



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Field Notes

*New Jersey Field Office*  
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An Activity Report of Field Operations



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## *From the Supervisor's Chair*

*Clifford G. Day, Supervisor, New Jersey Field Office*

*"The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."*

The theme of this Field Notes issue is "National Wildlife Refuges" (NWR). As federal land, NWRs are a federal trust resource responsibility.

One of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's (Service) major conservation priorities is to set the course for the future of America's National Wildlife Refuge System (System). This is quite a goal for a small agency, yet the Service manages the fourth largest land base in the federal government.

The System is the most extensive network of lands in the world that are managed specifically for plants and wildlife. These lands preserve our Nation's biological diversity. If compatible, many refuges provide hiking trails, observation areas, environmental education / interpretation, hunting and fishing, and other public use opportunities. In fact, the NWR System Improvement Act of 1997 provides guidelines and directives for administration and management of all areas in the System, especially wildlife-dependent recreation.

In 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt took the first step in developing our NWR System by establishing Florida's Pelican Island Bird Preserve. Our first refuge, a 3-acre island off Florida's coast, has expanded to include

538 refuges on nearly 94 million acres of prime wildlife habitat in all 50 States and U.S. Trust Territories. These lands are devoted to the comprehensive management of fish and wildlife resources. In 2003, the System will celebrate a century of conservation!

Five NWRs have been established in the State of New Jersey: Wallkill River, Great Swamp, Edwin B. Forsythe, Supawna Meadows, and Cape May. Currently, they comprise almost 70,000 acres; projected acquisition is approximately 100,000 acres. These refuges support valuable wildlife habitats and exhibit great natural diversity, including bottomland hardwood forests along the Wallkill River, glacial lake basin palustrine forested wetlands in Great Swamp, and salt marshes in the coastal refuges. Located on the Atlantic Flyway, these managed lands provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife, including forest-dwelling and grassland birds, migrating waterfowl, wintering raptors, endangered species, and species of special emphasis. Wilderness is a designation made by Congress under the Wilderness Act of 1964, and federally designated Wilderness Areas are contained within Forsythe (6,000 ac.) and Great Swamp (3,600 ac.).

Lands within the System are acquired under a variety of acts, administrative orders and directives. Land may be acquired using the Transfer of Certain Real Property for Wildlife Conservation Purposes Act of 1948, the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929, and especially via Land and Water Conservation Fund appropriations. Also, over the past 67 years, the *Federal Duck Stamp Program* raised over one-half billion dollars to purchase some 5 million acres of wetlands for inclusion in the System.

Our wildlife heritage contributes to the quality of our environment and is an important component of our Nation's history. Refuges help to sustain and safeguard this heritage. Visit a refuge and experience the great diversity of biota that make these wild lands so unique. If inspired, participate in the special events hosted by a NWR, contribute to the NWR Comprehensive Conservation Planning process, become actively involved as a Service volunteer, or join a Refuge Friends Group. Citizens can help ensure that refuge lands are being sufficiently protected by keeping informed and becoming involved in the public review process. In our system of governing by checks and balances, officials and regulatory agencies are accountable for their actions, such as achieving and maintaining federally approved State Water Quality Standards (SWQS) (N.J.A.C. 7:9B) under the auspices of the Clean Water Act. Unfortunately, even today several of the refuge watersheds in our State are still void of some of the protective measures that are afforded under SWQS.

The Service has referred to its refuge system as the front yard showcase of the agency — and it is! Last year NWRs throughout the country hosted some 35 million people; collectively, New Jersey NWRs reported 621,700 visitors. Great Swamp and Forsythe, the more established NWRs in the State, had about 375,000 and 200,000 visitors, respectively. With expanded visitor facilities, these and the other three refuges could host over one million annual visitors. On the following pages are articles and photographs about each of the State's five NWRs. Visit and enjoy our magnificent NWRs in New Jersey — and don't forget to purchase a Federal Duck Stamp!