ is Cape May, one of the best birding sites in Eastern USA, particularly during the fall migration; **marsh rice rat** and **red fox** are common there.

Other than these areas, natural habitats are mostly limited to lowland hardwood forests, coastal marshes, meadows, and swamps. Swamps are usually small, but two are big: Dismal Swamp near Edison and Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. The latter has an impressive checklist including abundant **starnose mole**, **Indiana myotis**, **woodland jumping mouse**, and lots of other small mammals (see http://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/Region_5/NWRS/North_Zone/Great_Swamp_Complex/Great_Swamp/GSMammals.pdf). I visited it briefly in winter and saw a **woodland vole** on the road S from the visitor center (that road is closed for cars at night and is great for night walks) and lots of **mink** tracks. There are some nice trails and boardwalks over swamps leading to blinds with bird feeders where shrews and rodents might show up at night.

Princeton has a few small nature reserves. About 1% of **Eastern grey squirrels** there are black morph. Charles H. Rogers Wildlife Refuge (see map at <http://www.princeton.edu/~llarson2/rogers/images/iaswoods.pdf>), where I saw two **smoky shrews** in as many days, both in daytime (later the rains started, the leaf litter became wet, and I couldn't hear shrews anymore). There is an observation platform overlooking a marsh where **muskrat** and, reportedly, **mink** can be seen. I did a few hours of spotlighting there and saw one **whitefooted mouse**. Adjacent to the refuge are Institute Woods, a larger, drier forest with old-growth patches; I saw a **Southern flying squirrel**, a few **Eastern chipmunks** (along Trolley Track Trail), a **masked shrew** (under a rotten stump near a small creek flowing along the western side of Von Neumann Dr.), and a **silver-haired bat** (in a small hollow tree at the southern end of the footbridge). The long, narrow Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park is a good place to see **Northern raccoons** patrolling the shores, while **white-tailed deer**, **Eastern cottontails** and **woodchucks** are often seen in meadows; another place to look for them is Princeton Battlefield State Park, where I also saw one **meadow jumping mouse** and three **meadow voles** in about 6 hrs of spotlighting. **Hoary** and **Eastern red bats** sometimes feed over the canal at dusk and even in broad daylight.