

Eastern Virginia Rivers National
Wildlife Refuge Complex
Rappahannock River Valley National
Wildlife Refuge
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August 2008



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Rappahannock River Valley

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



Magnolia Warbler
Clifford Otto

*Rappahannock
River Valley
National Wildlife
Refuge is the newest
of four refuges that
compose the Eastern
Virginia Rivers
National Wildlife
Refuge Complex.*



*This goose,
designed by J.N.
“Ding” Darling,
has become the
symbol of the
National Wildlife
Refuge System.*

Established in 1996, our goal is to protect 20,000 acres of important wetland and upland habitat along the river and its major tributaries. With help from our conservation partners, including Chesapeake Bay Foundation, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, and Fort A.P. Hill, we are well on our way toward achieving our land protection goal, which includes the purchase of conservation easements.



Catherine Markham

*Young bald eagle
in nest*

Wildlife and Habitat Management

Bald eagles nest and roost in significant numbers throughout the refuge boundary area. In fact, the state's largest wintering roost for bald eagles is located within the refuge boundary. The bald eagle was removed from the list of federally threatened species in August 2007, but remains a high priority for refuge management. The sensitive joint-vetch, a rare plant found only in freshwater tidal marshes, is the only confirmed federally listed species on the refuge.

Wilna pond



USFWS

*Right:
Le Conte's
sparrow
Far right:
Viceroy*



John Fox



John Fox

Shorebirds, neotropical migrant songbirds, raptors, and marsh birds rely on the Rappahannock River's corridors during the spring and fall migration periods. With help from partners and volunteers, refuge staff are restoring native grasslands and riparian forests along the river and tributary streams to provide additional habitat for these species. Focus species and species groups for management include bald eagles, forest-interior dwelling species such as wood thrush and scarlet tanager, and grassland nesting birds such as grasshopper sparrow and northern bobwhite.

*Wilna grassland
with flowers*



USFWS

Green tree frog

different management techniques to benefit grassland-nesting birds. We have studied three different techniques for taking a census of wintering grassland songbirds. We are now refining our inventories to also assess the effectiveness of habitat management activities and to determine the relative value of the refuge during fall migration and for pollinators.

Beginning in 2001, the refuge has taken a leadership role in controlling invasive stands of *Phragmites australis* (common reed) on both public and private lands along the entire tidal portion of the Rappahannock River. Using grants and matching private funds, we have been able to treat 120 different stands of *Phragmites* totaling over 250 acres. More than 200 private landowners have enrolled in the control program. In 2007, we began offering workshops to assist landowners in controlling other invasive species on their lands.

History

The Atlantic Flyway Council first proposed establishing a national wildlife refuge on the Rappahannock River in the early 1960s. However, it wasn't until the early 1990s that individuals, conservation organizations, and government agencies united to develop a plan for conserving the natural resources of the river for future generations. Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge was formally proposed in 1994, and the first tract was acquired in 1996.

Throughout its history, the Rappahannock River has nurtured native Americans, the earliest colonists, and Revolutionary War heroes. Today the river continues to sustain many of their direct descendants. Archeological and historic sites are abundant on both sides of the river. The 18th century





Rappahannock River Valley

National Wildlife Refuge

- Refuge Property
- Easement
- Highway
- Road

Miles
 0 0.45 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 4.5

Kilometers
 0 1 2 4 6 8 10

N



USFWS

Wilna pond levee

Bristol Iron Works was located adjacent to the refuge's Toby's Point Unit, while the Leedstown Resolves, a 1766 protest against the Stamp Act, was signed near the refuge's Mothershead Unit. Old pilings can still be seen from the days when steamboats made regular stops to pick up produce and passengers for transport to the Port of Baltimore.

Agriculture and forestry remain the predominant land uses and sources for the area's economy, as they have for centuries. Some still make their living on the river, crabbing and fishing, while wildlife recreation and tourism are becoming increasingly important economic engines for the region. As the refuge grows, it will make increasing contributions to the local culture and economy as we work with partners to conserve natural resources, improve water quality, and provide compatible, wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Gray fox



John Fox

*Headquarters
Wilna House*



USFWS

Visitor Services

While wildlife and habitat conservation come first on refuges, excellent wildlife observation, photography, fishing, environmental education, interpretation, and hunting opportunities can be enjoyed on several units of the refuge.

New visitor facilities were constructed on the Hutchinson Tract in Essex County in 2008. They include 2 miles of accessible wildlife viewing trails, fishing pier, and canoe launch. The Wilna Unit, located in Richmond County, is open to the public for visitation, seven days a week, sunrise to sunset. Also the location of the refuge headquarters, this site offers accessible fishing, excellent wildlife observation opportunities, and accessible nature trails.

Other refuge units are open for visitation on a reservation basis. Visit or contact the refuge headquarters for more information.

Volunteering

Volunteers and refuge friends play a critical role on national wildlife refuges and this refuge is no exception. Opportunities exist year-round for people to lend a helping hand in numerous areas of refuge management.

For more information on volunteering or the friends group, contact the refuge headquarters.

Guidelines

Help preserve the Rappahannock River and make your visit safe and enjoyable by following these guidelines.

Enjoy wildlife observation and photography throughout the year on marked trails at the Hutchinson Tract and Wilna Unit, and by reservation at other tracts.

Fishing

Permitted year-round on Wilna Pond and at Mt. Landing Creek (Hutchinson Tract). All Virginia boating laws and fishing regulations apply. At Wilna Pond, largemouth bass are catch and release only, and live minnows are prohibited as bait. Use of lead sinkers is prohibited at all fishing areas. Check with the refuge office about other fishing opportunities.

Environmental Education

Encouraged year-round at the Wilna Unit by reservation. Contact the refuge headquarters for details about educator-led activities, available supplies, and scheduling visits.

Hunting

Free roam/still hunting is available for archery and firearm hunters on designated refuge units. Contact the refuge headquarters for more information and to apply for a permit.

Firearms and other weapons

Prohibited on the refuge except during designated hunts.

Environmental Education Program



Diane Wheeler



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Newly hatched wood ducks

Pets

Must be kept on a leash.

*Plants,
Animals, and
Artifacts*

Disturbing or collecting is prohibited.

**Prohibited on
the refuge**

Swimming, camping, fires, horseback riding, and jogging or bicycling on trails designated for wildlife observation.



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*Below:
White-spotted
Slimy salamander*



David VanGeilder

*Northern
watersnake*



Stephanie Day

Getting There

From Tappahannock, Virginia, take US-360 E (across the Rappahannock River, toward Warsaw). Follow US-360 E for 4.1 miles, then turn LEFT onto Route 624/Newland Rd. Follow Newland Rd. for 4.2 miles, then turn LEFT onto Strangeway/Route 636. Follow Strangeway for 1/4 mile, and then turn RIGHT onto Sandy Lane/Route 640. Follow Sandy Lane for 1.1 miles, and then turn LEFT into Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge.