



The Birdwatchers Nature View store in Wakefield, RI, is a gateway to nearby wildlife refuges. | Photo courtesy of FWS

Phil Owen, Owner, Birdwatchers Nature View, Wakefield, Rhode Island

Phil Owen, owner of the Birdwatchers Nature View store in Wakefield, Rhode Island, says the national wildlife refuges located on Rhode Island's coast are the perfect way to turn ordinary backyard birdwatchers into serious birders. That's good for his business, which sells spotting scopes, binoculars, field guides, and other nature-related gear. "Most of my customers are people who are familiar only with cardinals, chickadees, bluejays—the kinds of birds that come to their feeders at home. Then they buy their first field guide in the store and ask where they can go to see some cool birds. I send them to the refuges. My store is a gateway and a portal to the refuges and all that they offer," states Owen.

The nearby Trustom Pond, Ninigret, and Sachuest Point refuges offer incredible opportunities for birdwatching, attracting visitors from all over New England. "Osprey nest on almost all the refuges, and visitors can see other raptors, bluebirds, egrets, and herons," Owen says. "Those are birds most of my customers have never seen, and may not even be aware are out there." Owen has put his knowledge of the area's birds to work, leading public walks at the refuges for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to teach about neotropical migrants, and leading birding tours that include Block Island National Wildlife Refuge off the Rhode Island coast.