



Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge

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Rappahannock River Valley Staff

Acting Refuge Manager
Merry Maxwell

Wildlife Biologist
Sandy Spencer

Maintenance Worker
Gary Bareford

Park Ranger/Law Enforcement
Dustin Martin

Biological Technician
Patrick Hegge

STEP
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Farewell, Frances!



Not too long ago, Rappahannock River Valley NWR had to say goodbye to former refuge manager Joe McCauley. Rappahannock will be also be saying goodbye to Administrative Support Assistant, Frances Murphey. Frances was a huge asset to the refuge and will truly be missed. Her strong dedication has made her contribution to the refuge complex enormous. Rappahannock is not only losing an awesome administrative support assistant, they are also losing the “go-to” person; whenever someone needed help, Frances was always the one to call and it was a sure thing that she would know what to do. Frances impacted the staff greatly and created a sense of family at the refuge. Her infamous lunchtime calls will definitely be missed, but the tradition will continue. Frances will be going to Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge in Homer, Alaska as an Administrative Officer.

Eagle Scouts' Bird Blind

Another project well done by the interns, well partly. Interns worked hard in the heat in order to clear vegetation for an Eagles Scouts' bird blind. But the Scouts also worked in the excruciating heat, constructing the blind over a weekend. Thanks to them, visitors now have a place to enjoy wildlife observation and accessible hunting.



The completed bird blind overlooks Wilna pond.

Biologist Called to the Gulf

Biologist Sandy Spencer was recently called to help efforts with the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. In hopes of helping with the clean up Sandy gladly accepted the call, and with our support, she headed off to aid in clean up. Soon to follow her will be Gary Bareford, our Maintenance Worker. This is a reminder that there are DOI and other department employees all around the U.S. traveling south to aid in the recovery efforts. A very special thanks goes out to them!

Trail to Secret Pond



A marker for the trail.

Is a secret really a secret? The interns brushed out a trail at the Wilna Unit that has been in use for many years that the interns did not know about. See what happens when you tell one person a secret?, they tell the world. The trail was only used by birders who had heard about it from other birders. So now with the secret out, and we are hoping that more visitors will find the trail to the secret pond.

All Dogs Go to Heaven....Well *Almost* Heaven.

As countless summer travelers make their way to sunny vacation destinations, many make their way to our National Wildlife Refuges. But this summer, the interns at Rappahannock had a very unexpected summer visitor as they returned to the Wilna Lodge after work one day. Awaiting them on the front porch was the world's friendliest dog. After checking the dog it was seen that he lacked any collar or identification. An old hunting dog, it is feared that he was left in the woods to suffer the not so pleasant fate of many older, unwanted hunting dogs. Several of the interns bonded quickly with the chipper pup, and after feeding the starved boy, named him Mr. Beans. Members of the staff spent the week trying to locate owners that might be missing a dog but found no leads. At the end of the week STEP student Rebecca Funk took Mr. Beans home to West Virginia, where she found him a home with a family willing to adopt him.

Mr. Beans is now living in Morgantown, West Virginia with Rebeccas rugby coach. There Mr. Beans is enjoying long walks in the woods, rolling in a big lawn, and playing by the Lake. Though he started out in Virginia, Beans has followed those "country roads" back to a home in "Almost Heaven," West Virginia.



Spot Light!



Patrick taking a break from helping the interns build benches to pose for a quick photo!

Hello! My name is Pat Hegge. I work as a Biological Technician and a maintenance employee here at the Rappahanock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Some of my tasks are to maintain natural habitat, herbicide spraying, and maintenance projects. I started here in late February and will be continuing on until September. This is my seventh year working in Virginia for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I have gained a lot of experience through different refuges since I've been working in Virginia. My first Refuge I worked at was Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge. I worked there for four summers. Then I worked at Eastern Shore during the summer of 2008 and Great Dismal Swamp during summer of 2009. I've had some exciting and adventurous summers with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and I always enjoy all my co-workers who are remarkable and very enthusiastic. They are really some of the most amicable people I have the honor to work with! Every day when I'm working I realize that I have learned something new especially when doing challenging projects.

Spot Light!



Rebecca explaining a leaf at a recent nature walk at the Hutchinson Tract.

Rebecca Funk is a Law Enforcement STEP student this year at Rappahannock. She is currently a senior at West Virginia University and will graduate this December with a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Resources. She plans to continue to work in the Fish and Wildlife Service in either Law Enforcement or Environmental Education. In previous years she completed an Environmental Education internship at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge where she worked with visitors and children during refuge activities.

Because of her educational background in environmental studies and experience with the Service, Rebecca has been an essential asset in leading the intern-guided nature walks, describing the interesting aspects of trees and other various details of the refuge system.

Rebecca is now back at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge for the rest of the summer gaining more experience in Law Enforcement.

“I Can See Clearly Now...”



Officer Martin and Rebecca

Entering this summer Rebecca Funk wasn't sure which career path she wanted to take with her life. She has had wonderful and rewarding experiences in environmental education at previous refuges and parks and thoroughly enjoyed those opportunities. But she has always had a strong interest in the field of Conservation Law Enforcement. As her graduation date in December creeps up quickly, she needed to make a decision and fast! This summer she was given the opportunity to spend a few weeks working with Officer Martin and taking a part in his day to day work here at the refuge. In that time, she has gotten the chance to go on patrol on several different refuge tracts, ride along in the LE boat and learn the fundamentals of operating it, the process of arrests, and she has viewed firsthand the collaborations Martin has built with numerous other agencies in the region. All the while he has taken the time to explain the process and training necessary to become a member of Refuge Law Enforcement. In a short time she has acquired a great deal of knowledge and now has a desire to pursue a career in the law enforcement field. She is very grateful to Region 5, the refuge, and especially Officer Martin for taking the time to work with her and helping her discover what she wants to do with her life.

Acting for the Acting

Andy Hofmann, Deputy Manager at Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge in West Virginia is now temporarily joining the staff at Rappahannock. While Acting Refuge Manager Merry Maxwell is away for Advanced Refuge Academy, which is being held August 9-20 at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, Andy will be acting as Deputy Complex Manager for Rappahannock in her absence.

Doug Austen Visits Rappahannock

On July 27th, in preparation for discussing the important role of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives to refuges at the August Advanced Refuge Academy, Doug Austen (recently appointed as USFWS LCC coordinator) visited Rappahannock River Valley NWR.

Nature Walks so far...

For the past four weeks the interns at Rappahannock NWR have led nature walks at the Hutchinson tract. The walks allow for a fun, interesting and interactive way to introduce the public to the refuge. The interns are from diverse backgrounds and have diverse interests ranging from medical, to FWS policies, Wildlife Biologist, Refuge Manger, and Law Enforcement. Their knowledge of nature is as diverse as their backgrounds, and they share that information with the public. As the interns take turns leading and talking about aspects of nature they are most interested in, guests come away with a great deal of information that can empower them to be proactive in their lives, such as wanting to create your own native garden, planting native trees and vegetation, buying a duck stamp, or just being more environmentally aware. The walks are open to the public and are for all ages.



The Wildlife Center of Virginia



Above left: Nick and Megan looking at a box turtle that had to be "put down."

Above right: Interns peeking inside cages at various birds.



From left to right: Anthony, Nick, Christine, Megan, and Ricky after a very interesting day.

On July 28th, 2010 interns from the Rappahannock River Valley NWR (Anthony, Ricky, Christine, Nick, and Megan) ventured to The Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro, VA. where they met Dave McRuer, who introduced them how the Center is operated. They learned how "rounds" were made, which allowed everyone to know how animals were doing including their daily behavior, feeding habits, etc. They also received a tour not offered to the public. During the tour they saw hawks, eagles, owls, deer, opossum, turtles, and plenty more. After asking many questions to get a better understanding of the Center, the students met other crucial staff members and interns. The students were able to watch a baby opossum being fed through a tube, and a bird being x-rayed. They also watched staff members capture an owl in order to move it to a cage for flying practice, and they saw a woman training a bird to be used for educational purposes. The stories behind the educational animals that could not be returned to the wild were provided. One story was about a snapping turtle that had been kept in a beer cooler in a basement for two years. Another turtle was found with a shell painted purple. There were so many interesting tasks the Center takes care of, including husbandry. The interns learned another side of wildlife conservation and how we all can help.

But you gotta have friends...

The Rappahannock Wildlife Refuge Friends is an independent, nonprofit group of individuals dedicated to supporting the National Wildlife Refuge System. They also promote awareness of the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge through education and support.