

United States
Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BLACKWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
2145 Key Wallace Drive
Cambridge, MD 21613

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 15, 2008

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**Record Number of Eagles Sighted During
Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge's 2008 Mid-Winter Eagle Survey**

On Thursday January 10, 2008, the 29th official mid-winter eagle survey was conducted at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Dorchester County, Maryland. This survey is part of a national effort presently managed through the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Blackwater NWR has participated in this annual monitoring program to track wintering eagle population trends since 1980. Blackwater NWR's mid-winter survey is one of only three conducted in the state of Maryland. Personnel with Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Service are responsible for administering this project for the state of Maryland.

Despite the relatively mild weather conditions in early January, a record number of eagles were sighted during the morning portion of this two-part survey effort. A total of 145 eagles, consisting of 108 bald eagles, 1 golden eagle, and 36 unidentified eagles, were observed during the morning count. Comparatively, 130 eagles were observed during the evening roost count, including 120 bald eagles and 10 unidentified eagles. At least four additional golden eagles that were not detected as part of the official survey were observed by survey participants.

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Blackwater NWR's mid-winter survey has traditionally been accomplished through a collective effort of refuge staff and volunteers. In 2008, a combination of 27

volunteers and seven U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees contributed their time to help make this survey successful.

In addition to a record number of eagles, observers were given the opportunity to participate in the release of a rehabilitated adult bald eagle. In December 2007 the injured bald eagle had been transported from Blackwater NWR to Tri-state Bird Rescue & Research, Inc. in Newark, Delaware and treated for soft tissue damage. This eagle returned to the refuge on January 10, 2008, and was released with the help of Tri-state staff and refuge volunteers.

Despite being removed from the endangered species list in 2007; the wintering bald eagle population at Blackwater continues to increase steadily from that initial count in 1980 of 24 eagles. Efforts continue to protect bald eagle nest sites and communal roost sites at the refuge. The bald eagle is still a federally protected species under the Migratory Bird Act and the Bald Eagle Protection Act.

Good eagle viewing opportunities exist along Blackwater NWR's Wildlife Drive. Additional quality eagle viewing opportunities exist along the lower reaches of Maple Dam Road between the intersection of Key Wallace Drive and Shorter's Wharf. As always, visitors are reminded to obey closed area boundary signs and adhere to refuge regulations. For further information, please contact the Visitor Center at 410-228-2677. The Visitor Center is open every day except Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm week days and 9:00 am - 5:00 pm weekends. Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge is located about 10 miles south of U.S. Route 50 in Cambridge at 2145 Key Wallace Drive Cambridge, Maryland.

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