

Dune Road

Situated along the barrier strand of eastern Long Island, between Shinnecock Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, the Dune Road Wildlife Trail provides excellent opportunities to observe abundant wildlife throughout the year. This self-guided auto tour maximizes a variety of habitats, including salt marshes, mudflats, sandbars, dredge-spoil islands, shrublands, dunes, rock jetties and ocean beaches.



Tools & Resources. When visiting the Dune Road Wildlife Trail, a few items will enhance your experience. First, binoculars should be brought along, as a fair share of the wildlife will be too far away to appreciate without their aid. If possible, bring a spotting scope as well, since these wildlife-viewing telescopes facilitate nature observation beyond the limits of binoculars. Additionally, a couple of basic field guides may provide assistance for identifying the various organisms you will see along the trail. Suggestions include *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, published by National Geographic Society; *Butterflies Through Binoculars: A Field Guide to Butterflies in the Boston—New York—Washington Region*, by Jeffrey Glassberg; *Field Guide to Mammals of North America*, from the Peterson Field Guide Series; and *A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians: Eastern/Central North America*, also from the Peterson Field Guide Series. Finally, it may be worthwhile to pack photographic equipment to take advantage of the fine wildlife photography opportunities along the Dune Road Wildlife Trail.



This brochure was prepared by Group For The South Fork, a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to protecting natural resources in Southampton, East Hampton and Shelter Island Towns. Group For The South Fork regularly offers wildlife-viewing trips along the Dune Road Wildlife Trail as part of its quarterly nature explorations calendar. For more information, call 631-537-1400; write to Group For The South Fork at P.O. Box 569, Bridgehampton, NY 11932; or visit the Group's web sites at www.hampton.com/group and www.hampton.com/gsf/groupaction.html.

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Shorebird Migration

For the local naturalist, the allure of the semi-annual shorebird migration is the possibility of seeing animals from distant regions of the globe. For instance, during the appropriate season, semipalmated sandpipers, lesser yellow-legs and whimbrels may be seen around Shinnecock Bay, even though they do not nest or winter anywhere near Long Island. What are these species doing here? They are taking advantage of the vast ecological resources of Shinnecock Bay. Many shorebirds undertake spectacular long-distance migrations, nesting in the Arctic tundra and wintering in Central and South America. The energy demands for such ventures are extreme, so shorebirds rely on strategically-located feeding stopovers along their migration routes. The salt marshes, mudflats and sandbars of Shinnecock Bay meet these requirements for many shorebirds. During spring (April to May) and fall (July to November) migrations, visitors to the Dune Road Wildlife Trail should encounter a variety of shorebird migrants, including semi-palmated plovers, short-billed dowitchers, ruddy turnstones, red knots and least sandpipers.



• In late spring, the courtship vocalizations of Fowler's toads are heard near temporary freshwater ponds in back-dune areas.

• In late spring and early summer, horseshoe crabs are seen laying their eggs in shallow depressions near the high-tide line.

• Roughly 20 shorebird species rely on the region during spring migration, the summer nesting season or fall migration.

• At least 15 species of waterfowl frequent ocean and bay waters each fall, the majority departing by springtime.

• During the same period, harbor seals are observed bobbing in the Inlet or resting on distant sandbars.

• Typical mammals of the barrier island include meadow voles, muskrats, eastern cottontails, raccoons and red foxes.



Wildlife abounds along these five miles of Dune Road from Shinnecock Inlet to Quogue Village.

• In summer, local avian nesters include great and snowy egrets, black-crowned night-herons, glossy ibises, American black ducks, clapper rails, piping plovers, American oystercatchers, willets,

common and roseate terns, seaside and salt-marsh sharp-tailed sparrows, black skimmers and boat-tailed grackles. • During late summer and fall, warm-water marine fishes may be found in Shinnecock

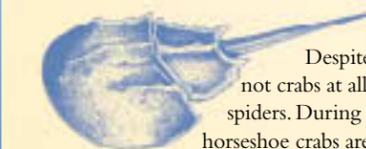
Bay, such as blue-spotted cornetfish, lookdowns, banded rudderfish, red goatfish, spotfin butterflyfish, orange filefish, gray triggerfish, smooth trunkfish and bandtail puffers.



• Seven species of hawks regularly follow the orientation of the barrier island during their southbound fall migration. • In autumn, migrant butterflies and dragonflies—especially

monarchs and green darners—follow the same course along the barrier island. • Many species of songbirds feed and rest along the barrier island during fall migration as well, highlighted

by tree swallows, golden-crowned and ruby-crowned kinglets, yellow-rumped warblers, white-throated and white-crowned sparrows, dark-eyed juncos and American goldfinches.



Horseshoe Crabs

Despite their name, horseshoe crabs are not crabs at all; they are most closely related to spiders. During the spring and summer months, horseshoe crabs are commonly encountered in the shallows of Shinnecock Bay. These encounters often include coupled breeding pairs (May to June), as males attach to larger females for extended periods of time in preparation for egg-laying. Coinciding with the new and full moons of late spring and early summer, female horseshoe crabs drag their mates to the high tide line, scratch out shallow depressions in the sand and deposit hundreds of eggs, which are then fertilized externally by the trailing males. In addition to their obvious procreative values, horseshoe crab eggs are desired food items for many coastal inhabitants, including glossy ibises, red knots, ruddy turnstones and laughing gulls.



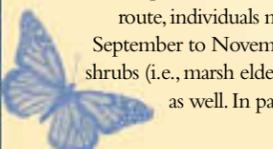
Hawk Migration

If the calendar reads *September* or *October*, and the weather vane shows winds blowing from the northwest, then chances are good that hawks are zipping over the dunes of Long Island's south shore. Seven species dominate the coastal hawk migration: three falcons (American kestrels, merlins and peregrine falcons), two accipiters (sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks), ospreys and northern harriers. In contrast to the thermal-loving, energy-saving buteos of inland ridges (e.g., broad-winged hawks), accipiters and falcons appear to be in a mad rush to get to their destination. Their flights are energized by a steady diet of songbirds and shorebirds, sometimes plucked out of mid-air. On occasion, the coastal hawk migration can amass impressive numbers. For example, single-day highs at south-shore hawk watches include tallies of more than 1,300 American kestrels, nearly 300 merlins, more than 230 sharp-shinned hawks and nearly 50 peregrine falcons.

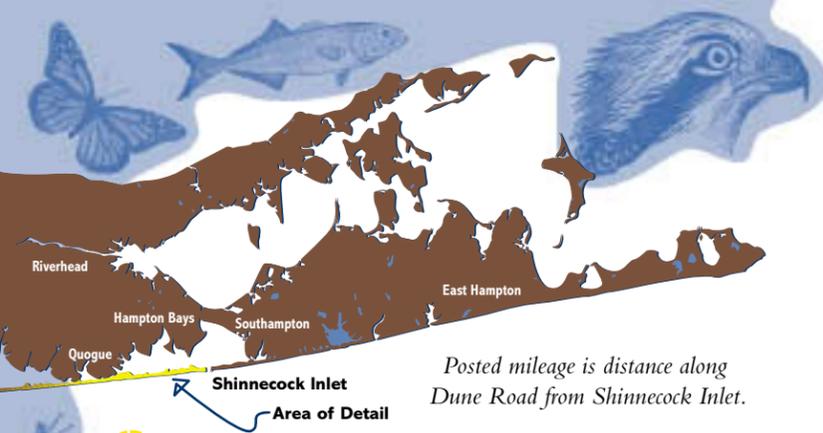


Migrating Butterflies

It seems inconceivable that delicate organisms like monarch butterflies can successfully migrate such considerable distances. Yet each fall, so as to protect their eggs and caterpillars from winter frost, these butterflies travel up to 3,000 miles from temperate North America all the way to central Mexico. [Since they stop to breed en route, individuals making the reverse flight in spring can be five generations removed from those of the fall migration.] On the Dune Road Wildlife Trail, from September to November, the monarch migration can be observed firsthand, as hundreds of butterflies flutter by or stop to nectar at goldenrod flowers and salt-marsh shrubs (i.e., marsh elder and groundsel-bush). Though the autumn butterfly migration is dominated by monarchs, observers should be aware that other species migrate as well. In particular, look for mourning cloaks, red admirals, American and painted ladies, common buckeyes and (occasionally) cloudless sulphurs.



Dune Road



Posted mileage is distance along Dune Road from Shinnecock Inlet.

1 Shinnecock Inlet (Mile 0.0)

Charles F. Altenkirch County Park, situated on the west side of Shinnecock Inlet, offers several vantage points for viewing wildlife. From the main parking loop, the Inlet can be scanned to the east, while Shinnecock Bay—with its distant islands and sandbars—can be surveyed to the north and northeast. South of the Park's entrance, the small auxiliary parking lot provides wide vistas of the Atlantic Ocean. Specialties for STOP 1 include common and roseate terns patrolling the Inlet (May to August), monarchs and other migrant butterflies nectaring on goldenrods in the middle of the main parking loop (September to November), harbor seals swimming in the Inlet or basking on distant sandbars (November to April), a variety of wintering gulls—including Bonaparte's, Iceland, glaucous and lesser black-backed—resting on or near the rock jetties (September to May), and common and red-throated loons bobbing in the Inlet (September to May).

2 Road I (Mile 0.4)

Road I dead-ends at Shinnecock Bay, offering views of open water and distant islands to the north, and a small salt pond and expansive marshes to the west. Various shorebirds can be observed from the end of Road I throughout the year, especially at low tide. At STOP 2 scan the salt marshes for hunting northern harriers (September to May) and (rarely) short-eared owls (November to April). Also, check the shrubs along the road's edge for migrating sparrows and warblers (September to November). To the south, across Dune Road, a catwalk (provided by Southampton Town's Trustees) accesses the ocean beach. It serves as a good vantage point for observing migrating hawks (American kestrels, peregrine falcons, sharp-shinned hawks and ospreys), particularly on days with northwest winds (September to October).

Please respect the posted rules and regulations for parking areas and adjacent public lands.

3 Ponquogue Town Beach (Mile 0.8)

From the pavilion at Ponquogue Town Beach, the Atlantic Ocean can be scanned for loons, northern gannets, common and (rarely) king eider, and all three species of scoters (October to May). Pelagic birds (e.g., sooty shearwaters and parasitic jaegers) are occasionally seen as well, though usually way out near the horizon (mid-May to mid-June). In addition, the southeast corner of the parking lot can serve as a good vantage point for observing the fall hawk migration.

4 Old Bridge Road (Mile 0.8)

Old Ponquogue Bridge Marine Park is situated 0.3 miles north of Dune Road, just east of the active bridge. Views to the northeast and east take in the open waters of the bay, several small islands, salt marshes and mudflats (at low tide). To the west, on the other side of the bridge, a large island looms in the distance, while numerous musselbars and sandbars are revealed in the foreground at low tide. During low tide, a good sampling of shorebirds and wading birds are commonly observed on both sides of the parking area. Specialties for STOP 4 include boat-tailed grackles broadcasting their varied squeaks and clucks from atop roadside utility poles (year-round), American oystercatchers picking at mussel bars with their flashy orange bills (March to November), black-crowned night-herons flying overhead (March to November), and Fowler's toads emitting their nasal "waaah" mating calls alongside temporary freshwater ponds (May to June). For something different, the waters near the bridge are popular among scuba divers, especially in late summer when tropical fishes (spotfin butterflyfish, blue-spotted cornetfish, orange filefish and gray triggerfish) make appearances in local waters. [NOTE: Between May 15 and September 15, parking at this Town Park is restricted to Southampton residents with permits only.]

5 Road K (Mile 1.2)

Road K dead-ends at Shinnecock Bay, allowing observation of open water and a large island to the north, musselbars and sandbars to the northeast, and expansive salt marshes to the west. The island is alive with birds during the nesting season (March to August), as snowy and great egrets, black-crowned night- and little blue herons, great black-backed and herring gulls, and glossy ibises each strive to successfully raise chicks. Other STOP 5 specialties include brant geese (September to May) and American black ducks (year-round) floating on the open water, salt-marsh sharp-tailed sparrows skulking among the marsh grasses (May to October), and (rarely) snowy owls sitting atop sand mounds or duck blinds (November to March).

6 Road L (Mile 1.5)

Road L provides views to the north of open waters and sandbars (during low tide), and salt marshes to the west. It is worth checking the sandbars and marsh edges for shorebirds (year-round), the open waters for various waterfowl (September to May), the marshes for wading birds (March to November), and the near-shore shallows for coupled horseshoe crabs (May to June). [NOTE: Visitors should park on the part of Road L that lies south of Dune Road, then cross the street to view the bay.]

7 Tiana Town Beach (Mile 2.4)

From Tiana Town Beach, the Atlantic Ocean can be searched for loons, grebes, eider, scoters and pelagic birds. In addition, horned larks and snow buntings may be observed in the parking lot (October to March).

8 Tiana Police Sub-Station (Mile 2.4)

The parking lot for the Tiana Police Sub-Station offers a good vantage to scan open waters to the north and salt marshes to the east. Specialties of STOP 8 include common goldeneyes (November to April) and horned grebes (October to April) bobbing in the bay, whimbrels feeding along marsh edges (April to May; July to October), and horned larks and snow buntings foraging on the west side of the parking lot (October to March).

9 Triton Lane (Mile 3.3)

The northern terminus of Triton Lane allows for wide views of open water (to the north) and expansive salt marshes (to the east and west). Waterfowl can be seen in the bay (September to May), shorebirds may be observed along the marsh edges (year-round), and wading birds can be spotted in the marshes (March to November). The south end of Triton Lane affords easy observation of the Atlantic Ocean for loons, grebes, eider, scoters and pelagic birds. Also, in recent years, this segment of ocean beach has been reliable for nesting piping plovers (March to August).

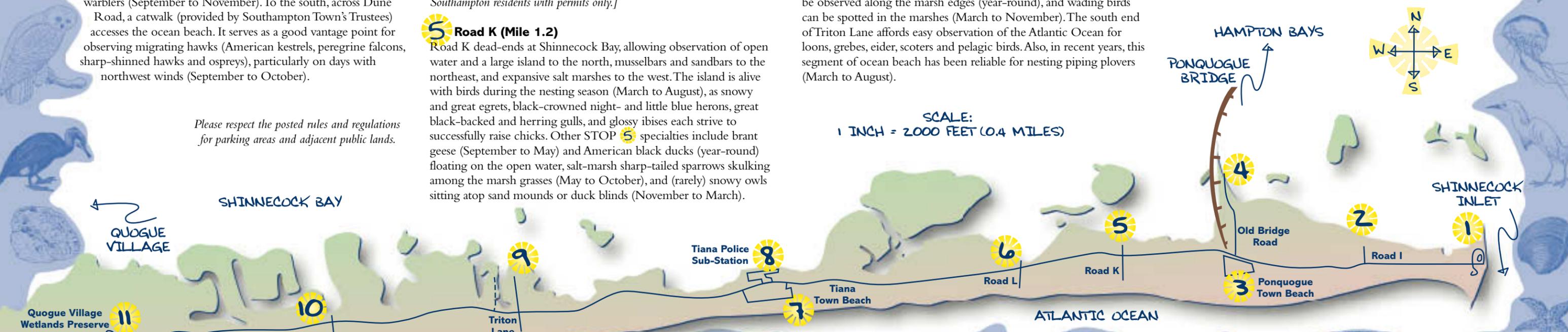
10 Dolphin Lane (Mile 4.0)

The north side of Dolphin Lane presents broad vistas of salt marshes to the west, north and east. Specialties include clapper rails creeping along the marsh edges (April to October), American bitterns flying over the marsh (October to April), salt-marsh (May to October) and Nelson's (September to October) sharp-tailed sparrows clinging to Spartina grasses, and monarch butterflies sipping nectar from roadside goldenrods (September to November). The south side of Dolphin Lane provides yet another view of the Atlantic Ocean, and has been a productive spot to scan for seabirds. Additionally, the pine trees lining the west side of Dolphin Lane should be searched for fall migrants such as yellow-bellied sapsuckers, brown creepers and red-breasted nuthatches (September to November).

11 Quogue Village Wetlands Preserve (Mile 4.8)

On the north side of Dune Road, the Quogue Village Wetlands Preserve contains a lengthy catwalk across salt marshes. This accessway allows close observation of such wetland denizens as willets (April to October), common yellowthroats (April to October) and seaside sparrows (May to October). [NOTE: The Preserve is accessible to Southampton Town and Quogue Village residents only; interested persons should apply for permit and key during weekdays at the Village office on Jessup Avenue.]

SCALE: 1 INCH = 2000 FEET (0.4 MILES)



Wildlife Trail