

[From Fall 2001]

Refuge Visitation Skyrockets

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge experienced the highest visitation days of the year in July, as beach parking lots were filled to capacity eight times during the month of July and 2 times in August, with beach-goers waiting in line for a parking space. During the fourth of July holiday alone, refuge staff estimated between 45,000-50,000 visitors.

However, visitation has not been limited to holiday weekends. For example, the month of June saw 9,000 more visitors than the previous June with 168,000 people entering the refuge. In July refuge visitation rose to 294,000 from 277,000 last year, an increase of 17,000 people. According to Outdoor Recreation Planner, Jill Van Scoyoc, attendance for interpretive programs is above last year's total as well, averaging 200 more people on walks during the months of June and July.

August visitation was heavy as well. Refuge fee collectors have certainly felt the increase working in the fee booths, as traffic backups have occurred. Refuge staff and volunteers have also worked hard in the Visitor Center answering the same questions over and over and ringing up book sales. After Labor Day, they had a chance to catch their breath and begin to prepare for the busy fall season. Congratulations go out to everyone who contributed to a successful summer season at the refuge!

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