

Delaware

E C O N O M I C D E V E L O P M E N T O F F I C E



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For Immediate Release

News Release

Bird Watchers Flock to Delaware

The First State offers many birding destinations

Dover, Del. (August 6, 2007) – Bird watching enthusiasts flock to Delaware as the fall migration begins. The fall migration starts early, well before what visitors normally think of as autumn. The first southbound arrivals show up the last few days of June, and by mid-summer, many shorebirds can be spotted as they make their way back from the Arctic nesting grounds. Warblers move through from August to October and raptors continue until November.

“We are proud to welcome birdwatchers of all ages to visit Delaware,” said Governor Ruth Ann Minner. “They can learn about birds and enjoy the natural beauty of the First State.”

The First State borders the vast and rich Delaware Bay with marshes, rural farmlands and open space dotting the scenic landscape. Tranquil ponds, protected wildlife areas and more than 90 miles of coastline make Delaware a perfect stop-off on a major migratory flyway. The state’s attractiveness to migrant birds makes it a hotspot for thousands of birdwatchers every year. An estimated 170,000 bird watchers visit Delaware annually. An important contributor to the state’s tourism industry, bird watching has an estimated \$14.3 million impact on Delaware’s economy.

Delaware is home to many natural wildlife areas, state parks and birding hot spots. Trails and observation platforms provide outstanding access to birds and other wildlife.

“Delaware’s birding destinations and wildlife refuges are expansive,” said Tim Morgan, director of Tourism. “Visitors can experience nature and bird watching from a kayak on the canal, the deck of a fishing boat, the wooded areas of many state parks or from the shoreline of our award-winning beaches. Visitors should plan a two- or three-day weekend to really enjoy the First State.”

In two state parks of **Brandywine Creek** and **White Clay Creek**, the Delaware Nature Society leads regular nature walks throughout the parks where visitors spot many species of birds. The parks are also hot spots for owl prowls. As the sun goes down, the owls come out and guides will help draw barred and screech owls out of the dense woods into plain sight. **Fort Delaware** on Pea Patch Island might be best known as a fort that was used as a prison during the Civil War, but it has another claim to fame, as one of the three largest heron rookeries on the east coast. Trained naturalists lead walks to the viewing platform, where visitors can see several hundred of the 2,400 nesting pairs of herons, ibis and egrets, all of which are colonial wading birds.

The **Delaware Museum of Natural History** has a huge collection of about 4,000 bird species! It includes approximately 67,000 study skins, 9,000 skeletons, 6,000 alcohol-preserved birds, and 36,000 clutches of eggs.

The central part of the state, Kent County, is home to **Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge** with 16,000 acres laced with wooded trails, freshwater ponds and tidal marsh areas, home to deer, foxes, river otters and beavers. During the spring and fall, thousands of migratory birds take a rest at the refuge to refuel before continuing on the Atlantic flyway. Many species of birds can be spotted at the refuge year-round. **Woodland Beach Wildlife Area** to the north and **Little Creek Wildlife Area** just south of the refuge are also great spots to take in nature. **Milford Neck Wildlife Area** is easily accessible and contains large tracts of saltmarsh as well as uplands of both forest and field. The new **DuPont Nature Center at the Mispillion Harbor Reserve** opened in May of 2007 and is quickly becoming an important birding destination. It overlooks Mispillion Harbor, one of the most important shorebird stopover sites along the Atlantic Coast during spring migration. Shorebirds are also attracted to its beaches in the fall. Visitors can use spotting scopes and a remote camera to view birds up close.

The town of Milton in Sussex County is the location of Delaware's other national wildlife refuge, **Prime Hook**. The refuge has 10,000 acres with one of the largest freshwater impoundments on the east coast. **Cape Henlopen State Park** in Lewes is also a great spot for bird watching. The landscape of pine trees mixed with sandy beaches, and walking trails makes a perfect habitat for many types of shorebirds, including the osprey and piping plovers. The WWII observation tower which is open to park visitors makes for a great look-out for birds.

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