



Monarch butterfly

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Eastern Shore of Virginia *National Wildlife Refuge*

Represented by Members of Congress:

Senator John W. Warner (R)
Senator George F. Allen (R)
Rep. Thelma Drake (R-2nd)

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The Eastern Shore of Virginia and Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuges are managed under the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge cluster.

Purpose

Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge was established to provide important habitat for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species and other native wildlife. Compatible wildlife-oriented recreational activities are encouraged.

Public Use Notes

- Interpretive visitor center
- Wildlife observation platform
- Spectacular observation of migratory birds that gather to cross the Chesapeake Bay
- Hunting for white-tailed deer
- Historic WWII-era bunkers

Management Activities

- Research into needs for improved stopover habitat for neotropical migrants
- Manipulate old fields for migratory birds, including control of exotic and invading plant species
- Protect and manage habitat for threatened and endangered species
- Restore and enhance native understory

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Highlights

Each fall, large numbers of migrating birds and monarch butterflies gather on the refuge until favorable weather permits crossing Chesapeake Bay.

Nearly 1,000 American woodcock winter on the refuge, increasing to as many as 5,000 during harsh winters.

The refuge's diverse habitats attract more than 300 species of birds.

Much of the refuge was formerly part of Fort John Custis (1940-1950) and the Cape Charles Air Force Station. The U.S. Air Force acquired the area in 1950 and occupied the site until 1984. Since then, most of the military buildings have been removed and replaced with grasses, shrubs and other vegetation to provide food and cover for wildlife.

The refuge encourages research and environmental education and is a partner with non-government organizations, state and federal agencies for high technology radar ornithology, reforestation projects and other cooperative habitat management.

A comprehensive conservation plan was completed in 2004 and includes a land protection plan for an expanded boundary totaling 6,032 acres.

Both the Eastern Shore of Virginia and Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuges have recently been designated as globally Important Bird Areas by the American Bird Conservancy.

Issues

Acquisition of Wise Point Corporation land raised issues about deep water access for both commercial and recreational users. Plans continue for a new boat ramp, dock and improved entrance road.

There is potential contamination from old military base usage and major adjacent waterway transportation lines.

A commercial communications tower is located in a migratory bird flight path.

