

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge
85 Mattamuskeet Road
Swan Quarter, North Carolina 27885

Contact: Jerry Fringeli 252-926-4021



News Release

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An amazing variety of waterfowl and other migratory birds may be seen on local national wildlife refuges in eastern North Carolina during the fall and winter. Large numbers of Tundra swans, like the ones shown above, are among the more memorable sightings for many visitors. Plan now to join one of the three scheduled tram tour of Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge on December 4 to see lots of waterfowl and other wildlife. For more information, call 252-926-4021. Photo Credit: Jeff Lewis.

"Let's Go Outside" and See the Amazing Waterfowl on Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge!

"It's probably going to be cold, but it's sure to be an awesome experience in wildlife viewing," said newly-arrived Refuge Manager Deb Pierce, when describing the upcoming open-air tram tours on Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge. The 2010 one-hour public tours are scheduled for Saturday morning, December 4 at 7:30, 9:00, and 10:30, and promise to be a whole new experience for participants. "We thought long and hard about whether to round up vans and do the traditional tours or try something new. 'Connecting People with Nature' is a national program in the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, so we decided to make some changes that would REALLY connect people with nature! We're taking the 'Let's Go Outside!' focus literally,

and we're excited to be able to offer this unique opportunity to Mattamuskeet visitors!" The tours are free; however, space is limited, so registration is required.

Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge is renowned for waterfowl. Widely recognized as one of the best birding sites in North Carolina, the refuge is especially popular in the fall and winter, when hundreds of thousands of migratory birds, including a wide variety of ducks, geese and swans migrate to Lake Mattamuskeet and surrounding areas. Visitors ranging from enthusiastic birders to casual observers come to view waterfowl in this magnificent setting. In addition to waterfowl, bald eagles also winter at Lake Mattamuskeet and are frequently seen perched in trees along the lakeshore. And, everything from otters and muskrats to warblers and wading birds are on the wildlife-watcher's menu.

Only once a year, the refuge offers visitors a special opportunity to view wildlife in areas that are seasonally closed to the public. Van tours conducted by refuge staff have been given annually since 1984, usually as a part of Swan Days. Swan Days was canceled due to the temporary closure of the Mattamuskeet Lodge; however, the refuge tours have continued by popular demand. In order to accommodate more people and to provide a more intimate connection with the refuge, the 2010 tours will be conducted from an open-air tram.

Reservations are required; non-registered visitors may be turned away, if space is not available. Interested individuals may reserve their seats on the tram starting on Tuesday, November 16 by calling the refuge office at 252/926-4021. Office hours are 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday – Friday. Because there is a limited number of seats available on the tram, it is important to call early.

The meeting location for tours will be the Lake Landing parking area. If you need directions, please be sure to ask when you call to register. Tour participants are encouraged, but not required, to bring binoculars and bird identification books. Since this is an open-air tram, it is critical that participants dress for cold weather, including heavy coats that will break the wind, scarves, gloves, and especially hats.

"Unless the weather is so bad it poses a safety hazard, the tours will go on, rain or shine, windy or calm....," added Pierce. "So, bring a pile of blankets, and come on out to Mattamuskeet Refuge for a great time of connecting with nature and learning about our incredible wildlife resources."

For more information about Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge, visit <http://www.fws.gov/mattamuskeet>. If you have questions about the tram tours, please call 252-926-4021.