

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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News Release

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Feeling stressed? Mind in a maze? Decompress with Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival

The Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival, a six-day celebration of the wild side of the Outer Banks region of North Carolina, is set for Nov. 6 through Nov. 11. Birding, natural history, decoy carving, photography and paddling are just some of the events planned for the festival which spans Veteran's Day weekend.

For those starving for adventure but with only a little time to spare, The Maze paddling trip is the perfect solution. Slip silently through the labyrinth of marsh creeks and search for rails, ibis, herons, egrets, raccoons, and other salt marsh wildlife. Easily accessible, the trip leaves from the boat ramp under Washington Baum Bridge across from Pirates Cove. Led by staff from Kitty Hawk Kayak and Surf School, the adventure is from 11 a.m to 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 7. Cost is \$35 and the relaxation is priceless.

The region offers some of the country's best paddling for canoe and kayak enthusiasts. From tannin-fed cypress swamps to endless marsh mazes, it is possible to paddle the region for a lifetime yet still study charts at night, discovering unexplored areas.

Registration also is still open for an assortment of water trips escorted by leaders who are familiar with the various areas.

Physical demands range from open water with wind exposure, to short distances with excellent wind protection.

Other planned paddling include the Kitty Hawk Bay Sunset Kayak Tour that will allow participants to enjoy a classic Carolina sunset over the bay while navigating through tall cord grass fields and listening for the mysterious sounds of the night marsh.

Upper Milltail Creek Canoe Trip allows canoeists to explore the narrow, winding creek through the heart of Alligator River

National Wildlife Refuge. Sheltered paddling gives participants a close look at the wildlife that calls the Refuge home, including Pileated Woodpeckers, river otter, and a variety of reptiles and amphibians.

And the Scuppernong River Canoe Trip, led by a ranger from Pettigrew State Park, allows participants the opportunity to learn about the features of this unique water body that is home to a variety of rare species, including Atlantic white cedar and Red-cockaded woodpeckers.

But Wings Over Water isn't just about paddling.

Birding trips are planned for locations throughout the northeastern part of the state including but not limited to Mackay

Island National Wildlife Refuge in Currituck, Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, Ocracoke Island and Mattamuskeet National Wildlife

Refuge, both in Hyde County, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge on mainland Dare County, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Pettigrew State Park, and Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

The long list of different birding trips offer a wide assortment of viewing possibilities including shorebirds, songbirds, waterfowl and even Red Cockaded Woodpeckers. Some of the sightings reported during recent Wings Over Water Wildlife Festivals include Eared Grebe, American White Pelican, Fork-Tailed Flycatcher and the Magnificent Frigatebird.

Just can't seem to get close enough to get that perfect shot at a pintail? Both hunters and photographers can get up close and personal to waterfowl by learning how to use decoys and calls on the Pea Island "Duck Hunt." Participants in this three-to-four hour class will sit in a duck blind while learning how to bring the waterfowl into range. Cameras welcomed; guns are not.

Nature photographers who want to improve their skills can join Mark Buckler, program director of the Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education in Corolla, for a wildlife photography class. Buckler, also a professional photographer, will show participants how to catch the morning light while exploring for wading birds, fall migrant songbirds, waterfowl and shorebirds.

The Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival is sponsored by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce, Carolina Bird Club, the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society, Roanoke Island Festival Park and the Outer Banks Sentinel.

To learn more, visit www.wingsoverwater.org or call the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce at 252-441-8144 to order a program book complete with map and registration forms.