

[From Summer 2004]

## **Attention: Environmental Education Outbreak**

An outbreak of environmental education fever has hit Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and it appears to be highly contagious. Those who have witnessed the epidemic are amazed and overwhelmed. Throughout the spring, scores of children infected with "the fever" descended upon the refuge. Symptoms include increased heart rate due to excitement, loss of memory (students appear to have forgotten that they are in school), and unusual behavior (students appear to enjoy learning!). In the month of May alone, staff from Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge conducted 116 programs for these knowledge-thirsty students. The programs focused on the habitats of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, wildlife conservation, and endangered species management.

The fever appears to affect students of all ages, from pre- Kindergarten to Elderhostel-aged citizens. Staff attempted to contain these infected groups of students to the Herbert H. Bateman Educational Center and the Environmental Education Trail but the crazed educational pandemonium was witnessed all throughout the refuge. From the beginning of January to the end of May, staff made over 5859 educational contacts through these hands-on environmental programs. Even with the school year ending, the fever shows little signs of releasing its information craving grip on the minds of unsuspecting students. Programs have already been scheduled throughout the summer for Intergenerational Elderhostel (in an unfortunate display of family cruelty, grandparents have spread the illness to their grandchildren!) and other summer youth clubs. Staff are even anticipating "the fever" to continue throughout the year - teachers have already indicated the desire to return in the fall. This has been a public service announcement.

Alison Penn, Environmental Education Specialist  
CNWR