

[From Winter 2000 - 2001]

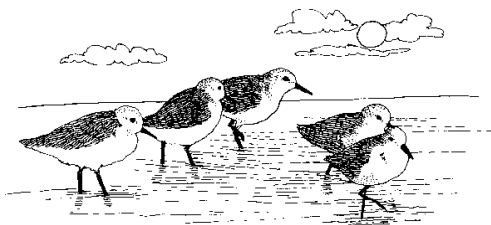
## Chincoteague Refuge "Branches Out"

This fall, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (CNWR) reached out to the local community and was received with open arms. In an effort to further enhance its partnership with the schools of Accomack County, Chincoteague NWR offered fall Environmental Education Outreach programs on a variety of refuge-related topics.

By meeting with teachers and principals face-to-face, refuge staff brought the image and mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the forefront of many county educators' minds. Surprisingly, many local teachers did not realize that Chincoteague Refuge was a resource they could turn to for help in accomplishing their environmental educational goals.

As a result of this outreach effort, 57 programs were scheduled from October 6 through December 14, reaching more than 1,200 students in eight different elementary and middle schools throughout the county. Several field trips were even scheduled as a direct result of this outreach endeavor.

Public Use Interns Cindy Goddard and Shannon Farrell assisted me in offering seven different programs, each geared toward a specific grade level and Standard of Learning requirement set by the state of Virginia. Topics included: habitat requirements and the habitats of CNWR; animal adaptation; waterfowl; and the diversity of wildlife of Chincoteague NWR.



Additional programs were conducted for special occasions such as a bat program for Halloween at Chincoteague Elementary's After School Program, and a recycling program on National Recycling Day for Chincoteague Elementary's Conservation Club.

Chincoteague NWR plans to foster its relationship with the local schools by conducting teacher training workshops and continuing to offer curriculum-based programs in the spring. As the saying goes, "A little effort can go a long way." And that statement certainly rang true this fall. Our staff branched out to educate local youth about the resources right in their backyard and to enlighten local educators that Chincoteague NWR is there for them to use as an educational tool.

Alison McGuire  
Recreation Assistant