

[From Fall 2003]

Weather Has Big Impact on Summer Visitation

The inclement weather this spring and summer, with 14 consecutive rainy weeks, took a toll on refuge visitation this year. In June alone, visitation dropped 46,000 from last year for a June total of 176,710.

While July visitation also saw a decrease of 25,000 compared to July of last year, July 4th of this year proved to be the busiest day on record for the refuge. It was an incredible day with perfect summer temperatures and sun! Can you imagine working in the fee booths that day and not being able to see the end of the line of traffic over the Assateague Bridge for hours? What a day! Rumor had it that traffic was backed up all the way to Main Street as well. Traffic backups started at 9:30 am and continued up to four hours at the fee booths. Beach Parking lots were full by 11:00 am on July 4th and 5th and lasted for three hours each day. Anyhow, we made it through the holiday weekend with flying colors! Visitors were patient and kind. Very few people turned around in the line going to the beach.

Visitation in August was another story, increasing during the month by 7.5% over 2002 for an August total of 337,328.

It just goes to show that weather can have a big impact on refuge visitation with vacationers tending to wait until August for better weather and to get that last fling in before school starts.

Sally Bowden
Park Ranger