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### **National Wildlife Refuge Biologist Receives National Science Leadership Award**

*Stephanie Koch leads scientific program at eight refuges in eastern Massachusetts*

Stephanie L. Koch, lead wildlife biologist at the Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex, this week was awarded the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's national Science Leadership Award.

Koch was recognized for her leadership in overseeing the scientific and biological program on eight national wildlife refuges in the greater Boston metropolitan area and on Cape Cod for the last decade. The award citation cites her "outstanding record of objectively evaluating scientific information and making recommendations that result in scientific-based solutions to fish and wildlife service issues."

Koch's area of expertise is the research and management of coastal waterbirds, however her work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has included waterfowl, Blanding's turtles, New England cottontails and other animals and plants. The national wildlife refuges in eastern Massachusetts are inhabited by federally-listed threatened and endangered species and one of the largest colonies of common terns along the Atlantic seaboard.

According to Libby Herland, refuge manager, "We are thrilled that Stephanie's scientific achievements and leadership skills have been recognized at the national level. Her original research provides sound science for making complex refuge management decisions. We are so fortunate to have a scientist of Stephanie's caliber working for wildlife on behalf of the American people."

Koch has received National Science Foundation fellowships and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funding for her research. She has established strong conservation partnerships with key scientific organizations including the Manomet Center for Conservation Science and the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

"Stephanie has formed strong conservation partnerships with leading biologists from throughout the United States, and she has assisted numerous young biologists in their career, serving as an excellent role model for sound, objective scientific research," said Herland.

Koch's work at the refuge complex began at Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge, where she completed a research study determining that horseshoe crab harvesting on the refuge was not compatible with the refuge's mission of conserving migratory shorebirds that feed on the crabs' eggs. She also established a partnership with the University of Rhode Island to conduct a comprehensive study of shorebirds and public uses to guide management decisions at Monomoy, an internationally renowned shorebird site. The research results have recently been published in

scientific journals such as *Waterbirds* and *The Wader Study Group Bulletin* and are also being used by other agencies and organizations.

Koch said, “I became interested in conservation while accompanying my dad on annual hunting trips in Maine, beginning when I was seven years old. It is an honor just to be nominated for this award.”

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is to work with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

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