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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex
BLACKWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
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NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Friends of Blackwater to Hold 11th Annual Open House

The Friends of Blackwater will hold their 11th Annual Eagle's Nest Christmas Open House on Saturday, December 1, at the Blackwater NWR Visitor Center on Key Wallace Drive in Cambridge. This annual event offers early gift shopping opportunities for the nature lovers on your list. The day will begin with a Bird Walk led by Terry Allen of Easton, which will leave at 8 a.m. from the Visitor Center. Between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. there will be an extravaganza of shopping opportunities. As always, this year's event will feature a host of artists, artisans, and authors, as well as activities for the kids. In addition to shopping, visitors will be able to enjoy spectacular views of migratory waterfowl, birds of prey, and other wildlife from the Visitor Center's second floor Observatory or the Wildlife Drive, which will be open free-of-charge for this event. Ranger-led refuge tours will take place at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., and an Eagle Prowl with Zeeger de Wilde will leave at 11 a.m. (sign up in Visitor Center).

Kathy Boyle will be the featured carver at this year's Open House. Kathy is a regular exhibitor and winner at area carving competitions, and specializes in small, life-sized birds. Watercolorist Kurt Plinke, an art instructor at Chesapeake College, will be exhibiting his collection of nature paintings. Leatherwork artist Bob Beletsky will also be on hand displaying custom wallets, golf bags, and other items from his "Chesapeake Leatherworks" studio. Carol Sandberg from "Crystal Prints" will be present to show how family photos can be transferred to a variety of multimedia items. Finally, two of the finest local wildlife photographers, Mary Konchar and Sid Keiser, will have their works on display for your enjoyment and purchase.

One of the most popular gifts this year is sure to be the new book "*Chesapeake: Bay of Light*," and we will have author Tom Horton and photographer Ian Plant on hand to sign them! There will be plenty of copies of this new book on hand for purchase, along with Tom's earlier bestseller, "The Great Marsh." Both are must-have coffee table editions for Bay dwellers.

Children are not forgotten at the Open House! Richard Dorbin will hold a photography clinic for children at 10 a.m., which will kick off a Youth Photo Contest to celebrate Blackwater's 75th anniversary in 2008. Parents can pre-register their kids for this clinic by calling 410-228-2677. There will also be arts and crafts activities for the youngsters during the event.

Throughout the day free refreshments will be available to all. All of this is in addition to the wide variety of items for sale in the Eagles Nest Bookstore and Gift Shop, many of which have been brought in especially to celebrate the season. Take home a unique nature-oriented ornament from our “Wildlife Christmas Tree!”

Mark your calendar to attend the Eagle’s Nest Christmas Open House at Blackwater. It has been very popular over the years and this year should be no exception. Call 410-228-2677 or see www.friendofblackwater.org for more information.

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