



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Erie National Wildlife Refuge

March 2012 Vol. 5 No. 1

INSIDE *Erie*



www.123r-f.com

Erie NWR provides habitat for a variety of birds, including song birds, raptors, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Starting in the top left corner and moving clockwise: tufted titmouse, downy woodpecker, red-tailed hawk, hooded merganser, white-breasted nuthatch, black-capped chickadee, and great egret.

Wildlife Watching? Count on the Birds

Planning a visit to Erie National Wildlife Refuge, and hoping to spot some wildlife? Erie is home to white-tail deer, black bears and even the elusive river otter, but by their very nature, most wild animals prefer to remain hidden, and there's no guarantee of viewing them at any given time or place. Nonetheless, nearly every visitor to Erie National Wildlife Refuge is likely to see-or at least hear-a bird.

Birds are the ambassadors of the wildlife world: dropping in on back-

yards and parks, and filling the air with song during spring mating season. They are also at the heart of Erie National Wildlife Refuge, founded to protect migratory birds.

Erie provides habitat for 230 bird species. Some are common backyard birds such as blue jays and mourning doves. Others, like the American woodcock and cerulean warbler, are species of concern because they are endangered or declining. The refuge has been designated an Important Bird

Area by the Pennsylvania Audubon Society for its diversity of bird habitat - from wetlands and impoundments to shrub areas and woodland.

A great place to launch your bird watching is at the visitor contact station off Route 198E on Wood Duck Lane, ¾ mile east of Guys Mills. Here, large windows provide a viewing area to feeders where common backyard birds gather. Microphones under some of the

(story continued on page 3)

Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Refuge Update

- The Alternatives matrix, described in the December issue, continues to fill the bulk of the current CCP effort. Once selected, the “Preferred Alternatives” will outline the strategies that refuge staff will take to achieve management goals for the next 15 years. Careful consideration of the goals, objectives, and alternative strategies is a critically important step in the CCP process. Meetings with State and other conservation partners is a part of that process. It will be worth the time invested once the matrix is complete.
- Plans are underway for the summer field season. Biological staff will treat invasive plants, complete wildlife and vegetation surveys, and work on the CCP. Maintenance staff work on improving parking lots, maintaining water control structures and other facilities, and improving habitat. Office staff will manage administrative matters, as well as the refuge open house and

other visitor services concerns. A Youth Conservation Corps work crew will complete trail maintenance, build an information kiosk, and assist with the refuge Summer Fest.

- New employee, Norm Pratt, joined the refuge staff in January. Norm is responsible for the maintenance program on the refuge. Though he grew up in the local area, Norm has broadened his education, experience and travels through his 10 years in the Army. He is a welcome addition!

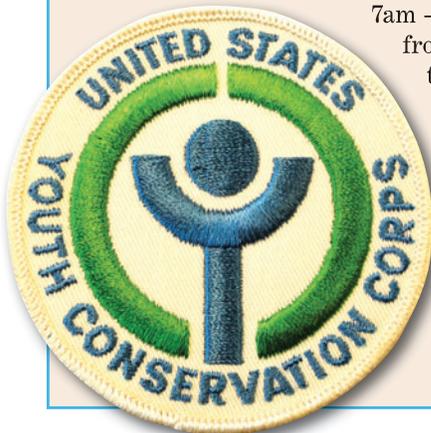


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Northern saw-whet owls inhabit dense coniferous or mixed forests.

Youth Employment Opportunity

Applications are being accepted until April 10 for the refuge’s Youth Conservation Corps program. Teens, aged 15-18, will be randomly selected to fill 5-10 enrollee positions. Participants will work 7am - 3:30pm, Monday - Friday, from June 11 - Aug. 3. Work tasks will include small construction projects, trail maintenance and other outdoor maintenance tasks. Call 814-789-3585 for more information and applications.



Let's Go Birding! Program

You will enhance your refuge experience, and learn more about birds at the same time. To participate in the refuge’s “Let’s Go Birding!” program, you must obtain a booklet from the refuge (or the website), and complete 10 tasks. Once finished, you receive an embroidered patch, a certificate, and your picture is added to the “Refuge Wall of Fame”. It’s a perfect activity for children, and for families!



Erie National Wildlife Refuge
11296 Wood Duck Lane
Guys Mills, PA 16327

Phone: 814/789 3585
Email: fw5rw_ernwr@fws.gov
Website: www.fws.gov/northeast/erie



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...Wildlife Watching (cont.)

feeders capture sounds from the birds, and seating, binoculars and bird identification materials are provided.

Families and children can pick up materials at the center to earn a Let's Go Birding merit badge. Badge-earners learn the basics of bird watching, answer questions from materials provided at the visitor contact station, and venture out on the refuge for more observations.

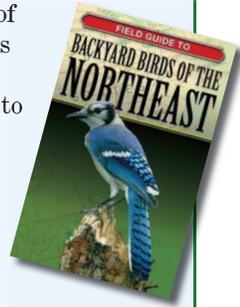
One great place to view birds on the refuge is the 2.6-mile Deer Run loop trail, off of Ritchie Road. Rich Eakin, an avid birder, recommends this trail for its diverse habitat. "It goes through the forest and different habitats. It comes into openings and streams, as well as ponds and impoundments," he says.

Also at this trailhead is a quarter-mile spur trail of compressed gravel that is wheelchair accessible. This leads to an observation deck outfitted with spotting scopes near Pool 9. It's a great place to view waterfowl, and often bald eagles are spotted on a tall pine tree across the impoundment.

While bald eagles and mallard ducks are present on the refuge year-round, other birds come to mate and raise chicks (such as the wood ducks and flycatchers that nest on the refuge). Many more are just passing through on their fall and spring migrations and they rely on the refuge as a stopover for food and rest. Because of this, spring and fall feature the richest variety of birds, including waterfowl, songbirds and shorebirds.

Tips for Beginning Birdwatching:

- American robins, northern cardinals and black-capped chickadees are easy birds to identify, and often frequent back yards. Start with observing and identifying these common birds and their calls, and build from there.
 - Find an experienced birder to go with you. Many knowledgeable birders are members of the Audubon Society. For information and activities on the closest Audubon chapter, visit the Presque Isle Audubon Society website: www.presqueisleaudubon.org.
- For basic bird watching, the two essential pieces of equipment are binoculars and a bird guide with images and descriptions to help with identification. Ask an experienced bird watcher to recommend birding binoculars, or visit a sporting goods store with bird-savvy staff. Also, refuge staff are happy to loan binoculars and field guides to visitors, free of charge, while they explore the refuge for the day.

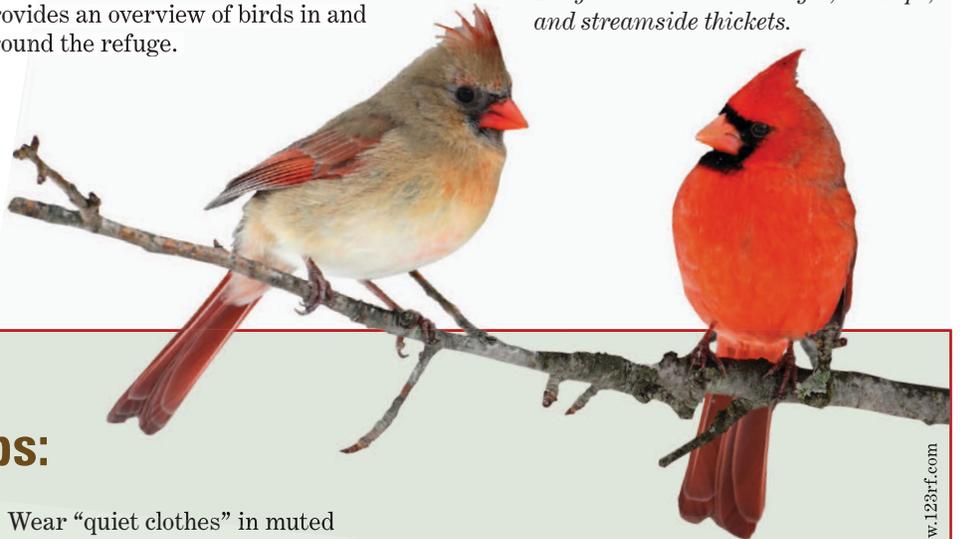


The refuge's bird list, available online (www.fws.gov/northeast/erie/r5ernwr_wildlife.html) and at the visitor contact center, details bird species on the refuge by season, and categorizes their presence from abundant to rare.

Updated in 2011 by Refuge volunteers Ron Leberman and Eakin, the list provides an overview of birds in and around the refuge.

Next time you are on the refuge - or even in your own back yard - take some time to count how many birds you see or hear. You may encounter more wildlife than you expected.

Northern cardinals are nonmigratory. They live in woodland edges, swamps, and streamside thickets.



More bird watching tips:

- Observe birds without disturbing them by hiding in vegetation or standing beside a tree.
- Stay on existing trails and roads to avoid trampling habitat.
- Watch for song birds the first 2 hours after sunrise and the last hours before sunset. Ducks and shorebirds can be observed all day. After sunup is the best time to view eagles and hawks. Owls are more likely to be seen in the evening. On light rainy days, birds normally are active most of the day.
- Wear "quiet clothes" in muted natural colors.
- Make as little noise as possible.
- Walk slowly. Try walking a short distance and then stopping to look. Scan the forest from top to bottom. Watch the vegetation for movement.
- Do not make quick movements. If you see signs of alarm in birds (a cocked head, a freeze in posture), stop moving, or back away if necessary.
- Do not stay near nests and never take their eggs or young.
- To learn the identification of birds, you will need to look and listen. Look at the bird's silhouette; coloring; markings on the face and breast; bill size and shape; and leg color and length. Watch movements, flight patterns, and behavior. Take note of the habitat. Listen to the bird's song. Use a good field guide with clear color pictures to identify the birds.

A vibrant green background with a thin orange border. The text "Summer Fest" is written in large, bold, orange-to-yellow gradient letters with a slight shadow. Below it, "June 30" is written in a smaller, similar font. The text is surrounded by decorative elements: green vines with small orange and green buds, several colorful butterflies (one red and orange, one purple and blue, one purple and pink), and a large green leaf in the bottom left corner. A thin green vine curves across the middle of the page.

Summer Fest

June 30

June 30th is **Summer Fest** at **Erie National Wildlife Refuge**.
This year's theme will focus on the unsung heroes of
the natural world - among the smallest wildlife -
insects and **bugs!**