



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Assateague Island  
National Seashore

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## Assateague Island National Seashore

## News Release

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### **“Holiday in the National Parks” Celebrated at the White House**

#### **Assateague Island National Seashore Ornament Displayed on the Official White House Christmas Tree**

(Berlin, Maryland) – Assateague Island National Seashore galloped into the White House this holiday in the form of an ornament, prominently displayed on this year’s official White House Christmas Tree. The tree is the centerpiece of elaborate decorations celebrating the theme of “Holiday in the National Parks.”

Local artist M. Scott Oatman of Ocean City, Maryland, a National Park Service volunteer, painted the one-of-a-kind ornament. “When Mr. Oatman first offered to volunteer for the park, little did he know that this gesture would turn into a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that would take him to the White House,” said Rachelle Daigneault, Assateague’s Chief of Interpretation and Education. Oatman’s ornament showcases Assateague’s famous wild horses galloping endlessly through the surf. A pelican and great blue heron sweep the sky above, while a circlet of marsh grass and blue crabs trim the bottom of the ornament.

“Attempting to represent the beauty and grandeur of Assateague Island National Seashore on an eight inch Christmas tree ornament was at times daunting, but the sense of pride that comes from knowing my work is being displayed in the White House is indescribable. The artists’ reception at the White House exceeded all my expectations and seeing my work on the official White House Christmas tree in the Blue Room was both humbling and surreal,” said Oatman.

National Park Service Director Mary A. Bomar, expressed that selecting the National Park Service as the theme for the White House holiday decorations by the President and Mrs. Bush was an amazing honor. Director Bomar added that “Mrs. Bush is the best champion for our national parks, and the beautiful decorations in each state room showcase the natural and historical treasures found in parks throughout the country.”

The tree, located in the Blue Room, is adorned with handmade ornaments representing the country’s 391 National Park Service sites. “Each ornament on the magnificent 18-foot Fraser fir was designed by an artist selected by the park,” said Bomar. “The ornaments tell the stories of our parks, just as our parks tell the stories of our nation.”

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The holiday displays incorporate the wide variety of natural, cultural, and recreational features preserved by the National Park Service. Assateague's ornament shares space with icons such as Independence National Historical Park, and scenic vistas from the Grand Canyon to Shenandoah National Park. Holiday garlands intertwined with park objects including seashells, pine cones, and gold aspen leaves add to each room's festive feel.

"National Parks commemorate the people, places, and events that define the American experience," said Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne. "I am so appreciative of President Bush's efforts to recognize the important role of national parks in American society. Our country will celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016 and the President has been instrumental in establishing the National Park Centennial Initiative to prepare the parks for the next century."

For more information on Assateague Island National Seashore, visit [www.nps.gov/asis/](http://www.nps.gov/asis/).

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Assateague Island National Seashore (National Park Service) was authorized by act of Congress (Public Law 89-195) on September 21, 1965, to preserve the unique Mid-Atlantic coastal resources and natural ecosystem conditions and processes upon which they depend while providing high quality resource-compatible recreational opportunities. The authorized boundary includes approximately 48,700 acres of land and water in Maryland and Virginia. Located within an easy three hour drive of Washington D.C., Annapolis, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Norfolk-Hampton metropolitan areas, Assateague Island offers visitors an unspoiled setting to experience the ambiance of a dynamic barrier island with its legendary wild horses and a multitude of exceptional recreational opportunities.

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