



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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NEWS BRIEFS FROM THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

Secretary Babbitt Visits Refuges

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt hiked trails, did some birdwatching, peered at a bald eagle nest, and discussed the Endangered Species Act with schoolchildren during recent visits to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey and Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Delaware.

Babbitt's tour of the national wildlife refuges was part of his 4-day "environmental caravan" in late April that started with a fishing expedition in New York Harbor and concluded with inspection of oyster beds in Chesapeake Bay, both environmental successes of the Clean Water Act.

"Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is a testimonial to what a few concerned citizens can do when they get excited," he said. "As I visit places like Great Swamp, I hope I can pick up some of that fire." Citizen activists started the 7,000-acre refuge in 1960 and later transferred it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In Delaware, Babbitt said of Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, "You have a wonderful treasure here. We need to make people more aware that nature is not 'out there,' but right here in their immediate surroundings," he said. "Once people visit a refuge, I guarantee they'll fall in love with it and fight to protect it the rest of their lives."

C.A.R.E.

A diverse coalition of conservation groups has formed to help find solutions to the maintenance and operational needs of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Members of the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) include the American Fisheries Society, American Sportfishing Association, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Defenders of Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited, Izaak Walton League of America, National Audubon Society, National Rifle Association of America, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Safari Club International, The Wilderness Society, The Wildlife Legislative Fund of America, The Wildlife Management Institute, The Wildlife Society, and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

"I'm impressed and heartened for the future that groups with such divergent viewpoints can come together in support of the National Wildlife Refuge System," said Mollie Beattie, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "As it approaches its 100th birthday, the refuge system faces many complex problems, but with this broadbased support, I am confident they can be overcome."

For more information on CARE, contact one of the member groups.

"Blue Ribbon" Commission Proposed

The National Wildlife Refuge Association has proposed that Congress authorize a "blue ribbon" commission to be appointed by the Secretary of the Interior to review the National Wildlife Refuge System, including land acquisition policies and procedures, whether any lands should be removed from the system, and the appropriate disposition of such lands. The review also would include the proposal to transfer Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the proposal to transfer management of waterfowl production areas and ownership of coordination areas to the states.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AMERICA'S NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

International Migratory Bird Day was observed at some 500 sites across the country, including most national wildlife refuges. Events were held throughout the week at Devils Lake National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota, for example, including "Get Hooked on the Outdoors" for kids ages 11-18, "Migratory Bird Fund Day" for 4th-graders, a "Mother's Day Walk," Girl Scouts adopting a bluebird trail, 20 local business featuring showcase displays, and a 3-week display at a local museum. Governor Ed Schafer proclaimed May 13, 1995, as "International Migratory Bird Day" throughout the state and the City of Devils Lake, North Dakota, has done the same.

According to the City of Devils Lake proclamation, more than 200,000 North Dakota residents observe, feed, and photograph birds while another 40,000 tourists visit the state for those purposes. North Dakota has more national wildlife refuges (63) than any other state, encompassing 295,780 acres. Its 39 waterfowl production areas encompass more than one million acres.

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Reading, Writing, and Refuges . . . School will soon be out--what to do for the summer? Visit an urban national wildlife refuge. Located within the city limits or just a few miles out, these urban oases offer numerous activities for children and adults. Here are just a few:

- o **San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, San Francisco, California.** This 18,000-acre urban refuge offers a kaleidoscope of activities for young naturalists. More than 30 miles of trails are marked for hikers and cyclists. Free day camps for children are held in July. Saturdays and Sundays offer interpretive hikes, slide shows, projects, and movies. Children and adults can patrol trails, pick up litter, answer visitors' questions, and work at the Visitor Center through the refuge's volunteer program. For information on summer activities, call San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, 510-792-0222.
- o **John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.** Located within the city limits of Philadelphia, this urban oasis offers weekend guided walks with a naturalist. A "Pathway to Fishing" orientation designed to introduce young people to basic fishing skills is offered the first week in June. Ten miles of hiking trails are available and fishing is permitted in certain areas of the refuge. For information on summer activities, call John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, 215-365-3118.
- o **Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Bloomington, Minnesota.** Located less than a mile from "The Mall of America," this refuge offers hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, wildlife observation, and a modern visitor center with interactive exhibits. A host of summer weekend activities are scheduled. For information and a calendar of events, call Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, 612-335-2323.
- o **Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge, Slidell, Louisiana.** Located 16 miles from downtown New Orleans, this urban refuge offers boating, canoeing, fishing, hiking, and wildlife observation. In June, two fishing events are scheduled. Naturalist programs, hands-on collecting and analyzing water samples, and bird watching excursions are some of the summer activities. For more information, call Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge, 504-646-7555.

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- o **Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, Denver, Colorado.** Adjacent to Denver International Airport, this 27-square-mile haven harbors a great diversity of wildlife despite its proximity to a major city. Tours, nature programs, school, scout and other youth group programs are offered. A June 3 open house will celebrate National Fishing Week and National Trails Day. A summer fishing program offers "Friday Night Fishing" and "Kids Fish Carnival." Join the refuge's conservation club and learn about nature. Changing exhibits are displayed at the visitor center. For more information, contact Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, 303-289-0232.

America's National Wildlife Refuge System is the world's most extensive and diverse network of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife. Some 28-30 million people visit the refuge system each year.