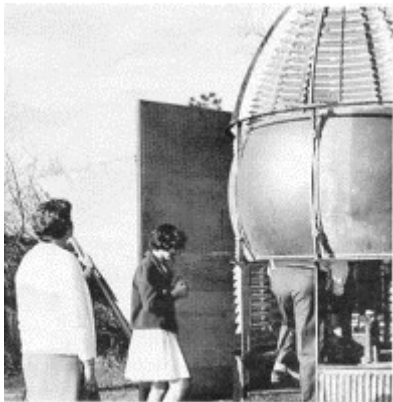


[From Summer 1993]

## **A Blast from the Past**

The ten years between 1963 and 1972 were a time of tremendous growth for refuge activities, especially in the area of public use.

In 1963, Charles Noble was still the refuge manager. With the bridge from Chincoteague completed, refuge visitation increased dramatically, even with the \$1.25 toll. During the summer of 1964, over 137,000 people visited the refuge. Another federal agency was also active in the area, because the narrative reports a wayward rocket crashing into a sand fence about 100 yards from a work crew. NASA now informs the refuge before launching so proper safety measures are taken.



*FWS photo of the Lighthouse Lens  
- late 1960's*

The administrative staff moved into the present Refuge Headquarters facility on Assateague Island in 1965, about the same time that the maintenance area (now "Subheadquarters") and residence areas were constructed. The same year, the island was designated Assateague Island National Seashore by Lyndon Johnson - a move that had been in the works since the 1930's. Although the relationship between the two agencies was perhaps rocky at the start, this designation was of enormous benefit to the island.

The next big changes to the refuge came during 1968. Refuge Manager Noble moved, and J.C. Appel began his reign as refuge manager. With Manager Appel's influence, the public use program on the refuge grew in leaps and bounds. Auditorium programs were started in a converted garage space; Island Cruises began offering evening cruises on the Assateague Channel (a wildlife safari was added in 1971); the Lighthouse Trail, Pony Trail (now called the Woodland Trail), and Wildlife Loop were constructed; and the Oil Shed Artist program was started. Also in 1969 the first "Weekend of the Islands" was created, which featured an "open house" of the federal agencies in the area, including the U.S. Coast Guard, NASA, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service also conducting special programs throughout the weekend. This once extensive demonstration wildlife art show is now conducted by the Chamber of Commerce and called the "Easter Decoy Show." Waterfowl Week celebrations were also started in 1969. At the time, it was known as "Goose Days" and featured Chincoteague's snow geese and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge's Canada geese.

During this ten year period, a number of other events took place on the refuge. In 1968, Delmarva Peninsula Fox Squirrels were introduced to Chincoteague Refuge. The squirrels were brought in over a three year period from Blackwater and Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuges. This program proved to be very successful as the refuge currently supports a population of approximately 300 squirrels. In 1969, loggerhead sea turtle eggs from Cape Romain NWR (SC) were hatched on the refuge, in hopes that a nesting colony

would be formed. Because the gender of a sea turtle is determined by the temperature of the sand, only male turtles were produced in the cold sands of Assateague Island. Also during this period, the first tree swallow boxes were erected on the refuge and bobwhite quail were released. The quail proved to be beneficial to the medical community as Walter Reed Hospital was using blood samples from the bobwhite quail for encephalitis research.

Some of our current staff members were hired during the late 1960's. Jack Bowden began his refuge career as an administrative assistant in 1967. Noah Williams and the former Susan Walker (now Merritt) both began in 1971. And "Drizzle" Wilgus name appeared on refuge reports in 1972.

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