

[From Fall 2008]

## **Everywhere a Vine**

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge is home to many species of vines and most of these plants are major sources of food for wildlife. During the summer months, with its large, bright orange-red flowers, the Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis radicans*) is easily noticed by visitors as it climbs up and over tall trees and small shrubs. This accounts for the many questions from visitors about this vine. The trumpet creeper is a deciduous plant, losing its leaves in winter. It grows to 40 feet in length, intertwining with the branches of surrounding vegetation. The leaves are green, about 2 1/2" in length, and there are usually 7 to 11 of them on each stem. The 3 1/2 inch funnel-like flowers open into a trumpet shape at the end, thus its name. The flowers are a major source of food for hummingbirds, particularly the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird. In addition, bees, ants, and other insects are attracted to these flowers.

The Trumpet creeper is also known as "cow-itch", as the foliage is noxious to cattle and other herbivores. Most animals avoid it. Even people should use caution when handling this vine as some may develop a rash. So the next time you visit the refuge, look around the trails and you may see this beautiful and interesting plant but just look, don't touch. See you soon.

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