

[From Winter 2000 - 2001]

Voices of the Night

Although no goblins or ghosts emerged from the darkness during Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge's Trick or Treasure Halloween Walks, Maddie the Weather Witch and a ghost crab appeared to tell stories about the cultural and natural history of Assateague Island. They were joined by the Lighthouse Keeper, who told more tales about the island's legends and lore, as well as poison ivy, a horse, mosquito, bat, dinoflagellate, black widow spider and a wise old owl, who further discussed this barrier island's biodiversity and natural history.

The pirate and approximately 300 visitors who accompanied her on the treasure hunt began the evening searching for silver and gold, but after meeting the cast from Assateague's nightlife and listening to the words of the wise old owl, the treasure hunters discovered that Assateague Island and its nightlife are the real treasure. Every plant and animal, and their interdependence on one another, form the beauty and riches of this special place. It is the cultural and natural wonders of Assateague Island that make it a priceless gem.

In addition to the walks' tremendous attendance, another measure of success was the coordination between Refuge and Assateague Island National Seashore staff. The two sister agencies not only jointly developed the walk, but assumed different character roles. For example, Ranger Gretchen Knapp led the group as a pirate and Ranger Ginger Birch played the part of the ghost crab.

Refuge volunteers also played a major role in making the walk a hit. Many thanks go to Tom Mahoney, who did an Academy Award winning performance as the Lighthouse Keeper and his wife, Thanh, who provided extra special touches with make-up. Jean Loeffert was the creative energy behind the owl, bat, mosquito, and horse costumes, while Shuli Tor rose to the challenge of portraying a dinoflagellate, as well as designing her appropriately sparkling costume. Nancy Schmidt provided set-up assistance on Sunday, and Bob and Carole Marz are to be commended for acting the parts of safety patrol and Assateague Villager, as well as serving refreshments to the parched and hungry treasure seekers.

And what, you might ask, was the magical brew for this walk? A pinch of hard work, a dash of hope, stiffed well with fun and enthusiasm - resulting in a potion full of the wonders of Assateague Island neatly mixed with the Refuge mission.

Congratulations and thanks to all who added their special touches of time and talent.

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