

[From Winter 1998-1999]

## **Refuge Hunt**

Fall at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge means different things to different people. Some people come to marvel at the spectacular number of waterfowl that migrate through the refuge during the season, and others come to hook a sizable striped bass in the surf. But one of the main attractions at the refuge during the fall and winter is the annual sika elk hunt.

Sika elk are not native to the United States. They were brought to this area from Asia in the early 1900s. In fact, a group of boy scouts introduced the elk to Assateague Island in the 1920s. To ensure that the sika do not out compete the native white tail deer, Chincoteague Refuge conducts a management hunt. This harvest of surplus animals is one tool used to manage wildlife populations at a level compatible with the environment, provide wholesome recreational opportunities, and permit the use of a valuable renewable resource. Sika have no natural predators on Assateague. Therefore, careful management ensures that the sika, white tail deer, and host of other wildlife and plants that live on or migrate through the refuge can co-exist without harming one another or the habitats upon which they all exist.



Contact the refuge for more information on refuge hunting or other wildlife-dependent public uses.

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