

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Eastern Neck is one of more than 430 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat and represents the most comprehensive wildlife resource management program in the world. Units of the system stretch across the United States from northern Alaska to the Florida Keys, and include small islands in the Caribbean and South Pacific. The character of the refuges is as diverse as the nation itself.

The Service also manages National Fish Hatcheries, and provides Federal leadership in habitat protection, fish and wildlife research, technical assistance and the conservation and protection of migratory birds, certain marine mammals and threatened and endangered species.

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Cover illustration by Mary Friel O'Connor

Eastern Neck

National Wildlife Refuge



**UNITED STATES
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

Maryland

Welcome

Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge, located at the mouth of the Chester River on the eastern side of the Chesapeake Bay in Kent County, Maryland, was established in December 1962. This island refuge contains 2,285 acres and is a major feeding and resting place for migratory and wintering waterfowl on Maryland's famed "Eastern Shore." The refuge is also home to two endangered species - the Delmarva fox squirrel and the southern bald eagle.

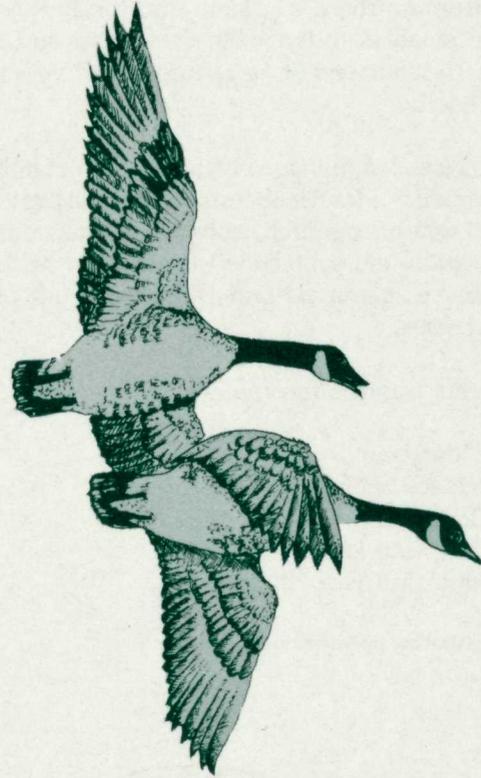
Settlers and Packet Ships...

Eastern Neck, strategically located at the confluence of river and bay, has a long and varied history. The island was among the first settled areas in the New World. Here Major Joseph Wickes obtained a grant of 800 acres in 1650 and built "Wickliffe," one of the finest mansions of the time. Packet ships built on the mainland to carry goods and passengers across the Chesapeake Bay made regular stops at Bogle's Wharf on the east side of the island from colonial days until 1924. Farming and waterfowl hunting were the most important land uses prior to the establishment of the refuge. The island was known as one of the best hunting grounds on the bay and was a favorite with gunning clubs.

Managing Forests and Ponds...

Active management on the refuge revolves around providing optimum year-round habitat for the Delmarva fox squirrel and migrating and wintering habitat for waterfowl, especially black ducks. Management for

the fox squirrel includes maintaining underbrush from hedgerows (usually by burning), running a cooperative farming program and keeping the deer population in check by administering an annual deer hunt. Management for waterfowl includes maintaining fresh-water ponds and several "green-tree" reservoirs, planting winter wheat and rye grass cover crops and maintaining wood duck nesting boxes scattered throughout the refuge.



A Stopover for Waterfowl...

The marshes, coves, ponds and abundant aquatic vegetation in the Chesapeake Bay and the Chester River made the island a natural waterfowl habitat through the years. Both diving and puddle ducks have historically used the area. Swans also concentrate around the island by the thousands. Canada geese can be readily observed during the fall and winter months, feeding in the food plots grown primarily for the Delmarva fox squirrel, or cleaning up leftover grain from refuge farming operations.



Wildlife Calendar

Most waterfowl begin arriving in early October. Their numbers reach a peak in November. Tundra swan, Canada geese, bufflehead, wigeon, pintail, mallard, black duck, canvasback, and scaup are the principal waterfowl using the refuge. The presence of sea ducks such as the oldsquaw and white-winged scoter makes the refuge more interesting. Most waterfowl leave the refuge by early April. Shorebirds, wading and marsh birds such as herons, egrets and rails, frequent the shores and marshes of the refuge all year.

The diversity of habitat, including the shoal waters, sand beaches, open fields, marshes, swamps, hedgerows, and woodlands provide for a variety of bird life. Upland game birds include bobwhite and mourning doves. Bald eagles and osprey nest on the island. Various woodpeckers, along with many songbirds, can be seen in the timbered areas and hedgerows.

Mammals are also an attraction on Eastern Neck. The most popular is the white-tailed deer which are regularly observed by refuge visitors. In order to prevent an overabundance of deer and to provide recreational hunting, the Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with the Maryland Wildlife Administration, conducts an annual hunt.

An Endangered Species...

The Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel is commonly observed on the refuge. Eastern Neck Island is one of the few remaining isolated habitats of these large squirrels. They often may be seen in hedgerows bordering roads on the island. Other mammals include the cottontail, raccoon, opossum, woodchuck, muskrat, and skunk.

Visitor Opportunities

Nearly six miles of roads and trails are open to visitors most of the year. The Ingleside Recreation Area on the northwest side of the refuge has facilities for crabbing and car-top boat launching from May 1 to September 30.

Bogle's Wharf landing is located on the east side of the refuge and offers trailered boat launching facilities (county permit required - not available at the refuge office).

Wildlife trails, a boardwalk and observation tower are available for those wishing to observe the refuge environment on foot.

To protect wildlife and habitat, certain restrictions are in effect on the refuge. Camping, off-road vehicles, fires and firearms (except under permit during the refuge hunting season) are prohibited. Pets must be on a hand-held leash. Other regulations may apply; contact the refuge office for any questions.

