

[From Spring 2003]

Countdown to the Centennial

What an exciting time to be part of the largest network of lands set aside specifically for wildlife! Little did President Theodore Roosevelt know that when he set aside tiny Pelican Island in Florida as the first national wildlife refuge in 1903, his conservation movement would grow to include more than 95 million acres on more than 530 refuges in all 50 states and U.S. Territories.

But how do you commemorate a century of conserving the nation's natural resource legacy? At Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, this historic event will need a whole year to be properly celebrated.

The celebration kicked off on March 9 when a centennial bus tour rolled through the refuge. Several U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service dignitaries, media, and event coordinators participated in the tour. Refuge Manager John D. Schroer and Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner Angela V. Tracy provided the participants with a VIP tour of the new Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center, and there was an open house at the Visitor Contact Station.



On March 14, the official 100th birthday of the National Wildlife Refuge System, Deputy Refuge Manager Thomas P. Roster and members of the public celebrated the centennial by placing historical items spanning the refuge's history into a time capsule which will be opened in another 100 years. The event also included a stunning display of some of the refuge's historic artifacts.

The following events, with a "Centennial Twist," will be conducted at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge during 2003:

- A special Earth Day Celebration on Saturday, April 12
- Migratory Bird Celebration May 9 & 10
- National Fishing and Boating Week during the first week of June
- 100 yrs. of waterfowl conservation on July 1
- National Wildlife Refuge Week over the Columbus Day Weekend
- Waterfowl Week, November 22 - 30

In addition, on December 6, refuge staff and volunteers will share the centennial message of a hundred years of managing nature's gifts for the American people through a float in the Town of Chincoteague's Christmas Parade.

As the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Northeast Region's focus refuge, the grand opening of the Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center will be the highlight of the region's Centennial Celebration. The grand opening is scheduled to coincide with the National Wildlife Refuge Week Celebration on Columbus Day weekend. Special tours, coupled with dynamic programs and a variety of activities will be conducted in the new state-of-the-art facility. Join in the fun and the Centennial spirit by participating in the various events throughout the year. Be a part of history!

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