

Mattamuskeet

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



photo: USFWS



photo: Eugene Hester

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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1934.
- Acres: 50,180.
- Other management responsibilities:
Swanquarter and Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuges.
Thirteen conservation easements in seven counties in eastern North Carolina totaling 362 acres.
Mattamuskeet Lodge (National Register of Historic Places).
- Location: the refuge is 9 miles east of Swan Quarter, NC by U.S. Highway 264 and U.S. Highway 94 in Hyde County.

Natural History

- Refuge's main feature is Lake Mattamuskeet (40,000 acres), North Carolina's largest natural lake.
- Significant wintering populations of ducks, Canada geese, snow geese and tundra swans. Also, concentrations of bald eagles and other raptors, wading birds and shorebirds occur seasonally.
- Significant fishery resources including largemouth bass, striped bass, sunfish (breem), white perch, crappie, alewives (herring) and blue crabs are associated with Lake Mattamuskeet and canals.
- Habitats consist of open water (40,000 acres), freshwater marsh (3,180 acres), forested wetlands (3500 acres), managed wetlands or impoundments (2600 acres), croplands (520 acres), and forested uplands/admin. lands (80 acres).

Financial Impact of Refuge:

- Staff: 12 permanent.
- 100,000 visits annually.
- Current budget (FY 05): \$1,816,000.

- Refuge visitors generate approximately \$1.0 million annually.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide habitat for migratory waterfowl and other birds.
- Provide habitat for endangered species such as bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and American alligators.
- Provide wildlife-related recreation and environmental education for the public.

Management Tools

- Water management for waterfowl, shorebirds and fisheries.
- Cooperative farming.
- Prescribed fire.
- Mechanical/chemical control of noxious plants.
- Deer management with public hunting.
- Education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities

- Trails.
- Auto route (Entrance Road and Wildlife Drive).
- Fishing.
- Crabbing.
- Two observation towers/decks.
- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Hunting for deer and waterfowl (waterfowl includes special youth hunts).
- Three boat ramps.

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Calendar of Events:

March-November: Mattamuskeet Lake open to fishing and boating.

May: Migratory Bird Day.

June: Nature Week with NC Extension Service.

September: September Canada goose hunts.

October: deer hunts, National Wildlife Refuge Week.

November: Mattamuskeet Fun Ride (bicycle event).

November-January: waterfowl hunts.

December: (first weekend) Swan Days (local wildlife/craft festival and refuge tours).

Questions and Answers

Where is the best place to see wildlife (birds)?

Mattamuskeet's Wildlife Drive is a 5-mile-long gravel road bordering the southern shore of Lake Mattamuskeet. A variety of mammals and birds can be seen along this drive, as well as along the 3-mile-long entrance road to the refuge headquarters. In addition, there is short nature trail near headquarters and miles of grassed dikes crisscrossing the entire refuge. In winter, thousands of waterfowl can be seen up close.

Another popular place for viewing is from the overlook on Highway 94. An interpretive panel and viewing scope are located on the overlook.

Where is the best place to fish?

Mattamuskeet Lake is a very shallow lake allowing only small boats access to approximately 40,000 acres of prime warmwater fishing. In addition to the lake, there are miles of canals available for bank fishing. Favorite species to catch are largemouth bass, white perch, crappie, sunfish, catfish and blue crabs. The lake is opened to fishing March 1 through November 1.

How do I get to hunt on the refuge?

Mattamuskeet hosts both a waterfowl and white-tailed deer hunt program. Only a limited number of permits are issued each year by lottery. The lottery is open to any properly licensed U.S. citizen. Contact the refuge in August or September to apply for these hunts.

What can I do here?

Mattamuskeet provides numerous opportunities for wildlife observation and fishing. Other activities available are hunting, photography, hiking, boating, canoeing and environmental education.

How do I pursue a career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Mattamuskeet has an active volunteer program, college internship program, and summer youth conservation program. In addition, 2-5 temporary positions are filled each year. For permanent professional positions, a college degree is usually required with a degree in wildlife management or biology.