

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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News Release

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Alligator River Refuge Red Wolf Howlings Reach Hundreds of Visitors

Every year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Red Wolf Recovery Program and the Red Wolf Coalition jointly sponsor weekly howling experiences for the public. The 2008 summer schedule begins June 11 at 7:30 p.m. and continues each Wednesday evening through Labor Day. The highlight of the evening is having the chance to listen for the characteristic "howl" of one or more red wolves (*Canis rufus*) as they communicate with each other. While there are no guarantees that red wolf howls will be heard, audiences will definitely get a chance to try their howling skills, learn about red wolves, and experience the wilds of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge after dark. Over 1,000 local residents and visitors from across the United States attended these events during the 2007 summer months.

Participants meet on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge at Creef Cut Wildlife Trail at the intersection of Milltail Road and Highway 64. A short presentation provides an overview of the Red Wolf Recovery Program and the role of the Red Wolf Coalition, a Friends organization dedicated to the preservation of the red wolf species. Visitors have an opportunity to obtain red wolf literature and to see both red wolf and coyote pelts and skulls, track casts, tracking collars, and field photos.

The Red Wolf Coalition has many items available for sale such as T-shirts, hats, bumper stickers and journals. The money collected from merchandise sales, plus donations, is used to support red wolf education and outreach programs. The organization also hopes to one day build a red wolf visitor center near Columbia, NC, where red wolves can be viewed by the public.

The red wolf is one of the most endangered animals in the world, and its story of recovery is a remarkable one. According to Bud Fazio, Red Wolf Recovery Program Team Leader, "The Fish and Wildlife Service is heartened to see its restoration efforts successfully pull red wolves back from the brink of extinction. Forty years ago, only a handful of red wolves were found in the wild. Today, 100-130 wild red wolves roam freely across five eastern North Carolina counties. There is a saying, 'Endangered means there's still time.' We have shown there is enough time to restore red wolves to a level more likely to ensure their long-term survival. I am proud of the field biologists whose skillful efforts allow red wolves to once again roam free to howl in the wild." This recovery program has served as a model for other reintroduction efforts.

For a 2008 schedule or to register for a howling, please contact the Red Wolf Coalition office at 252-796-5600 or visit their web site at www.redwolves.com. A \$5.00 per person administrative fee is charged for the summer howlings. There is no charge for children five years old and under.

Four additional howling opportunities are available throughout the year at no charge. These howlings are scheduled: April 19, Saturday, 7:00 pm (Earth Day); October 18, Saturday, 6:00 pm (Wolf Awareness Week); October 25, Saturday, 6:00 pm (Howl-O-Ween Howl); and December 6, Saturday, 4:00 pm (Holiday Howl). Registration is required for the free howlings, as well as the summer howlings.

For information about other refuge programs offered year round, visit the refuge web site at <http://www.fws.gov/alligatorriver> or contact Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge at 252-473-1131.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working 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.