

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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News Release

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Annual Pea Island Crabbing Rodeo Saturday, June 14 from 9 to noon

The annual Crabbing and Fishing Rodeo, one of the most looked-forward-to events for families on the Outer Banks, will be held Saturday, June 14, from 9 a.m. to noon at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge.

"North Pond is often just loaded with crabs," said Bonnie Strawser, Refuge Interpretive Specialist. "But, we manage it primarily for migratory birds. So the pond, itself, is closed to people year-round. To celebrate National Fishing Week, we open it once a year for fishing and crabbing. Some years, folks pull crabs out by the bushels.... other years, they just catch a few crabs. You just never know! But, we have a lot of people who have been every year since the very beginning- more than 20 years ago." The event is sponsored annually by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Billed as a family event, the annual 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. Registration for the prize drawing will be held at the Visitor Center from 9 a.m. until noon, with every child 12 years of age and under guaranteed to win a prize in a random drawing. There is no registration for the rodeo; registration for the prize drawing will begin on the front porch of the Visitor Center at 8:00 am.

"The real focus for this day is family fun in the great outdoors. We're so blessed on the Outer Banks to have such wonderful and diverse natural resources. On this day, folks can catch what has to be some of the biggest crabs in the area," Ms. Strawser 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." Strawser also stressed the importance of bringing insect repellent, sunscreen, food, and drink to insure a pleasant morning, and reminded everyone of the 50 crab per person State limit for crabs. Participants who are planning on reeling in some fish are also reminded of the new, saltwater fishing license requirement. Licenses are not available at the Pea Island Visitor Center, so participants will need to purchase their own before the event. Crabbing does not require a saltwater fishing license. Crab pots, traps, and other commercial gear will not be allowed.

Persons needing further information are invited to call the Pea Island Visitor Center at 987-2394 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.



The Annual Crabbing/Fishing Rodeo on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, scheduled for Saturday, June 14th from 9am until noon, is a highlight of the year for many local families and visitors, as well. Kory and Mya Erpelding, pictured above, had a great time at the 2007 event.
Photo Credit: USFWS

"The purpose of the Fishing and Crabbing Rodeo is to give families an opportunity to come out and enjoy nature at its best in a prime setting," Strawser said. "It gives them an opportunity to hang out on Pea Island, a wildlife refuge that offers spectacular trails for viewing birds and other wildlife generally found in the area. The miles of ocean-front also enable folks to enjoy the solitude of a beautiful beach on the Outer Banks. We want America and her visitors to get to know refuges!"

The National Wildlife Refuge System has been protecting hundreds of wild species, including our national symbol, the bald eagle, for more than 100 years and comprises nearly 100 million acres, protected within more than 540 refuges and thousands of small prairie wetlands.

Wildlife refuges provide unparalleled outdoor activities, including fishing, hunting, environmental education, wildlife observation, and photography, making them special places for all Americans to connect with nature. Many refuges also offer opportunities for nature hikes, bird tours, wildlife drives and other activities. There are wildlife refuges in every state, and at least one within an hour's drive of most major cities.