

Earth Day Comes Naturally at National Wildlife Refuges

National Wildlife Refuges around the country are planning special events in mid-April to mark the 39th annual celebration of Earth Day.

The activities, timed to coincide with the March equinox, are meant to build awareness of the fragility of the earth's environment and what ordinary people can do to help conserve and protect our natural resources.

Earth Day is celebrated at many of the country's more than 550 national wildlife refuges, which are dedicated to the protection of our natural habitat and the many creatures that depend on it for survival. Many refuges conduct year-round environmental education programs. There is a national wildlife refuge within an hour's drive of most major cities. The National Wildlife Refuge System, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is the world's premier system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve America's fish, wildlife and plants.

Here is a sampling of Earth Day events on National Wildlife Refuges. For more information on events in your area, visit www.fws.gov/refuges and click on visitors.

Saturday, April 11

Earth Day Litter Pickup

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Cambridge, Md.

9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Join in the refuge's annual litter pick-up of the roads around the refuge, and enjoy drinks and snacks, compliments of the nonprofit Friends of Blackwater. Individuals, families and groups are welcome. Meet at the Blackwater Visitor Center.

Contact: Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center at 410-228-2677

For more information about the refuge: <http://www.fws.gov/blackwater>

Saturday, April 18

Earth Day Cleanup and Hike

Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge

Oceanville, N.J.

8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Join refuge staff and the Township of Galloway for a cleanup along the refuge's Wildlife Drive. Then go for a short nature walk led by naturalists. Activities are free, but you must pre-register: 609-748-1535. A light lunch will be served. Rain date: Sunday, April 19.

Location: 800 Great Creek Road, Oceanville, N.J.

Contact: Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge at 609-748-1535

For more information about the refuge: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/forsythe>

Saturday, April 18

**Earth Day Litter Pickup and Bicycle Tour
Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge**

Folkston, Ga. - East Entrance

8 a.m. – noon

Join in a cleanup of the refuge and adjacent Highway 121. Then take off on a bicycle tour of Swamp Island Drive. Enjoy staffed exhibits and demonstrations along the way about wildlife, plants, wildland fire, fishing, nature photography, swamp culture, hiking, bicycling, recycling and more. Discover some of the amazing plants and animals found in the refuge. Create nature crafts, see live animals and get a free bicycle safety check. Find out what local organizations do in your community. Learn about what you can do to help protect the earth.

Contact: Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center at 912-496-7836.

For more information about the refuge: <http://www.fws.gov/okefenokee>

Saturday, April 25

**Earth Day Volunteer Day
Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge**

Seymour, Ind.

9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Join in a cleanup of the refuge. Then move on to other hands-on projects for all ages. Among these: improving hiking trails and removing invasive garlic mustard.

Contact: Donna Stanley at 812-522-4352 or via email Muscatatuck@fws.gov

For more information about the refuge: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/muscatatuck>

Saturday, April 25

**Earth Day Boating Tours, Butterfly Viewing and Fishing Lessons
Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge**

Dayton, Texas

11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Enjoy an afternoon of free outdoor activities, hosted by the refuge and the nonprofit Friends of Trinity River Refuge, at the Champion Lake Public Use Area. Activities will include canoeing, kayaking and boating tours; bird and butterfly viewing; walking the levee trail; and dip netting and fishing lessons in the lake for the kids. You may want to bring a lawn chair, as seating is limited.

Location: Champion Lake is located at the end of CR 417, two miles east of FM 1409 in southern Liberty County. This is approximately 10 miles south of Dayton, Texas, from Hwy 90 or about six miles north of I-10 at the Cove exit (FM 565).

Contact: Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge at 936-336-9786

For more information about the refuge: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/trinityriver>

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