

[From Fall 2006]

## **Youth Conservation Corps Summer 2006 Accomplishments**

The 2006 Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) finished up a very successful summer on August 18, 2006. The camp began on June 26, 2006, consisting of six enrollees: Rebecca Turner, Tyler Campbell, Adam Jump, Elizabeth Simko, Wilson Smith, and Kaitlyn Lacaillade. These six enrollees were recruited from the local area to participate in this eight week camp. The camp was headed by Refuge Operations Specialist, Geralyn Mireles, who coordinated the program with Chris Wentworth serving as their group leader. This summer the YCC crew completed many projects to benefit wildlife, the habitat and visitors. The crew spent much time and effort maintaining refuge trails to enhance the visitor's experiences. Crosswalks and signs were cleaned and repainted, brush was cleared away from informative signs, and low-hanging limbs were removed from bike trails to increase visibility.

Another YCC project was the removal of old sand fencing on the beach dunes. Posts were removed from the beach area as well as any parts of the wire. The fence had become exposed as the dunes progressively moved back and had become a possible safety risk to people walking on the beach. Any fencing still supporting the dunes was left alone at this time. The YCC crew also repaired and replaced the pony fence on the North Wash Flats. This fence is essential, as it protects the habitat of the piping plover and other nesting shorebirds on the North Wash Flats.

The primary accomplishments were the cleaning and preserving of two wooden decks and constructing and replacing several wood duck and Delmarva Peninsula Fox squirrel boxes on the refuge. The decks were located on the back of the Big House and the HHBEAC Building. The decks were first power washed to remove any mold and loose splinters before being sealed to protect them against the weather. The enrollees constructed 30 squirrel boxes and 15 wood duck boxes out of cedar wood. Chincoteague Refuge Volunteer Carl Palmer eagerly guided and helped the enrollees in the construction of these boxes. After the boxes were constructed, the YCC set out to repair or replace several nest boxes around the refuge.

Throughout the hot and buggy times they encountered this summer, the enrollees stayed focused and worked extremely hard to assist the entire refuge staff complete many badly needed tasks. The crew was able to lend a hand whenever necessary with smaller projects such as cleaning and organizing work areas, removing netting that had washed up during storms and helping remove part of the old boat pier.

Most importantly, the enrollees learned valuable skills such as working in teams, as well the importance of conserving our wildlife and natural resources.