

[From Summer 1998]

Despite Rain, the Celebration Soars

In spite of the inclement weather, the 4th Annual International Migratory Bird Celebration was a great success, according to Chincoteague Refuge Manager John D. Schroer. "Thanks to a lot of hard work by sponsors, refuge staff, and volunteers up and down the Shore, this year's celebration was the most successful yet," said Schroer.

The event commenced on Friday night, May 8, with over 200 people attending a reception hosted by The Chincoteague Center and the Oyster and Maritime Museum. Attendees enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and presentations by Wilhelm Goebel, Eldon Greij, and Jim Clark. Mr. Goebel, the artist for the 1995-1996 Federal Duck Stamp, talked about the history of the Federal Stamp. Eldon Greij, editor of the popular birding magazine *Birder's World*, presented a slide program on the spring migrants of Chincoteague. Jim Clark, Chief of Wildlife Training at the Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center, presented three inspirational slide programs entitled, "Portraits of Nature," "Highland Overture," and "A Gift of Winter."

Forty-two runners participated in the 5K Race/Walk on Saturday morning. The overall winners took home a decoy carved by Chincoteague Carver Cork McGee. Refuge Manager Schroer presented \$601.00 (proceeds from the race registration) to the Eastern Shore Special Olympics. The decoys, medallions, and T-shirts were donated by Conectiv and escort service was provided by the Town of Chincoteague Police Department.

Saturday and Sunday activities on Chincoteague Refuge were well-attended in spite of the rainy, cool weather. Thanks to the Navy, who provided a large tent, most of the activities were under cover. During Saturday and Sunday, over 1000 people participated in a variety of family-oriented activities including face painting, making shell critters, bird pins, bird puppets, and Junior Birder and Refuge Manager programs.

Forty children constructed wooden bird feeders. The children also made 140 pine cone feeders. One hundred sixty cedar bird houses were also made and carried home for placement in time for spring nesting. Fifty-seven children painted decoys, which were provided and supervised by the Chincoteague Decoy Carvers Association. Under the direction of Betsy Schroer, the Chincoteague High School Biology Class designed a children's activity booklet that emphasized the protection of the ocean.

Schroer said the Assateague Island National Seashore staff at Toms Cove reported their beach and bird walks were well-attended in spite of the nasty weather. The U. S. Coast Guard allowed 609 people to climb the Assateague Lighthouse which was open on Saturday and Sunday for the celebration. The five refuge auditorium programs, which were presented by Eldon Greij, Jim Clark, and shorebird expert Paul Smith, were attended by a total of 225 people. Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge provided videos in

their Visitor Center auditorium and over 30 people constructed bird houses for their yards. Other participants included The Nature Conservancy and Kiptopeke State Park.

Schroer attributed the successful celebration to hard work by a great number of people. In addition to Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, the celebration was sponsored by Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, Assateague Island National Seashore, U. S. Coast Guard, Kiptopeke State Park, The Nature Conservancy, Chincoteague Natural History Association, Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce, The Chincoteague Center, Conectiv, Pepsi, *Runner's World Magazine*, and Kalmbach Publishing (*Birder's World*).

Schroer emphasized that the great success of the celebration signifies the appreciation and interest people have in migratory birds and their protection and exemplifies the important role the Eastern Shore plays in the life history of these treasured resources. Schroer said plans are underway for the 5th Migratory Bird Celebration which will be held on May 7-9, 1999.

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