

[from Spring 09]

Cultural Treasures Day

By: Michael Dixon

On Saturday, April 4, 2009, we invite you to celebrate *Cultural Treasures Day* at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Two main activities will take place, one at 10:00 a.m. and another at 1:00 p.m. You are welcome to come early and stay all day.

If you arrive early, let's say prior to 9:00 a.m., you may witness the hustle and bustle of volunteers, employees and countless community partners, eagerly preparing for what will surely be a memorable and moving experience. Be patient, however, because things may be a bit out of sort. I encourage you to stop by the Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center to learn about the specifics of the day. It won't take long for you to notice that something is different.

Once the initial commotion fades around 9:30 a.m., step outside; take a deep breath; exhale slowly and listen intently for a rare phenomenon. You must be vigilant in your effort, because from a distance, the sound is often misidentified. If you have trouble, walk away from the building and clip your hands around your ears to winnow out any errant sounds. If that does not help, walk further still and this time close your eyes.

Some will say it's just the wind. Others will be adamant that it's a rare species of bird or nothing at all. While at least one person will admit that they hear voices from the past which are echoing quietly in the present, gingerly revealing the special meanings hidden on the island.

Upon additional inspection of the surrounding area, you will undoubtedly learn that this rare phenomenon was actually caused by members of the U.S. Coast Guard Band. "What are they doing here," you ask? While warming up nearby, their melodic sounds have rhythmically beckoned you away from the Bateman Center and led you to the Assateague Lighthouse, just in time to participate in the ceremonial activities. Stick around and bear witness as it is officially reopened for the 2009 summer season. Learn firsthand what lies ahead in the restoration effort and what progress has been made. Take time to thank the CNHA and their members for contributing its restoration.

You won't want to miss the afternoon unveiling of a new exhibit that recalls and honors a maritime event involving the *La Galga*, which resonates still today in Spanish and American History. The exhibit showcases a large scale model of the Spanish Warship. This model was painstakingly built by a local artisan over a two year period and will become a temporary exhibit on display at the Bateman Center. The *La Galga* was shipwrecked on Assateague Island in 1750, during a hurricane, and most likely gave rise to one of the current legends that explain how the world famous Chincoteague ponies first arrived.

These are just a few examples of what will occur on this momentous occasion. *Cultural Treasures Day* provides many reasons to be festive. During your stay, we hope you will immerse yourself in the rich natural and cultural history of Chincoteague and Assateague Island, drawing strength and memorable experience from the voices of those who came before us.



La Galga Model Arrives at Herbert Bateman Visitor Center for Exhibit and Unveiling