

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alligator River/Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge
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News Release

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Celebrate America's Great Outdoors Month at the Pea Island Refuge Fishing/Crabbing Rodeo

After a few years' hiatus, the Fishing/Crabbing Rodeo on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge is back on the schedule. One of the most looked-forward-to events for families on the Outer Banks will once again be held Saturday, June 14, from 9 a.m. to noon in North Pond on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge.

June is a special time to celebrate America's Great Outdoors. National leaders for years have issued proclamations recognizing this month as Great Outdoors Month, a time when America celebrates its natural treasures. This recognition highlights the benefits of active fun outdoors.

Did you know that one of the main reasons people don't go fishing is because no one has invited them? For a newcomer, fishing can feel like an intimidating activity without an experienced guide, but you can help change this. The Rodeo is a great way to introduce a child, relative, or friend to the wonderful world of fishing or crabbing.. Your invitation may be just what someone needs to start a lifetime of love for fishing, crabbing, or just being outside.

This is the only day each year that North Pond, directly behind the Pea Island Visitor Center, is open to the public for crabbing and fishing, according to Cindy Heffley, Visitor Services Specialist for the wildlife refuge. The event is sponsored by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Billed as a family event, the fishing and crabbing outing attracts hundreds of young and young-at-heart trying their luck at netting, reeling in, capturing, or otherwise legally bringing home a seafood dinner.

"Though a focus is family fun in the great outdoors, the extra access allowed at North Pond on Saturday is strictly for fishing and crabbing. The pond will continue to be closed to paddling, swimming, and other activities. We hope folks will come out and enjoy a morning of outdoor recreation on one of the greatest national wildlife refuges in the whole system! We're so blessed on the Outer Banks to have such wonderful and diverse natural resources. On this day, folks may catch what have to be some of the biggest crabs in the area," Heffley said, noting that the North Pond is traditionally off limits to all but the migrating birds. "We invite all participants to bring crab nets, fishing lines, rods, bait, tackle, and whatever else they think will help them have a memorable day. Everyone will receive a flyer with crabbing regulations and must obey all refuge, state, and local regulations." No commercial crabbing or fishing gear will be allowed.

Persons needing further information are invited to call the Cindy Heffley, Visitor Services Specialist, at 252-475-4180.

"The purpose of the Fishing and Crabbing Rodeo is to give families an opportunity to come out and enjoy wildlands at their best in a prime setting," Heffley said. "It also gives them an opportunity to visit Pea Island, a wildlife refuge that offers spectacular trails for viewing birds and other wildlife. The miles of ocean-front beach also enable families to enjoy the solitude of a beautiful beach on the Outer Banks."



Manteo resident Audra Shackelford with her son and a friend soon after scooping up one of their first crabs at the 2011 Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge Crabbing and Fishing Rodeo.

Credit: USFWS