



Volunteering with Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex



Who are we?

The Complex

The Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex is comprised of eight ecologically diverse national wildlife refuges. The eight individual refuges include inland and coastal wetlands, forests, grasslands, and barrier beaches that provide important habitat for migratory birds, mammals, plants, reptiles and amphibians. Great Meadows, Mashpee, Assabet River, Monomoy, Nantucket, and Oxbow all provide wildlife dependent recreation opportunities for the public. Massasoit is closed to public use in order to protect critical habitat for the Northern Red-Bellied Cooter Turtle. Noman's Land Island NWR was formerly a bombing range used by the Navy; as a result it is closed to public use due to a risk of unexploded ordinance on the island.

Assabet River NWR

Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge encompasses 3.5 square miles located within the towns of Hudson, Maynard, Stow and Sudbury which is approximately 20 miles west of Boston. The Visitor Center opened in October 2010 and is a "green" building that the local community and tourists visit to learn more about local wildlife and habitats, as well as the United States Fish & Wildlife Service. The Center is the primary location refuge visitors can obtain information about the Refuge, as well as the Eastern MA NWR Complex and the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Center also houses interactive, hands-on educational exhibits, a multi-purpose meeting room, and a Friends Group nature store.

Great Meadows NWR

Roughly 85 percent of the refuge's more than 3,800 acres is comprised of valuable freshwater wetlands stretching along 12 miles of the Concord and Sudbury Rivers which includes the towns of Sudbury, Wayland, Lincoln, Concord, Carlisle, Bedford and Billerica. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service protects and manages Great Meadows as nesting, resting, and feeding habitat for wildlife, with special emphasis on migratory birds. A great diversity of birds has been recorded at Great Meadows NWR; an annotated list of over 220 species is available in a separate brochure. The Great Meadows NWR headquarters office is our main administrative facility and is typically open Mon – Fri, 8am – 4pm.

Mashpee NWR

Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established in 1995 to preserve and protect natural resources associated with the Waquoit Bay area for the protection of waterfowl and protection of wildlife. Located in the towns of Mashpee and Falmouth, this refuge will total 5,871 acres when complete, only a small percentage of which will be owned by the Fish and Wildlife Service. Currently, 335 acres are in FWS ownership. Managed through a unique partnership among nine Federal, State and private conservation groups, this Cape Cod refuge preserves thousands of acres of magnificent salt marshes, cranberry bogs, Atlantic white cedar swamps, freshwater marshes, rivers and vernal pools.

Monomoy NWR

Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established in 1944 to provide habitat for migratory birds. Sand stretches for eight miles off the elbow of Cape Cod, forming the barrier islands of North and South Monomoy. In addition to the two islands, a 40-acre unit on Morris Island is also part of the refuge. This is where the headquarters and visitor center are located. The total size of the refuge is 7,604 acres with varied habitats of oceans, salt and freshwater marshes, dunes, and freshwater ponds of which 3,244 acres are designated Wilderness. The Monomoy visitor contact station is open with seasonal hours based on availability of interns and/or volunteers. It houses interpretive displays and has a Friends nature store.

Nantucket NWR

Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge is located at the very tip of the Coskata-Coatue Peninsula, in an area known as Great Point. This area encompasses both the refuge and parts of the adjacent The Trustees land above the area known as The Galls. The refuge constitutes approximately 21 acres on the northernmost tip of the peninsula.

Oxbow NWR

Located just 40 miles west of Boston, the 1,667-acre refuge lies along almost eight miles of the Nashua River in north-central Massachusetts (Harvard, Ayer, and Shirley). Within its boundary is a diverse array of habitats beneficial to wildlife: wetlands, forested uplands, old fields, oxbow ponds, and, of course, the river itself.

Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Volunteer Descriptions

Below are descriptions for volunteers we are currently in need of at our different refuges. Note that some of these positions are seasonal and not all positions apply for all locations. If you are interested in any of the positions, information on who to contact for each refuge is available below and the point of contact there will be able to provide you with further details.

Trail Steward

Walk an assigned section of trails on a weekly or frequent basis and report to staff about any noticeable changes (ie., fallen trees/limbs, damaged signs or sign posts, dumping of debris, etc). A trail steward would also be notified for special trail day projects and clean ups. Trail stewards enhance the enjoyment and safety of visitors to the refuge. Volunteers will need to regularly communicate with refuge staff on what was seen on trails and any problems.

Nature Guide

Be a guide for an audience of your choice such as seniors, children, adults, and/or families and engage them in the outdoors with your special interest, ie – plants, painting, biking, etc. This includes coordinating the strategic, operational and logistical activities necessary for the event, such as doing outreach to the local community. For a new volunteer that is getting to know the refuge assisting staff with creating and delivering informative and exciting presentations to the local community organizations might be a good way to get started.

Environmental Educator

Prior teaching experience is needed for this position. If you do not have any then consider beginning with a Nature Guide position. We are in need of committed individuals who enjoy the company of children and are fascinated by the natural world. Depending on the refuge, volunteers will either be assisting refuge staff on existing environmental education programs or creating curriculum and lesson plans which meet State curriculum standards.

Visitor Greeter

Welcome visitors to the refuge, some might have never visited a refuge before! The duties will include suggesting hikes based on visitor's abilities, maintaining visitor center's cleanliness and helping staff with a few tasks. A friendly, helpful demeanor is a must! Check with your refuge on when the busiest time of the year is.

Volunteer Coordinator

Work closely with staff to help manage current volunteers and their schedules and to do outreach to increase our volunteer numbers. Assist the staff with planning volunteer training opportunities and volunteer appreciation celebrations. It is important you are comfortable working with different ages and abilities and that you are organized.

Reasons to Volunteer

- ❖ Contribute to your local community
- ❖ Share your interest in nature with others, and help insure that a respect for the natural world is passed on to future generations. Help visitors see how they can become stewards of nature
- ❖ Be part of a group of exceptional people- make new friends!
- ❖ Volunteers are greatly appreciated by the Refuge staff and we would be lost without you!

Who to Contact

Assabet River NWR: KizetteOrtizVanger@fws.gov or 978-562-3527ext. 117

Monomoy NWR: Matthew_Boarman@fws.gov or 508-219-4856

All other refuges: Susan_J_Russo@fws.gov or 978-443-4661 ext. 34