

[From Summer 1998]

National Fishing Week Nets Numerous Smiles

I am pleased to announce that many smiles were caught during National Fishing Week as over 200 refuge visitors took part in the activities during the week of May 31 through June 6," stated Refuge Manager John D. Schroer. The activities for National Fishing Week hosted by Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge began with a 7:30 am walk on Sunday, May 31. This leisurely stroll along Beach Road explored areas where the fishing is reserved for the birds. Visitors discovered the identity and gained insights into these feathered anglers of the island.

The festivities continued with youths of all ages creating their own unique T-shirts through the art of fish printing. Through grant money the refuge was able to offer a limited supply of free white T-shirts for these creations. Fish printing was conducted from 1 pm to 4 pm on both Sunday, May 31 and Saturday, June 6.

Another activity that was conducted on both Sunday, May 31 and Saturday June 6 was "Fish Tales." For the angler of the future to discover the importance of fish as a valuable natural resource, an early childhood story, *Sharky Shark* was read to preschoolers. While no "formal" programs were scheduled for the weekdays, youths of all ages were encouraged to design their own fish pin or weave a colorful fish during the operating hours of the Chincoteague Refuge Visitor Center (9 am to 5 pm daily).

The highlight of National Fishing Week was the surf fishing course held on Saturday, June 6. Youths ages 12 to 18 years old were invited to sign up for this course on surf fishing equipment and techniques. To keep the participants "hooked" on fishing the rods and reels used by the youths were theirs to take home. Special funds earmarked for National Fishing Week were used to purchase these rods and reels plus the necessary accessories. National Fishing Week decals and activity books, as well as certificates of accomplishment, were used to enhance the program and to encourage the youths to remember the importance of fish as a natural resource.

The surf fishing course was a cooperative effort between the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. Refuge Manager John D. Schroer stated, I am pleased by the response of the participants to the surf fishing course and for the spirit of cooperation between the two agencies that allowed this event to be such a success. "Schroer went on to say, "Refuge volunteers also played a big role in assisting these young people with their surf fishing techniques".

For those of you who may have missed the fun, mark the first week of June on next year's calendar so you can join in and catch your own smile.

Jill VanScoyoc - CNWR