

[From Winter 2004-2005]

## **Farewell and Thanks!**

I arrived, as the new Refuge Manager of the Chincoteague NWR, sixteen years ago to find a well organized and well-managed cooperating association already in place. That association was your organization, the Chincoteague Natural History Association (CNHA). I retire on December 31, 2004, leaving a very well-organized and well-managed cooperating association in place. This fact is a testament to the great leadership which your CNHA has had over the years. Although many of the faces of your Officers and Board Members have changed, the high quality of service to both the Chincoteague and Eastern Shore of Virginia refuges has not.

Since your organization was established in 1986 growth has definitely occurred - growth for which every member should be extremely proud. You took a chance and sponsored a teddy bear to help the National Wildlife Refuge System celebrate the Centennial. By being generous and loaning your resources, you helped other cooperating associations, as far away as South Georgia, get started. You took the Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR under your wing. You sponsored a video to promote the Chincoteague Refuge and also have funded a soon-to-be-published, wonderful book about this refuge. You took over a Wildlife Tour, so that thousands of people each year could experience the northern part of the refuge and learn more about the important natural resources here. You have taken on the monumental task of providing our visitors the opportunity to view the refuge from the top of the historic Assateague Lighthouse and of maintaining that structure. You have also branched out by funding biological projects. Thank you for all of these accomplishments and the many others which I haven't mentioned.

Your organization has also been very generous, over the years, to the Chincoteague Refuge. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, federal funds were scarce for visitor service related activities. The granting of annual "Wish Lists" enabled the refuge to provide the visiting public with outstanding service, from fun filled celebrations to environmental education opportunities. Your association was able to contribute over \$100,000 to the Bateman Center project, as well as successfully promoting the need for the center on Capitol Hill.

As Refuge Manager, I have been very proud to be associated with the CNHA. I am very pleased with the amount of donated time and effort which your Board members devote to making success assured. I was thrilled that your organization was honored as the Friends Group of the Year, a well deserved award. I will always cherish the friendships which I have made with members of the CNHA. Thanks for the many fond memories and for your continued support of the Chincoteague and Eastern Shore of Virginia NWRs and the entire National Wildlife Refuge System.

John Schroer Refuge Manager, CNWR