

[From Winter 1993 - 1994]

50th Celebration a BIG Success Equals Big Thanks to the CNHA

In 1941, the Migratory Bird Commissioners recommended the establishment of the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, which became a reality in 1943. What they probably did not realize was that they initiated one of the greatest refuges in the system. In terms of the value to many wildlife species, and in providing the public with the opportunity to enjoy the wildlife and wildlands, the Chincoteague Refuge ranks among the top. The year 1993 has come and gone but not the memories of a year of celebrating the 50th anniversary of this great refuge. The celebration, which kicked off last April during the Decoy Festival and continued throughout the year, climaxing on November 13 with a grand finale, was a huge success in every way. The Chincoteague Natural History Association was a key player in this celebration from the very beginning. In November 1992, the CNHA was more than receptive to the idea of helping to sponsor portions of the 50th celebration.

In order to help promote this event, the CNHA began selling special 50th edition T-shirts, sweatshirts and patches. These items were a huge success in promoting 1993 as a special year for the refuge. As additional promotion, and to help involve the youth of the area in the celebration, the CNHA and the refuge co-sponsored an art contest with the theme being the refuge's 50th. Again, a smashing success as nearly 200 entries were received. The Association continued the support by covering the expenses associated with the printing of both the invitations and posters; the result was that over 500 people participated in the events on November 13.



For those readers of the *Piping Plover* who may have missed this event, a short recap of the activities is in order. On Saturday, November 13, the Chincoteague Refuge held a celebration to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the refuge. The celebration, including many special activities, was well attended and considered a major success. Guests in attendance were from the local community and more distant areas. Of special note were guests such as former Fish and Wildlife Service Director, John Gottschalk, former refuge managers Jacob Valentine and Dennis Holland, and Judy Johnson, President of the Committee to Preserve Assateague. Guest speakers included Ken Smith, Deputy Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and Cathy Short, Deputy Regional Director.



Refuge Manager John Schroer accepts proclamation/plaque from Chincoteague Mayor Harry Thornton. Fish and Wildlife's Deputy Director Ken Smith (far left) and Congressman Herb Bateman demonstrate their approval.

Other speakers included Mayor Harry Thornton - who announced a proclamation of November 13, 1993, as Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge Day - Assateague Island National Seashore Superintendent Marc Koenings, and as the keynote

speaker, Congressman Herbert Bateman. The ceremony concluded with the unveiling of a beautiful plaque featuring a brass snow goose in relief and the inscription, "Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge 1943 - 1993, 50 Years of Managing for the Future."

Others participating in the ceremony were the United States Coast Guard and local boy scout and girl scout troops. One of the most well-received ceremonial events was the CNHA presentation of awards to twelve county students who were art contest winners.

Following the ceremony, the Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce provided an elaborate lunch. The refuge administrative staff served over seventy dozen cookies which were baked by the refuge staff and the Home Economics Department of the Chincoteague High School/ Middle School. Island Cruises, the refuge concessionaire, provided a three-tier cake to celebrate the event.

A variety of exhibits were displayed in the old lighthouse keeper's home and on the grounds. These included a display of over 70 historical refuge photographs of personnel and various aspects of refuge management. Exhibits were also provided by the Committee to Preserve Assateague, the Audubon Naturalist Society, Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce and the National Park Service. The Falcon Recovery Team had an exhibit which included a live peregrine falcon.

The U. S. Coast Guard, Group Eastern Shore, provided tours to the top of the Assateague Lighthouse. At least 500 visitors got a rare opportunity for a spectacular view of the refuge and nearby islands. Maggie O'Connell, Outdoor Recreation Planner, presented a slide show about the refuge's past 50 years.

The success of this ceremony would not have been possible without the assistance and generosity of the Chincoteague Natural History Association. On behalf of the entire refuge staff, we sincerely thank the CNHA for their great support this special year and in past years.

John Schroer
Refuge Manager