

[From Summer 2003]

## **Sharing the Same Needs**

As I sit here in the Eastern Shore of Virginia Visitor Center greeting visitors, I regularly have a fact of life pointed out to me that I and other staff capitalize on as an opportunity for wildlife interpretation. As most visitors come in, they head straight for the rest room. When they come out, they have a drink at the water fountain and tell us how far they have traveled and how much they needed a rest stop.

This is our opening. They needed a rest stop for their long travels, a place of relief, of quiet, and to refresh with a drink and maybe a nibble. Now we ask them how do they think migratory birds go so far and how much they need a break, just like the human visitor. As a refuge, this is our role, to be the rest stop for the wildlife.

We ask them how they liked the long trip across the mouth of the bay or are looking forward to the trip. We try to get them to imagine what the trip is like for a bird or a butterfly. Hopefully, they head back out with a whole different view. As travelers, they now know they are not alone. There are other travelers out there, feathered, furred, or scaled who have the same needs. And, they now know there is a system of rest stops for these other travelers, a system called the National Wildlife Refuge System.

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