

[From Fall 2001]

Happenings at the Point

Fall season is upon us and the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge is once again gearing up for the masses of migratory songbirds and birds of prey to arrive. Already small flocks of Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and Stilt Sandpipers are being seen in the Visitor Center pond. Other migratory species, such as Glossy Ibis and Swallows, are being seen in the area.

As we prepare for our fall visitors, the refuge and the lower peninsula are offering opportunities for the public to witness this incredible migratory feat. Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory is banding and counting birds at Kiptopeke State Park. This annual banding operation has been going on for years and is an excellent opportunity to witness birds up close. Most banding is done early in the morning when birds are more active. Reese Lukei, refuge volunteer and a College of William and Mary researcher, will once again be banding raptors on the refuge this fall. The College of William and Mary is also conducting songbird foraging studies on the lower shore. These studies will assist land managers in providing a good food base for these fall transients.

Opportunities for the public to experience the fall migration include the 9th Annual Eastern Shore Birding Festival on October 5, 6, and 7. The main festival grounds will once again be held at the Best Western Sunset Beach resort with various trips and activities for the whole family to enjoy. The refuge staff will be very busy that weekend leading trips, staffing the Visitor Center, and making bird houses, buttons, and leading other fun filled activities for children. For more information, contact the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce at (757) 787-2460 or at www.intercom.net/npo/esvabirding . If you can not make it to the area for the festival, you may want to sign up for a Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuge guided walk on a Saturday (some Saturdays may not be available) from October through mid-March. These tours are approximately 3 hours in length and allow visitors to experience the beauty of Fisherman Island. Call the refuge at (757) 331-2760 to schedule tours. Fisherman Island Beach cleanups are being held on Saturday, September 29, 2001 and Saturday, March 23, 2002. Reservations to assist are required, so please call me at the refuge to sign up.

If you are a teacher trying to present information to meet the Standards of Learning (SOL) or a scout leader whose group needs a little help in meeting the requirements for a badge, you should call the refuge to schedule an environmental education program. Our E.E. programs are geared to help the educator reach certain SOLs and badge requirements. If you would like a special program or presentation, please call the refuge and talk to Nancy Biegel.

If you would like to help the refuge and wildlife, the refuge is always looking for volunteers. Volunteers can provide a variety of help especially by operating the Visitor Center and working in the butterfly garden. If you are interested, please contact me at the refuge or sheilafaith@fws.gov .

Sheila Faith, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge