



Kiawah Island

Wildlife Lookbook:

THE WILDLIFE YOU'LL

SEE ON KIAWAH

Kiawah Island[®]
CLUB & REAL ESTATE

40 Kiawah Wildlife To Spot Around The Island

Whether you're visiting, or you call the Island home, you're bound to encounter a variety of wildlife on Kiawah Island. Unlike more commercialized coastal towns, Kiawah Island was designed to provide an unparalleled experience for its guests while protecting the untouched beauty of its environment.

All across the Island, you'll find white-tailed deer, bobcats, and gray foxes to name just a few. Under the wake, though, is where the magic really happens! From loggerhead sea turtles and bottlenose dolphins, to red drum, and spotted sea trout, Kiawah Island is a fisherman's delight.

Throughout this lookbook, you'll get to know 40 of the most common mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and birds you'll spot on the Island. Our hope is that this guide is your go-to for spotting and identifying the breathtaking wildlife that call Kiawah Island home.

So print it out, grab your family and get to exploring! See just how many Kiawah Island wildlife you can find.

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Mammals

Over 20 species of mammals call Kiawah Island home. Here are 10 of the most common mammals you'll see around the island.



Bobcat

Bobcats are common on the Island, especially on the eastern portion around dawn and dusk. In fact, Kiawah Island is home to around 30 bobcats, each of which are closely monitored by the Town of Kiawah Island.

Bobcats are yellowish or reddish-brown in appearance, and typically have black or brown spots or streaks. The bobcat population on Kiawah Island is especially important, considering they maintain the deer, rabbit, rodent, bird and amphibian populations.

Since bobcats are most active in the evening, they commonly fall victim to vehicle collisions. So be extra cautious when driving at night to protect our Island bobcats!

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Bottlenose Dolphin

One of our favorite encounters around Kiawah Island is that with bottlenose dolphins. Known for being playful creatures, these aquatic mammals are especially common in the Kiawah River and in the ocean.

Dolphins are gray or silver in color, with smooth skin and a dorsal fin. While traveling by the Kiawah River or walking along the ocean, you may see dolphins strand feeding. Strand feeding occurs when a pod of dolphins corner a school of fish or shrimp against a sandbar or beach. Then, the dolphins propel themselves out of the water and lay on the bank to feed. It truly is an incredible sight to see! Dolphins can be spotted strand feeding all across the Island, so keep a close eye out when you're near the water.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Eastern Cottontail Rabbit

One Island mammal you're likely to see in your own backyard is the eastern cottontail rabbit. These rabbits are brownish-gray in color with large ears and a fluffy white tail. The eastern cottontail rabbit is most common at night, so enjoy an evening on the porch and keep your eyes peeled for this tiny rabbit!

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Eastern Red Bat

While taking an evening stroll on the Island, you may encounter the eastern red bat. Known for flying around open areas at night, this reddish-orange bat is common around all parts of the Island.

Interestingly enough, while you may see the eastern red bat, it may not see you – at least not how you may think! At night, bats use echolocation to “see”. Echoing noises alert the bat to its surroundings, letting it know if it's safe to fly.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Gray Fox

If you're lucky, you'll catch a glimpse of a gray fox on your wildlife adventure! These grey and red bushy-tailed animals are located in all parts of the Island. However, they're not always easy to spot! Gray foxes are most active at night, making them a little more difficult to find.

A fun fact about gray foxes is that they are the only canine capable of climbing trees. Bonus points if you spot a gray fox in a tree!

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Gray Squirrel

While not exclusive to Kiawah Island, the gray squirrel is equally as respected as the other animals in this lookbook. The gray squirrel is gray in appearance with hints of red, a white belly and a fluffy tail. Squirrels are most active during the day, and while you're most likely to spot them in a tree, they commonly wander the ground seeking food and water.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





North American River Otter

The North American river otter is by far one of the most playful mammals on the Island. While Island otters are more difficult to spot, you may find them relaxing in ponds and creeks, or in the river or wetlands.

The North American river otter has short, brownish-gray fur with webbed feet and a long tail – not to be confused with a beaver, which isn't a Kiawah Island native.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Raccoon

Raccoons are nocturnal creatures, so you're most likely to spot them at night. They are grey or brown in color with black markings around their eyes. The easiest way to identify a raccoon is by its ringed tail.

While raccoons are omnivorous, they are known to forage for food in trash cans – so keep a close eye on your outdoor trash bins!

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Virginia Opossum

The Virginia opossum is one of the most misunderstood mammals on the Island. Opossums are normally nothing to fear, and aren't known for harming humans unless they feel threatened.

Opossums have gray and white fur with black legs and a hairless tail, which is used for climbing trees. They are common on all parts of the Island and are most visible at night.

A fun fact about the Virginia opossum is that it is the only marsupial in North America. No other species of animal in North America has a pouch for rearing their young.

Seen? Yes ☐ No ☐

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

White-Tailed Deer

Spotting a white-tailed deer on Kiawah Island is always exciting! These beautiful creatures are common on all parts of the Island, and all throughout the year.

During the summer, deer have a reddish-brown coat that turns into a darker gray color during winter. Male deer have antlers and newborn fawns have white spots for the first few months of their lives.

Around 500 deer live on Kiawah Island and the population is solely controlled by bobcats and other wildlife. Deer hunting is strictly prohibited on the island.

Similar to many of the wildlife on this list, deer are most active at night and are known to travel in groups. Be careful when driving on the Island at night since deer are known to cross roadways.

Seen? Yes ☐ No ☐

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Reptiles

Over 40 species of reptiles inhabit Kiawah Island. From snakes to alligators, here are 10 you're most likely to spot!



American Alligator

Basking in the sun on the pond's edge, you're likely to spot the Island's largest reptile: the American alligator. Male alligators are known to reach up to 12 feet in size, while females are a bit smaller, reaching nine feet in length when fully grown.

Adult alligators help control the wildlife population around the Island, preying upon raccoons, birds, deer, fish and other small Island mammals.

You can find alligators in the spring, summer and fall when the weather is warm. Alligators are naturally cold-blooded and they are unable to regulate their own body temperature — which is why they're usually spotted sunbathing.

If you see an alligator, remember to keep your distance. Never approach, harass or attempt to feed alligators.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Broadhead Skink

What has an orange head and spends its time in the forest? The broadhead skink!

These foot-long lizards are common around Kiawah Island and are easy to identify. Adult male skinks have a brown or black body with an orange head and five lightly colored stripes, while their young have bright blue tails.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Diamondback Terrapin

Diamondback terrapins are easily one of the prettiest animals on the Island. Its light gray skin with black spots is beautifully complemented by the diamond-shaped pattern on its shell – hence its name.

Diamondback terrapins are commonly found in the saltwater rivers and creeks around the Island. See if you can spot a diamondback terrapin on the Kiawah River!

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Eastern Garter Snake

The eastern garter snake is common all across the Island. This non-venomous snake is brownish-gray to black in color with three yellow stripes down its body.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Green Anole

If you've visited Kiawah Island for quite some time, you've probably seen many green anoles. These bright green lizards are active on all parts of the Island, and are usually spotted climbing a building or fence during the day.

However, green anoles aren't always green! While some green anoles are brown, all are capable of changing their color based on their surroundings. Male anoles, on the other hand, are easily identifiable by their pink throat. So, if you spot a lizard bobbing up and down showing off its pink throat fan, you've found a green anole!

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Loggerhead Sea Turtle

If you're lucky enough to spot a loggerhead sea turtle on Kiawah Island, you're lucky enough! These beautiful turtles come ashore between May and August to lay their eggs. Approximately 60 days later, loggerhead hatchlings take their first steps onto the island sand.

Loggerhead sea turtles have dark, red-brown shells and heads with yellow flippers. They're most commonly spotted on the beach, or on the shores of the Kiawah River.

From May to October, be sure to keep any beachfront lights off. Lights can distract turtles coming ashore, which can result in fatal consequences for the turtles.

If you come across a turtle nest, or notice a loggerhead sea turtle laying her eggs, notify Kiawah Island Turtle Patrol as soon as possible. The Turtle Patrol monitors each nest daily to protect the nest from crabs, snakes, or other wildlife that may infiltrate the nest, as well as excavate and direct the hatchlings to the ocean when the time is right. By reporting any sea turtle activity to the Turtle Patrol, you are doing your part to protect our Kiawah Island wildlife!

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Southeastern Five-Lined Skink

Similar to the broadhead skink, the southeastern five-lined skink is brown or grayish-black in color with five light-colored stripes. Young southeastern skinks also have a bright blue tail.

The key difference between these two lizards is that the southeastern five-lined skink is smaller, reaching approximately eight inches in adulthood. While both are common in forests and yards, the southeastern skink often hides under brush and isn't seen as often as the broadhead skink.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Rough Green Snake

This bright-green, non-venomous snake is common on various parts of the Island. It lives in trees and bushes, often near the water.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Yellow-Bellied Slider

The yellow-bellied slider is common in the south — Kiawah Island included! This turtle is typically spotted sunbathing on a log in one of the many freshwater and brackish ponds around the Island.

Yellow-bellied sliders have yellow bands with a yellow spot behind their eye, as well as — you guessed it — a yellow belly.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Yellow Rat Snake

The yellow rat snake is common across the Island, and often found in trees. This non-venomous snake is yellowish-brown in color with four distinct black bands on its body.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Amphibians

While there isn't a ton of amphibians that inhabit the island, there are a few common ones you're likely to see!



Green Tree Frog

Ever spotted a frog lounging on your windows? Chances are it was a green tree frog! Green tree frogs live all over the Island and are most active at night.

Green tree frogs are bright-green in color with a white stripe on the sides of their heads and a white belly.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____	Location Spotted:
Date Spotted:	

Southern Leopard Frog

In the ponds and wetlands, you'll find the southern leopard frog. These frogs have green and brown legs with large spots across their body. They are most active at night, and frequently seen around the ponds on golf courses. So the next time you're teeing off, keep an eye out for the southern leopard frog!

Seen? Yes ____ No ____	Location Spotted:
Date Spotted:	



Southern Toad

The southern toad appears all over the Island, often under the lights in parking lots at night. It's distinguished by its brown, bumpy skin and dark spots.

While the skin of the southern toad may look warty, it won't give you warts — that's a myth! However, be sure to wash your hands after touching a toad if you decide to pick one up.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____	Location Spotted:
Date Spotted:	



Fish

Fishing is a favored pastime here on Kiawah Island — and for good reason! There are a variety of fish all across the island. Here are eight of the most common (and sought after) fish you'll find!



Black Drum

While the black drum may be a bottom feeder, it sure makes for a good meal! This silver and black saltwater fish is common in brackish and saltwater ponds, rivers, creeks and the ocean.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

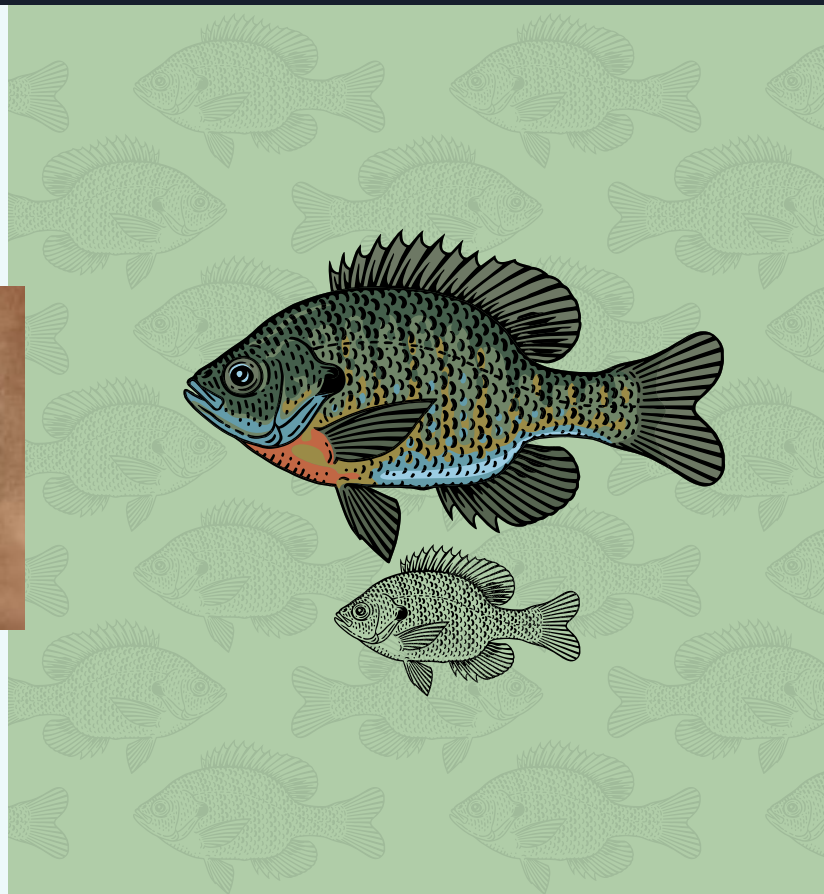
Bluegill

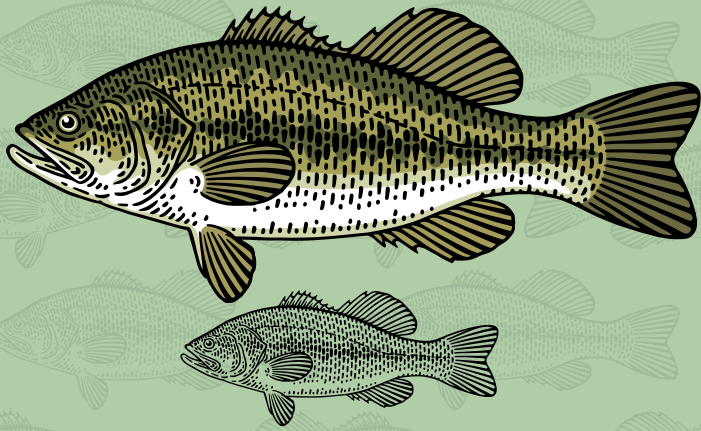
The bluegill has a flat, olive-colored body with dark blue and purple gills. You can find this popular game fish in freshwater ponds.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Largemouth Bass

This olive-green freshwater fish is a favorite among local fishermen! The best spot to find largemouth bass is in freshwater ponds around the Island.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

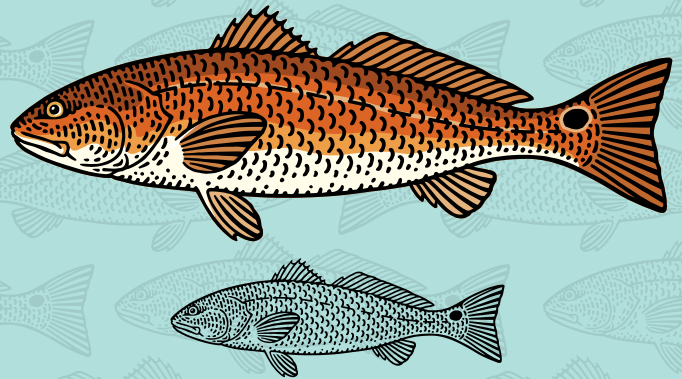
Red Drum

Another local favorite is the red drum. This saltwater fish is silver to reddish-brown in color with an identifiable black spot near its tail. You can find the red drum in brackish and saltwater ponds, rivers, creeks and the ocean.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:



Sharks

Sharks found around Kiawah Island are usually no larger than five feet long.

Bonnethead, Atlantic sharpnose and blacktip sharks are most common in the saltwater rivers, creeks and ocean here on Kiawah Island.

Bonnethead sharks are a member of the hammerhead shark family. They have shovel-shaped heads and are smaller than their hammerhead counterparts.

Atlantic sharpnose sharks have a pointed snout, with gray coloring and a white underbelly. Adult sharpnose sharks also have spots on their sides.

Blacktip sharks are gray with black tips on each of their fins.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

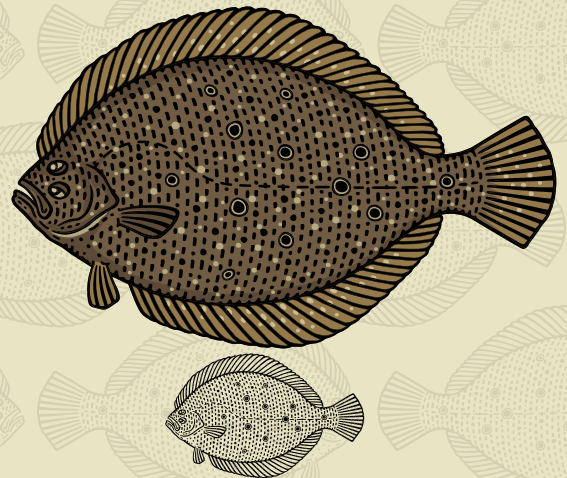
Southern Flounder

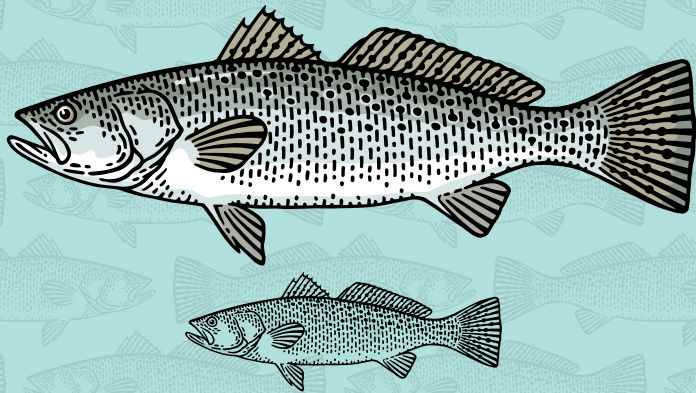
Found in brackish ponds, rivers, creeks and the ocean, this saltwater fish is highly sought after on Kiawah Island! The southern flounder is dark brown in color with light spots and a white underbelly.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Spotted Sea Trout

The spotted sea trout is commonly found in brackish and saltwater Island ponds, rivers, creeks and the ocean. The spotted sea trout is a silver fish with black spots on its sides, and one of the top species of inland game fish in South Carolina!

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Whiting

Looking for a yummy dinner? Cast your line for a whiting! This saltwater fish is known for being a good meal.

Whitings are gray-brown in color and have a long body marked with black bars. Another tell-tale sign of a whiting is the single whisker under its mouth!

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Birds

From the sea to the air, Kiawah Island is home to a variety of wildlife – including birds. Over 290 species of birds fill the air, beaches, wetlands and forests here in Kiawah!



Brown Pelican

One Kiawah Island bird you're bound to see all year round is the brown pelican. Brown pelicans are identified by their large pouched bills and grayish-brown coloring with a white head and neck. While you're most likely to see a brown pelican at the beach, you can also spot them near ponds, creeks and rivers.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Carolina Chickadee

This tiny songbird is common around the forests and shrublands on the Island. The Carolina Chickadee has a gray back and a white belly, with a black crown and black facial markings.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Great Egret

Near the wetlands, look for the great egret. These large white birds are known for wading in the water while searching for fish, reptiles and amphibians to eat.

Great Egrets are common on Kiawah Island year-round in ponds, marshes and creeks.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

Great Blue Heron

Commonly seen in ponds, creeks, rivers, marshes and on the beach, the great blue heron is loved by locals and visitors alike. Like the Great Egret, the Great Blue Heron is a wading bird.

It has grayish-blue coloring with a white head and a distinct black crown.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Laughing Gull

On the beach, and in ponds, creeks, marshes or ocean you'll find the laughing gull. The most notable difference between a laughing gull and other seagull species is its black head. Laughing gulls have a dark gray back with a black head and red bill.

The call of a laughing gull sounds like a laugh, hence the name. So the next time you visit the beach, see if you can spot and hear a laughing gull.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:

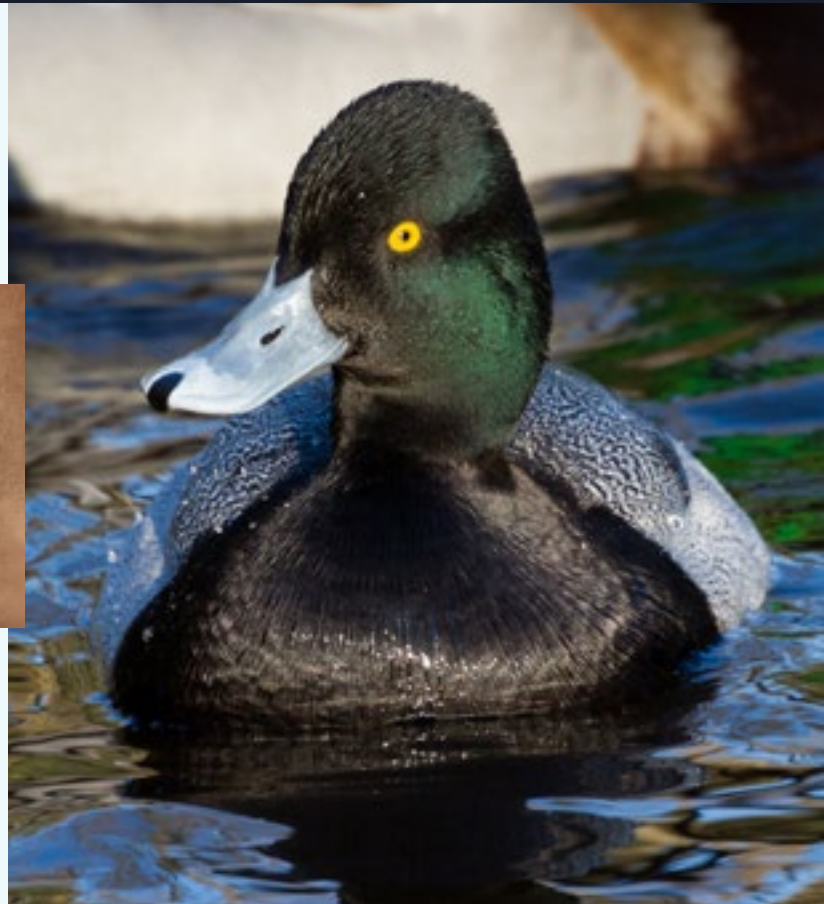
Lesser Scaup

Known for its blue bill – hence the nickname “bluebills” – the Lesser Scaup commonly floats the ponds and ocean on Kiawah Island. Male ducks have a purplish-black and green head and a light gray back. Female ducks, on the other hand, are brown with a white face patch.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____

Location Spotted:

Date Spotted:





Northern Cardinal

There's nothing quite like spotting a bright-red cardinal perching on your porch. The northern cardinal inhabits the forests and shrublands around the Island, and is most commonly noticed due to its vibrant coloring.

Males are red with a red bill and black facial markings while females are brown with red tints.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____	Location Spotted:
Date Spotted:	

Sanderling

Sanderlings, a type of sandpiper, are small shorebirds that live on the beach. Their back is light gray in color with a white underbelly, black legs and black bill.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____	Location Spotted:
Date Spotted:	





Willet

There's nothing quite like spotting a bright-red cardinal perching on your porch. The northern cardinal inhabits the forests and shrublands around the Island, and is most commonly noticed due to its vibrant coloring.

Males are red with a red bill and black facial markings while females are brown with red tints.

Seen? Yes ____ No ____	Location Spotted:
Date Spotted:	

And there you have it – 40 of the most common wildlife Kiawah Island has to offer. Take the time to explore Kiawah Island and discover the beautiful animals that call the Island home – and don't forget to take your lookbook with you!

Thinking of [calling Kiawah Island home?](#)
Reach out to us to learn about our [current listings.](#)