

[From Summer 1999]

Notes From the Point

Spring 1999 has been very busy at the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge. Here are some of the highlights:

- > A Marine Mammal/Sea Turtle stranding workshop was conducted at the refuge and was attended by staff and representatives of area agencies. The Eastern Shore is a primary area in Virginia where strandings occur. Participants learned guidelines, procedures, and identification of the areas whales, dolphins, seals, and turtles.
- > Since the workshop, staff (and cooperating agencies) have responded to 2 Harbor seals, 1 Striped Dolphin, 1 Bottlenose dolphin, 2 Loggerhead Sea Turtles, and 1 Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle strandings. Refuge personnel are also on the lookout for sea turtle strandings. June usually is the peak month of strandings.
- > KESTREL staff and refuge volunteer Jamie Cameron concluded his spring migratory bird survey on May 31. In addition to daily counts atop Winslow bunker, he banded songbirds on Saturdays and presented educational programs to visitors and school children. The study should continue next year and will provide valuable information on the importance of the lower peninsula to spring migrants.
- > Wildlife response and rehabilitation was at a peak during the spring. The staff responded to many calls from concerned citizens regarding injured and young animals. Of special note:
 - * A male Great Horned Owl was taken to Tuckahoe State Park in Maryland. He will be included in the Scales and Tails educational program led by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The owl had been struck by a vehicle along Route 13 and became blind in both eyes.
 - * A female Canada Goose was taken to a Virginia Beach wildlife rehabilitator for veterinary care and TLC. She had been attacked on her nest by a predator. She lost an eye and suffered a broken foot, but is recovering.
 - * A female Least Bittern got lost on her migration this spring. She was found by Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) staff at the entrance to one of the tunnels. Besides being a little confused, she suffered no injuries and was released in the area.
 - * And finally, the CBBT staff came to the aid of an Osprey that had been hit by a vehicle on the bridge. The young male bird had suffered a head injury and was very dazed. After receiving veterinary care, he was taken to the Salisbury Zoo where he was fed and taken

care of until he recovered. A few weeks after his accident, he was banded, released, and never looked back.

> Other interesting wildlife notes for this spring include:

* A male Painted Bunting was spotted

* Daily sightings (since May 16) of Mississippi Kites over Winslow Bunker

* A White Pelican visiting the Visitor Center Pond and frequently seen on Fisherman Island during bird surveys

* Wood Ducks in the Visitor Center Pond

* Black-necked Stilts

* Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and Carolina Chickadees nesting around the refuge

* Brown Pelicans and Royal Terns sitting on eggs/young on Fisherman Island

* Peregrine Falcons have 4 eggs in their nest at the hacking tower on Fisherman Island

* A few sightings of coyotes

* Black Rat, Black Racer, Eastern Hognose, and King snakes were found

> Refuge staff has been in the midst of environmental education. Daily EE programs have been conducted since early May and will finish in mid-June. After this period, all Northampton county students between grades Pre-Kindergarten and 6th grade (approximately 1000 students) will have visited the refuge and attended an EE program.

> Many other EE and special programs were presented this spring. School children from other areas of the state, senior citizen groups, and special interest groups were given special programs about the area and its wildlife.

> On May 8, ESVNWR held its first International Migratory Bird Celebration. It was very well attended and enjoyed by visitors from the Eastern Shore and the Hampton Roads area. (See article pertaining to the celebration on page 2.)

> Memorial Day weekend was the kickoff for the summer season. Over 600 people visited the refuge Visitor Center and walked its trails.

Each year an increase in visitation has occurred as more people are finding our gem of a refuge at the Point.

Sheila Faith, Outdoor Recreation Planner

