

Mason Neck, Occoquan Bay and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuges are all managed under the Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge is located at  
14050 Dawson Beach Road  
Woodbridge, VA 22191  
Visitor Contact Station: 703/491 6869  
[potomacriverrefuges@fws.gov](mailto:potomacriverrefuges@fws.gov)  
[www.fws.gov/refuge/occoquan\\_bay/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/occoquan_bay/)

For further information, contact:  
Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex  
Headquarters Office  
12638 Darby Brooke Court  
Woodbridge, VA 22192  
703/490 4979  
E-mail: [fw5rw\\_msnwr@fws.gov](mailto:fw5rw_msnwr@fws.gov)  
Website: [www.fws.gov/occoquanbay/](http://www.fws.gov/occoquanbay/)

Federal Relay Service for the  
deaf and hard-of-hearing  
1 800/877 8339

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
1 800/344 WILD

September 2013



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Occoquan

## *National Wildlife Refuge*



*Twenty miles south of Washington, D.C., at the confluence of the Potomac and Occoquan rivers, Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge is an oasis where migrating birds and busy city residents both seek a quiet escape from development. Its diverse grasslands and marshes attract songbirds, raptors, waterfowl and butterflies that depend on meadows and open water for their food, nesting sites, and a place to rest. Visitors share this feeling of respite as they hike trails and watch wildlife drawn to the one-square mile refuge, a sanctuary in an urban setting.*

## Welcome



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



Bill Wallen

*Male Northern cardinal*

The Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge provides 642 acres of unparalleled habitat for migrating songbirds, raptors and waterfowl. The vast man-made meadows and freshwater tidal marshes play a vital role in preserving the diversity of plant and animal life in the heavily populated region of Northern Virginia. This unique landscape has been recognized as an Important Bird Area by the Audubon Society for its significance in providing essential habitat for birds.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge is one of more than 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a federal agency. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat for the continuing benefit of the American people. It represents the most comprehensive wildlife resource management program in the world.

The Service also manages national fish hatcheries and provides 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.

*December sunset*



Bill Wallen

## History

When John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, he found a well established Dogue Indian village at the Occoquan River's mouth. Floods, fire, and farming kept the vegetation low, creating meadows and open areas. The Army obtained the site in 1950 for a radio transmitting station, and fields of antennas replaced cows and crops. In the 1970's, the base's mission shifted to electromagnetic pulse testing. Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge was established in June 1989, to protect habitat for upland nesting birds, migrating wildlife, habitat diversity and environmental education. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continues to preserve these grasslands that have nurtured wildlife for so long.

## Visitor Opportunities

- *Wildlife and Habitat Viewing* - A network of roads from the site's military days forms the basis for trails and a wildlife drive. Approximately 4 miles of gravel roads are reserved for foot traffic only. The refuge also offers a 2-mile loop serving as a one way auto tour route. Public use rotates among the trails to permit a variety of wildlife observations while minimizing stress on nesting, migrating wildlife and to facilitate land management.
- *Interpretation* - Pay a visit to refuge volunteers at the Visitor Contact Station (open most weekends) to learn about the local wildlife, habitat, and upcoming events or programs. Use our interpretative kiosks and information booths to choose a

refuge trail or route to explore. Interpretive sites include a kiosk site outside the gate, the Main Parking Lot Pavilion featuring 6 interpretive panels, an interpretive trail featuring 10 small signs and several locations scattered throughout the refuge.

- *Environmental Education* - The refuge features several environmental education sites including two outdoor pavilions, a 2.7 acre pond with a dock and ramp, and a floating boardwalk in a freshwater marsh. Environmental education activities are primarily self-guided field trips exploring topics prepared by the teacher. Interested groups are required to obtain a Special Use Permit to gain refuge access for their program (refer to permit section).
- *Photography* - Wildlife photography is an increasingly popular activity. Visit the refuge photo blind situated on Marumscoc Creek or the observation platform at the intersection of Fox and Deephole Point Roads. Photography opportunities are boundless along all refuge roads and trails open to the public.
- *Hunting* - The refuge uses hunting as a tool to manage white-tailed deer populations at a healthy level compatible with planned habitat goals and objectives. Deer hunting is available by permit during designated periods and only in certain areas. Contact the refuge office for details.



# Occoquan Bay

National Wildlife  
Refuge



Legend	
	Parking
	Gazebo
	Environmental Education
	Vehicle Traffic Only (Bikes are vehicles.)
	Foot Traffic Only
	Vehicle & Foot Traffic
	Portalet
	Marsh

## Habitat Management

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge is a mosaic of habitats that benefit multiple species of flora and fauna in a relatively small area. The mix of grasslands, shrublands, wetlands, and wooded areas meet the needs of wildlife by providing breeding grounds, foraging areas, migration stopovers, and winter cover.

To maintain desired habitat diversity, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the refuge in various ways. Selective mowing and prescribed burns keep the vegetation as grasses and shrubs, which are attractive to birds and other wildlife. Removal or control of exotic, invasive plant species using physical or chemical methods ensures native species keep their role in the ecosystem. Hunting is used as a management tool and to provide quality wildlife-oriented recreation.

Habitat and wildlife management decisions on the refuge are supported by scientific-based research that considers the needs of wildlife and conditions of the ecosystem. Additionally, this knowledge enhances ways to provide wildlife related education and recreation for the American people.

*Mowing encroaching brush at Occoquan Bay*



USFWS

*White-tailed deer and red fox*



Tyler Reber

### Hours of Operation:

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge is open year-round, from 7AM - 5PM October 1- March 31 and 7AM-7PM from April 1 - September 30. Staff temporarily closes the refuge during managed deer hunts in December and January. Call the headquarters office or visit the website for scheduled closures.

### Safety:

Visitors may encounter ticks, bees, biting insects, and poison ivy while on the refuge. To minimize contact with poisonous plants and insects, please stay on the trails and avoid walking through tall grasses. Summers are hot and humid; sunscreen and drinking fluids are recommended. Use insect repellent and dress appropriately for the weather.

### Regulations:

Help staff ensure that wildlife has a place to grow and survive for future generations by respecting refuge rules and obeying posted signs.

*Great horned owl and chicks*



Bill Wallen

**Permitted  
Activities:**

- Visitors must stay on posted trails. Wetlands, fields, and forests are for wildlife only.
- Vehicles are allowed on posted roads and parking areas.
- Occupants must stay with their vehicles while touring the Wildlife Drive.
- Bicycles are considered vehicles and may only access the entry road and wildlife drive.

**Prohibited  
Activities:**

- Pets in or out of vehicles
- Picnicking, camping, and fires
- Fishing
- Jogging, in-line skating, and skateboarding
- Fireworks, kite flying or objects launched into the air
- Audio devices used to attract wildlife including electronic lures of any kind
- Disturbing, introducing, or removing plants and animals, living or dead
- Feeding wildlife
- Entry into closed areas
- Vehicles, including bikes, on foot trails

**Permits:**

The Service encourages adults and youth groups to use the refuge for wildlife dependent interpretive and educational programs but groups of 10 or more individuals must obtain a permit from the headquarters office. Group use of the refuge is regulated to minimize conflict with other visitors and avoid pressure on sensitive habitats. Permit applications must be mailed to the Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex Headquarters Office at least three weeks in advance. Visit the following site to obtain permit applications: <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/visitors/permits.html>

**Volunteers**

The refuge welcomes volunteers to help staff the visitor contact station, present programs, assist with biological projects, and perform maintenance duties in supporting the refuge. Some activities may have age and skill level requirements. Contact the volunteer coordinator for information.

*Monarch butterfly on thistle*



Cindy Kreticos

**Fees**

Fees collected at the refuge are used to improve public use services and facilities.

Daily Passes

Private Vehicle	\$2.00
Foot or Bicycle (Children 15 under admitted free)	\$1.00

Commercial Bus or Van:	Less than 20 people	\$20.00
	Over 20 people	\$30.00

Extended Passes

Occoquan Bay NWR Annual Pass	\$10.00
Federal Duck Stamp	\$15.00
Interagency Annual Pass	\$80.00
Senior Pass (US Citizens and residents 62 or older)	\$10.00
Access Pass (Disabled U.S. Citizens and residents)	FREE
Military Pass (Active military and dependents)	FREE