

South Cape May Meadows (Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge)



Nesting Least Tern
Photo credit: Beth Polvino

About The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy is the leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. Since 1955, the Nature Conservancy has protected more than 56,000 acres in the Garden State. Learn more by visiting the website: www.nature.org/newjersey

Diverse Habitat Protected

In 1981, The Nature Conservancy acquired 212 acres of the former town of South Cape May as a refuge area for migratory birds.

Spring and autumn are both important times for migrating birds in Cape May. The fresh water and abundance of food make the preserve an important stop along the migration route of many species.

Migration

Shorebird migration occurs in the spring, as birds head to their nesting grounds, certain species travel as far as the Arctic.

During autumn in Cape May, one can witness the migration of shorebirds, songbirds, waterfowl, raptors and monarch butterflies. Fall migrants are funneled down the Cape May Peninsula and concentrated before flying across Delaware Bay.



Black Skimmers gather on the beach before fall migration. Photo credit: Adrianna Zito

History: A town that washed away

From 1892 to 1945, the land where the South Cape May Meadows Preserve sits today was a resort town, the borough of South Cape May¹. It's difficult to imagine that homes once populated the beachfront, now protected for endangered beach nesting birds.

Severe storms in 1944, and another in 1950, devastated the borough: eroding the beach, destroying many homes, and prompting residents to relocate remaining houses to more stable ground.

After the floodwaters of the 1950 storm abated, a portion of the devastated area reverted to its natural state of meadows, low grasses and shrubs, mud flats and wetland areas.

The Restoration Project

The Nature Conservancy worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to restore the Meadows. In addition to restoring critical habitat for migrating and beach nesting birds, the project provided protection against storm damage to nearby homes and communities. This project began in 2004 and was completed in 2006.

Components of the Restoration

- **Phragmites control:** maintain diverse freshwater plant community
- **Beach replenishment:** increase beach nesting bird habitat and protect against coastal flooding
- **Dune reconstruction**
- **Creation of piping plover foraging ponds**



The endangered Piping Plover
Photo credit: Beth Polvino

- Creation of **levees** and installation of **water control structures**
- Restoring **freshwater flow** through the wetland
- Creation of **islands in the wetland** as resting and feeding areas for birds
- Enhancements to **increase reptile and amphibian habitat**

Signs of Success

- Estimated 75% reduction of invasive Phragmites and restoration of a diverse plant community
- Increase in nest success of federally endangered piping plovers
- Piping plovers are utilizing plover pond foraging areas and dune crossover
- Successful nesting of American Oystercatchers
- Black Skimmers have returned to the site and can be in the wetland, and on the beach from July to October
- Increase in the number of state endangered Least Terns nesting in colonies on the beach

Visitor enhancements

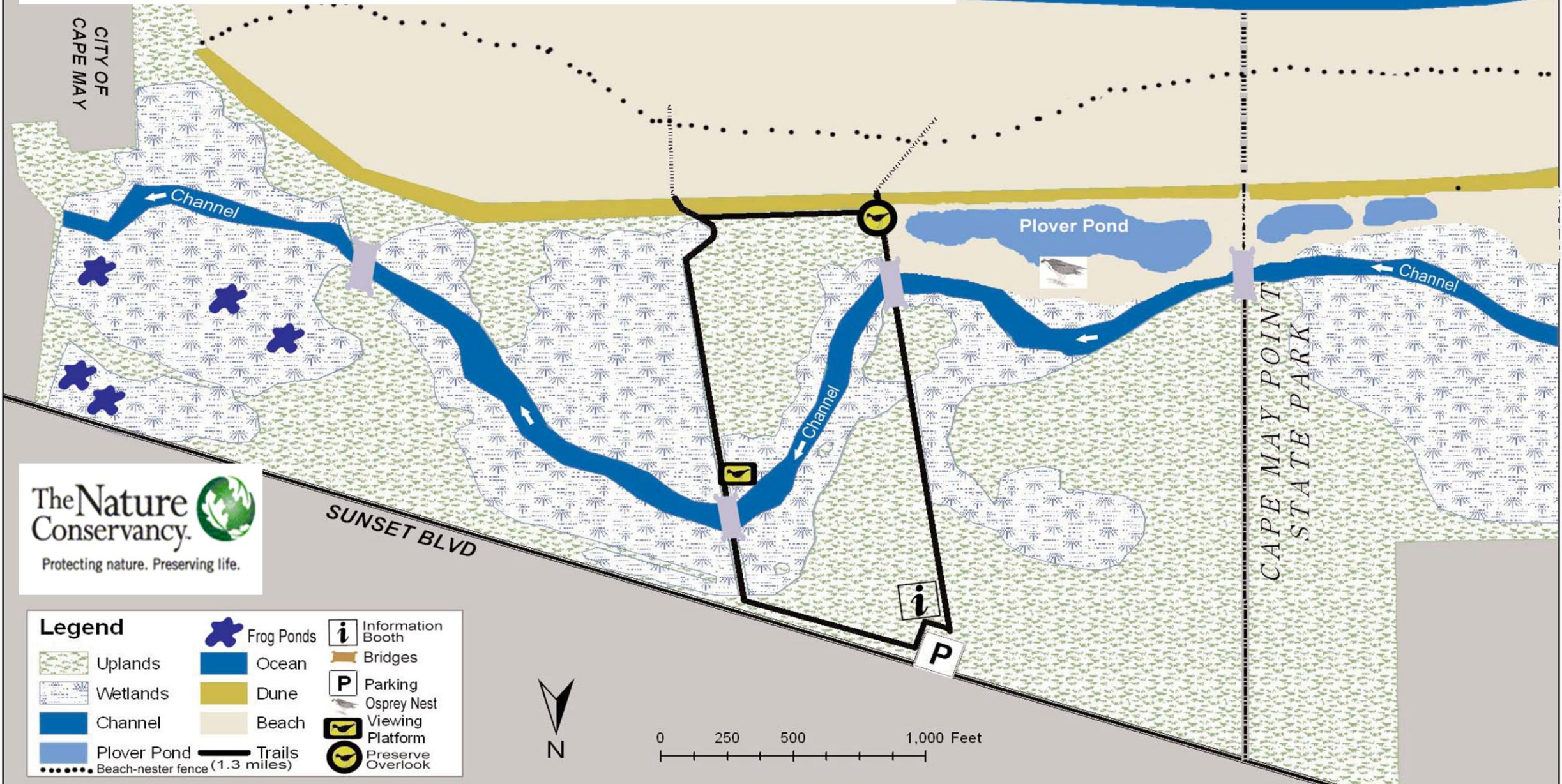
- New viewing platform
- Large parking lot with bike rack
- Wider raised trails
- New entrance sign
- Kiosk area with preserve information
- Visitor welcome booth

To learn about **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES** and upcoming **FIELD TRIPS** at this preserve and throughout the state
Please email: nj_events@tnc.org

¹Remembering South Cape May: The Jersey Shore Town That Vanished into the Sea by Joseph Burcher with Robert Kenselaar Copyright Historic Press 2010

The South Cape May Meadows Preserve

ATLANTIC OCEAN



Legend			
	Uplands		Information Booth
	Wetlands		Bridges
	Channel		Parking
	Plover Pond		Viewing Platform
	Beach-nester fence (1.3 miles)		Preserve Overlook
	Frog Ponds		Trails
	Ocean		
	Dune		
	Beach		Information Booth
			Bridges
			Parking
			Osprey Nest
			Viewing Platform
			Preserve Overlook

