

[From Fall 2002]

Summer Visitation Soars

Despite the summer heat and drought, visitation at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge increased dramatically. Refuge staff, interns, and volunteers have felt the impact of heavy visitation, being kept busy welcoming visitors, answering questions, collecting entrance fees, and presenting programs.

In June, visitation reached a high of 223,396 - an increase of over 56,000 visitors from June 2001. Fourth of July weekend was one of the busiest weekends on record, with parking lot closures four consecutive days lasting up to 3 hours or more. July's visitation increased by 39,000 people for a total of 333,851. August's visitation was almost equally as high, with the total close to 330,000 - a gain of 63,000 visitors from August 2001.

All in all, it's been a great summer! Visitors have been wonderful and appreciative of the work we do. There have been minimal complaints and fewer ambulance calls and accidents on the refuge, compared to last year. Why is visitation up this year? Could it be a result of 9/11 - people staying closer to home and traveling by car instead of flying to their destination? Weather? No one knows for sure, but what we do know is that it's been an extremely busy summer at Chincoteague Refuge.

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