

[From Winter 2003-04]

## **Excellence in Education**

Even though the Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center (BEAC) is now complete, staff at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge are still working to improve its environmental education department. The refuge was recently rewarded a \$25,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to further enhance the refuge's educational endeavors. The grant money was matched by funds and in-kind services from the Chincoteague Natural History Association and other volunteer and educational groups.

The project includes equipping the classroom and teacher resource room in the BEAC with library resources, laboratory equipment, educational materials, and audiovisual provisions. In addition, the Environmental Education Trail (open only to organized educational groups) will be outfitted with educational signs to reflect the themes highlighted in the exhibit area of the BEAC. An outdoor laboratory and learning stations will be created and placed on the trail as well. The completion of this project will fulfill the refuge's vision of providing an exemplary and meaningful learning experience.

In the one month since the BEAC's opening, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge has made over 600 educational contacts through guided educational programs and teacher workshops. The look of awe and excitement on the faces of the students and teachers as they walk through the BEAC is the refuge's incentive to continue to strive for excellence and professionalism in creating a comprehensive educational program. This project will afford teachers and students alike an all-inclusive package to learn, experience, and ultimately appreciate the natural resources of an Eastern Shore barrier island ecosystem.