

[From Spring 2008]

Envirothon

By Stacey Hollis

Throng of environmentally-minded students filed into the visitor center of the beautiful Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR on February 15th. They arrived with the admirable intent of gaining a greater understanding of their natural surroundings and our effect on them. The catalyst to this event was the 2008 Canon Envirothon, a competition designed for high school students to learn about their environment and to apply this knowledge through tests and projects. The students represented seven teams from within the Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District and will compete locally in an effort to advance to area and state competitions.

Local biologists and education specialists acted as "Resource Trainers", with presentations to the students on wildlife, aquatics, soils and forestry. All of these topics were based around this year's Envirothon theme: Human Impact on National Parks and Refuges. Each presentation made students aware of how we as humans affect the natural world. While the Envirothon is a competition, its true value is in the education these students receive throughout it. During a time when our earth is in great need of raised environmental awareness, it is imperative that our younger generations in particular understand the issues we are facing.

Artful and informative exhibits in the refuge's visitor center acted as effective supplements to the lectures. In between lectures, students could be found at the center's observation window watching a flurry of Yellow-rumped Warblers and other songbirds swarming the brush flanking the picturesque freshwater pond. By the end of the day, students left with a broader understanding of the world they live in, thanks to the devoted individuals who put together a day of quality knowledge to the test and, while only one team will move forward in the competition, all of the students can now take what they've learned and apply it in their own lives towards a better future.