

Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Supawna Meadows

*National Wildlife
Refuge*





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

Overview

Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1974. The refuge is located in Pennsville, Salem County, New Jersey along the Delaware River estuary just north of the Salem River. Currently, the refuge contains 3,020 acres of important wildlife habitat, and the acquisition boundary encompasses approximately 4,500 acres.

In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Killcohook Migratory Bird Refuge along the Delaware River. For many years, the site was used by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to deposit dredge spoil. The dredge spoil built up on the site, which decreased Killcohook's value for wildlife, and spurned local conservationists to pursue purchase of adjacent lands to create a wildlife refuge with habitat value.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchased the first 653 acres of refuge land from the Philadelphia Conservationists (now known as Natural Lands Trust) in 1971. In 1974, the Service named the site Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge to make it distinct and separate from Killcohook. The Service exercised its secondary jurisdiction over the Killcohook Migratory Bird Refuge until it was revoked by Congress in October 1998. Killcohook is still used as a confined disposal facility by the Corps of Engineers.

The Delaware Bay and estuary is designated a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention. Coastal salt marsh habitats of the mid-upper Atlantic coast, including the Delaware Bay marshes and Supawna Meadows Refuge, have been identified by the Black Duck Joint Venture as the most

important habitat for wintering American black ducks. Pea Patch Island and the surrounding area, including the refuge, have been designated a Special Management Area by the States of New Jersey and Delaware in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act.



Refuge Wildlife and Habitat

Marsh

More than seventy percent of Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge (2,200 acres) is slightly brackish tidal marsh occurring along the upper Delaware Bay and the southern edge of Mannington Meadow. This unique habitat includes a mixture of fresh and saltwater plants and wildlife and is an important resting and feeding area for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wildlife. The extensive marshlands on the site are critical to the thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds that use the Atlantic Flyway.



Indigo bunting

Large numbers of waterfowl, particularly American black ducks, Northern pintail, and mallards use the marsh in winter. During the breeding season, the tidal marsh provides important foraging habitat for the more than 6,000 pairs of wading birds that nest on nearby Pea Patch Island (the largest wading bird rookery north of Florida). The marsh is also home to the bald eagle, which nests on the refuge. The quiet tidal waters serve as nurseries and spawning and feeding grounds for fish and shellfish, which are important in the diets of many wildlife species. Northern diamondback terrapins, snapping turtles, muskrats, and river otters rely on the refuge's habitat and food resources.



Gene Nieminen/USFWS

Forest



©Judy Oshipp

Almost 390 acres of upland forest and forested wetlands provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife on the refuge. Amphibians such as Southern leopard frogs, New Jersey chorus frogs, and spring peepers rely on ephemeral vernal pools for breeding habitat. The forest along the Forest Habitat Trail is considered one of the best examples of a high quality, healthy forest in southern New Jersey. Songbirds such as wood thrush, Baltimore oriole, and Eastern wood-pewee breed in this area. White-tailed deer are often seen as well.



Ken Casey

Grassland

The 80-acre grassland area is used by Northern harriers and American kestrels as they fly over the fields looking for small rodents to eat. Mammals, reptiles, and amphibians use the site throughout the year. The grassland provides important nesting habitat for the Northern diamondback terrapin, a species of special concern in New Jersey.

Remaining refuge habitat consists of approximately 240 acres of wetland and upland shrub habitat and 110 acres of open water. The shrub habitat supports a variety of birds including American woodcock, indigo bunting, and field sparrow.

Supawna Meadows

National Wildlife Refuge

Delaware
New Jersey

Pennsville

Xmas Tree Lane

Fort Mott Road

Hook Road



Forest Habitat Trail

Grassland Trail

Lighthouse Road

Delaware Bay

Goose Pond

Boat Trail

Salem River

Salem

Legend

-  Refuge Boundary
-  Closed Areas
-  Seasonal Closure
-  Trails
-  Refuge Headquarters
-  Finns Point Rear Range Light
-  Boat Ramp
-  Historic Cemetary
-  Parking
-  Wildlife Observation Platform

North





Heidi Hanlon/USFWS

Yellow-crowned Night-heron amid phragmites and pickerelweed

Invasive species

While a variety of habitats are available to wildlife on Supawna Meadows Refuge, much of the site is threatened by myriad non-native, invasive species. Generally, the unwanted invasive plants form a monoculture and crowd out the desirable native plants, which reduces ecological diversity. Known invaders include mile-a-minute, phragmites, Japanese honeysuckle, multiflora rose, autumn olive, Japanese stiltgrass, and Canada thistle.



Dave Menke/USFWS

Common muskrat

Refuge management targets the most serious threats to protect native habitat. However, the aggressive nature of invasive plants makes it difficult to stay ahead of this troubling situation. Phragmites is causing the most concern on the refuge. Management includes spraying the plant with herbicide and mowing or burning the dead stalks. The process continues over several years until native plants dominate the habitat.

Enjoying the Refuge



©Doug Wechsler

Northern spring peeper

Two hiking trails are available for wildlife observation on the refuge. The Forest Habitat Trail winds through a hardwood forest and scrub/shrub habitat and around a pond. The best time to walk this trail is in spring when you are likely to hear choruses of spring peepers and Southern leopard frogs and the beautiful flute-like song of the wood thrush. Wood duck and great blue heron are often seen in wet areas along the trail.

The Grassland Trail traverses a small patch of upland forest and extends through the grassland area. In winter you are likely to see a number of Northern harriers and American kestrels foraging over the field. Songbirds are present throughout summer. An observation platform constructed by refuge volunteers and the Friends of Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge overlooks a finger of tidal marsh.

A two-mile boat trail winds through refuge tidal marsh habitat. In spring and summer you are likely to see osprey carrying fish and working on their nests. Glossy ibis and muskrat are present and the bubbly gurgling call of the marsh wren and the harsh clacking of the clapper rail can be heard.

View of the marsh from the observation platform



©Judy Oshipp

Seasonal deer hunting and waterfowl hunting are allowed in designated areas of the refuge. Please contact refuge headquarters or go to the refuge website (<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nj/spm.htm>) for additional information, regulations and maps.

Important Information for Visitors

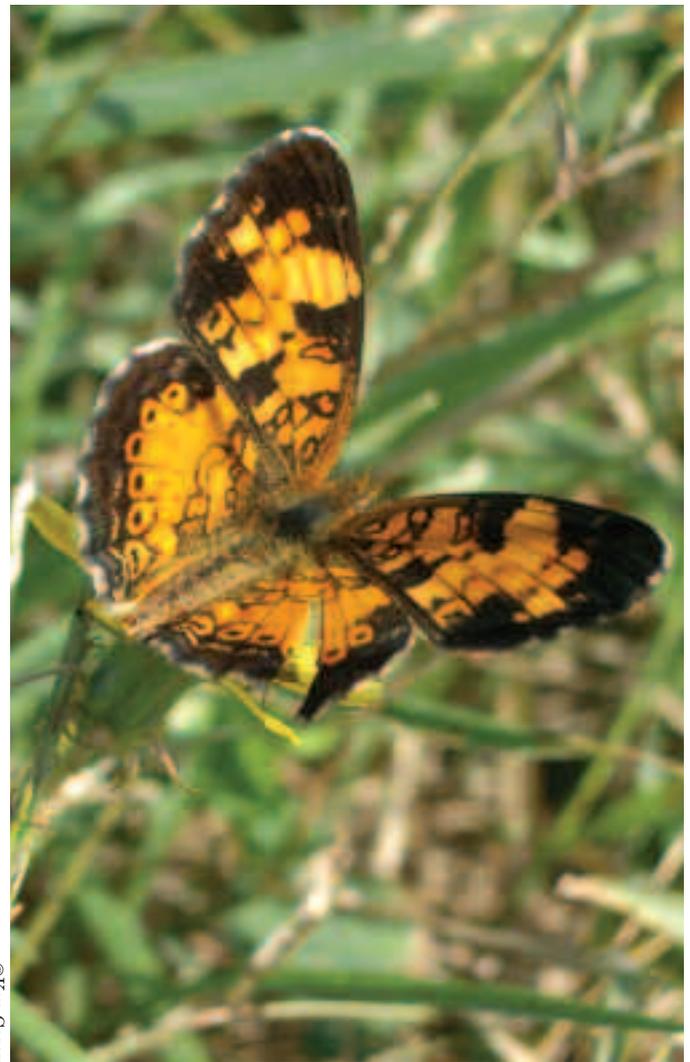
- The refuge is open daily from dawn to dusk.
- Pets must be on a short, hand-held leash.

The following are prohibited on the refuge:

- Use of motorized and nonmotorized vehicles
- Use of pack horses or horseback riding.
- Disturbing, injuring, destroying, or collecting plants, wildlife, or other natural objects
- Picking fruits or flowers
- Feeding wildlife
- Entering closed areas
- Camping or fires



Virginia Rettig/USFWS



©Ken Casey

Pearl crescent

Our Friends

The refuge is supported by the Friends of Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and an active group of volunteers. Individuals interested in finding out more should contact refuge headquarters.

This brochure was created with help from the Friends of Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.