

Wildlife Viewing

Wildlife viewing includes whale watching, birding and any other recreational activity whose main goal is to enjoy nature in its most unsullied form.

An increase in air temperature combined with an earlier spring and a later winter will give a longer season for wildlife viewing that occurs during the warm months. But shortened winter months with more precipitation and cloudiness may adversely affect viewing of seals and winter-migrating birds. And let's not forget the importance of phenology, when the migrating bird arrives too late for the caterpillar that feeds it because that caterpillar hatched when it got the earlier high temperature signals. Dead or depleted species will not serve to lure wildlife aficionados.

Barrier beaches are extremely popular and much utilized for birding and fishing and will be especially vulnerable to increased erosion and migration as sea level rises. The beaches serve as important habitat for shorebirds such as the piping plover and numerous other species, and good fishing



from shore on beaches and at breachways is a constant lure for anglers.

Diving

Recreational SCUBA diving is popular in Rhode Island and includes historical shipwrecks, interesting marine life, and popular shark sites.

It is difficult to speculate how climate change will impact diving. Longer summers can have a positive impact on diving by extending the season. However, the resulting effects of climate change on marine life and ocean visibility for diving are unknown. As is the case for boating, more severe storms would have a negative impact.

Over the long run, more acidic seas may increase the rate of decay of underwater wrecks that attract recreational divers. The destruction of shoreline property could lead to more debris in the water, which is unsafe for swimmers and divers alike.



Tree swallows on a dune fence at Napatree Point in Westerly, RI

Photo Credit: Ayla Fox