Beach

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homes during the summer, Mayor Wood said, speculating that many locals use these accommodations.

The mayor first realized the rise in tourism as the calendar approached beachgoer crab-mating season, typically between May and June. He said that, walking through town, he noticed that all the rentals were full and some visitors had created campfires.

After talking with locals, he learned that the campers were bird enthusiasts, searching for some of the region's most notable shorebirds, like sandpipers, sandpipers, and red knots.

The ecosystem in this area is very important to the beach to gather and play their role, like the horseshoe crabs still being in the red knots, sandpipers and other shorebirds. The horseshoe crabs and red knots are the rock stars, but ultimately people come here to see the nature," Mayor Wood said.

Though there was always an audience for the town's wildlife, he said the increase in tourism could be attributed to recent efforts to protect the environment in Slaughter Beach.

In August 2021, a study by the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center found that Delaware's Millipon and Cedar Creek watersheds — which encompass much of the Milford and Slaughter Beach area — provide significant economic benefits to the neighboring communities and their residents via wildlife-watching and outdoor recreation. Specifically, the report said that Milford's Abbott's Mill Nature Center generated up to $2.3 million annually from tourism activity, and that Slaughter Beach wildlife activity generated between $0.9 million and $1.3 million.

The study was led by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Natural Resources Defense Council, and it concluded that wildlife tourism could be a major economic driver for the local communities, providing significant benefits to the region.