

In 1995, two seemingly unrelated Southern Delaware institutions took flight. This was the year that Dogfish Head Brewings & Eats - the first state's first brewpub – opened in Rehoboth Beach. 1995 was also the inaugural year of the Delmarva Birding Weekend, originally hosted annually each April.

For the past 26 years, both tourism businesses have enriched travel experiences in Southern Delaware. Beer lovers and bird watchers alike have flocked to the region for off-centered ales and world-class wildlife watching. During the last quarter century, Dogfish Head would often host Delmarva birders during informal “Tally Rallies” at the Rehoboth Beach brewpub and the Milton brewery.

During this same time period, the growth in craft beer tourism and wildlife watching has increased steadily. An estimated 10 million people visit craft breweries every year. More than 20 million Americans take birding-specific trips each year. That translates into a growing demographic of travelers who are willing to spend their time and money in destinations that offer both.

In 2014, the Dogfish Inn opened in Lewes. Situated along the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal, the Dogfish Inn acts as an off-centered basecamp for beer lovers and adventure seekers alike. Shortly thereafter in 2016, Delmarva Birding Weekends hosted their first January event to showcase the region's winter wildlife, including dozens of species of waterfowl, raptors and seals. The 2016 winter event was the first of its kind in Southern Delaware.

In 2021, after 25 years of working together informally, Dogfish Head, the Dogfish Inn and Delmarva Birding Weekends collaborated on the first Winter Delmarva Dogfish BirdINNG Weekends. Hosted over a total of six days in late January and early March, the events brought together beer lovers and bird watchers in Southern Delaware during a time of year when our tourism economy needs it most. Field trips took place at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, Cape Henlopen State Park, and on the Delaware Bay during an extremely popular series of boat trips. To commemorate the collaboration, Dogfish Head brewed a special amber lager just for birders: Binoculager!

Apart from the direct tourism dollars the winter events deliver, they also help brand Southern Delaware as a winter travel destination. Since 2016, thousands of wildlife photos have been shared on social media. Local and regional media have covered the winter wildlife watching spectacle. In 2021, a full two-page article about the winter weekend appeared in *Birding* magazine, the monthly publication of the American Birding Association.

The winter wildlife watching event has grown considerably since it began in 2016, when 100 guests participated. Thanks to the partnership between Dogfish Head, the Dogfish Inn and Delmarva Birding Weekends, 364 guests participated in the two 2021 events, despite the covid-19 pandemic and foul weather that caused a few trips to be canceled.

The Winter Delmarva Dogfish BirdINNG Weekends demonstrate that Southern Delaware offers much, much more than summer beaches. Winter is growing to become a popular season to travel to the region, thanks to the pioneering efforts of Dogfish Head, the Dogfish Inn and Delmarva Birding Weekends.