

## Wildlife Viewing



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### See nature come alive

*Check out Delaware's best spots for wildlife watching*

From its upland forests to its coastal waterways, Delaware encompasses incredibly diverse wildlife habitats, making it possible for visitors to enjoy Northern Delaware's wooded hills in the morning, and be immersed in a seaside setting by the afternoon.

Thanks to its strategically ideal location along major waterways in the heart of the Mid-Atlantic region, Delaware is not only a convenient and picturesque destination for millions of East Coast travelers, it is revered around the world as a center for watching the thousands of rare songbirds, shorebirds and raptors that live in and migrate through the Delmarva Peninsula. These Outdoor Trail sites give nature-lovers convenient access to some prime viewing spots, and would be ideal for an extended exploration:

#### **DAY 1**

Get things going with one of the best breakfasts around at Lucky's Coffee Shop north of Wilmington. Then start your adventure amid the wooded calm of Northern Delaware's rolling piedmont, at one of its most popular outdoor destinations, Ashland Nature Center. Self-guided trails take hikers through a variety of habitats, ranging from marsh to stream, and the popular Hawk Watch Hill gives a rare glimpse of these spectacular birds of prey. Others will enjoy the seasonal Butterfly House, or meeting live turtles, frogs, crayfish, and other creatures.

Next it's over to Delaware's river coast, stopping for a lunch of the state's favorite crustacean at Kathy's Crab House in Delaware City. Nearby, you'll find a pleasant post-meal excursion at Fort DuPont State Park, a former military base that's now open for exploration. The park's Port Penn Trail takes visitors across the tidal marsh of the Augustine Wildlife Area, where hikers can enjoy marsh vistas and many birding opportunities. Interpretative exhibits recall days when fishing and trapping were ways of life in the area.

Just to the south lies a place that people come from around the world to see -- Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, recognized as one of America's Top 100 "Important Birding Areas" by the American Bird Conservancy.

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Known for exceptional bird and wildlife viewing throughout the year, the riverside refuge is made visitor-friendly by the Auto Tour loop road that traverses a cornucopia of habitats, including fresh and salt marshes, ponds, mudflats, woodlands and fields.

It's now time for dinner and some down-time, both achieved nicely in Smyrna at the Odd Fellows Café and the Best Western Hotel.

## **DAY 2**

Get the day started in true local fashion, with breakfast at the Smyrna Diner, before heading south and making a stop near Dover. Located on the north shore of the St. Jones River, the St. Jones Reserve features a two-mile nature trail, with a quarter-mile boardwalk over the salt marsh that joins up with the adjacent Ted Harvey Wildlife Management Area. Check out the St. Jones Center for Estuarine Studies, featuring hands-on interactive activities and exhibits.

Refill and rejuvenate at Abbott's Grill in Milford, conveniently located close to your next stop: The DuPont Nature Center at the Mispillion Harbor Reserve is one of Delaware's best viewing areas for spawning horseshoe crabs and migratory shorebirds during the peak season, when a live-cam offers an up-close view of the activity. Exhibits include history of Slaughter Beach and the famed Mispillion Lighthouse, educational information on horseshoe crabs, shorebirds, waterfowl and plant life of the Salt Marsh. A year-round observation deck offers a brilliant view of the harbor and its wildlife.

It's now time for dinner and some down time at the Georgia House restaurant before ending the day at the Hampton Inn Milford.

## **DAY 3**

Your morning strategy session can commence at Milford's Dolce Bakery and Coffee Shop, before you head off to Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, known for excellent year-round birding. Prime Hook is *the* place to witness thousands upon thousands of snow geese, and marvel as they all take flight simultaneously whenever a bald eagle approaches. "It's like a whiteout," one observer says. The refuge includes a variety of trails for hiking and observation. There are also canoe trails through Prime Hook Creek, and a photography blind on a trail off of the Black Farm Trail.

Head to the inland region of Sussex County next, pausing for lunch at the historic Brick Hotel on the Circle, a restaurant and tavern in Georgetown that's a local favorite. Now it's time for an exploration of the Nanticoke Wildlife Area, where trails and large tracts of forest along the Nanticoke River and Broad Creek make this 4,400-acre wilderness a popular birding destination. Experts recommend the wooded areas along Chapel Branch, the Woodland Ferry area, and the woods surrounding the boat ramp at Phillips Landing. Also check out the monument dedicated to Captain John Smith, located at Phillips Landing, commemorating the arrival of colonists to the Chesapeake Bay and Broad Creek in 1608.

Dinner will have an edge of sophistication and French charm at Bon Appétit restaurant in Seaford, leaving you ready to yield to the night at the nearby Holiday Inn Express.

***For more information, go to [www.VisitDelaware.com/Outdoor](http://www.VisitDelaware.com/Outdoor), call (866) 284-7483, or e-mail [Visit.Delaware@state.de.us](mailto:Visit.Delaware@state.de.us).***