

# Currituck

## National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



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### Refuge Facts

- Established: 1984.
- Acres: 4,110.
- Located in Currituck County, NC.
- Location: the refuge is located 3/4 of a mile north of Corolla, NC. NC Route 12 ends in Corolla. After the road ends proceed up the beach 3/4 of a mile to the first refuge tract.
- Refuge administered by Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge.
- Accessible only by boat or by 4-wheeled drive vehicle. There is no public road that provides access to this refuge.
- Comprehensive Conservation Plan completed in 2007.

### Natural History

- Refuge is found in the northern portion of Currituck Sound on an Outerbanks barrier island. Some tracts transition from the Atlantic Ocean to Currituck Sound which include sandy beaches, grassy dunes, maritime forests, shrub thickets, and fresh and brackish marshes.
- Concentrations of wading birds, shorebirds, waterfowl, and raptors with a variety of mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Piping plover and loggerhead sea turtles occasionally nest on the refuge.
- Wetlands      2,033 acres.
- Woodlands     778 acres.
- Brush           874 acres.
- Beach           418 acres.

### Financial Impact of Refuge

- 69,000 visitors annually.
- Administered by Mackay Island NWR with no assigned staff or budget.

### Refuge Goals

- Preserve, protect, and maintain healthy and viable populations of migratory birds, wildlife, fish, and plants, including federal and state endangered species and trust species.
- Restore, enhance, and maintain the natural processes and diversity of the beach, dune, interdunal, maritime forest, and marsh habitats to ensure optimum ecological productivity and protect the water quality of Currituck Sound.
- Provide the public with safe, high quality wildlife-dependent recreational and educational opportunities that focus on the wildlife and habitats of the refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- Protect refuge resources by limiting adverse impacts of human activities and development.
- Acquire and manage adequate funding, human resources, facilities, equipment, and infrastructure to accomplish the other refuge goals.

### Management Tools

- Water management for waterfowl.
- Prescribed fire.
- Mechanical control of noxious plants.
- Education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

### Public Use Opportunities

- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Hiking.
- Waterfowl Hunting.

### Calendar of Events

**November-January:** waterfowl hunting.

### Questions and Answers

*What recreational opportunities are there on Currituck NWR?*

Currituck Refuge does not have any developed public use facilities such as roads, trails, restrooms, or visitor contact station. The refuge is open daily, from sunrise to sunset, throughout the year. Hiking, wildlife observation, nature photography, and waterfowl hunting are the primary wildlife-dependent activities that may be enjoyed on the refuge. Vehicle access is limited to the Monkey Island Tract and the Swan Island Tract. A four-wheeled drive vehicle is necessary since the only access is on the beach. Traffic is restricted to the beachfront only. The rest of the refuge is accessed by foot only to help prevent damage to the fragile duneecosystem.

*How can people help Currituck National Wildlife Refuge?*

Mackay Island has a new support group called Friends of Mackay Island (<http://www.music-usa.org/mackay>). This group supports both Mackay Island and Currituck financially, as well as providing volunteers to do projects on the refuge. Because Mackay has a small staff (and Currituck has no staff), it's not easy to always coordinate projects for volunteers. Becoming active and supportive of Friends of Mackay Island is a great way to help the refuges.

*Are Corolla Wild Horses found on the refuge?*

The "Corolla Wild Horses" can be seen on the Outerbanks north of Corolla to the Virginia State line, which has been designated by a Currituck County ordinance as a Wild Horse Sanctuary. For the safety of the public and the horses, the ordinance also makes it unlawful for anyone to harm, approach, feed or kill any wild horse in the sanctuary. Wild horses are occasionally seen on the refuge and visitors are advised to view them from a distance.

The Fish and Wildlife Service considers the horses to be non-native, feral animals and not a natural component of the barrier island ecosystem. These animals compete with native wildlife species for food and fresh water. Their activities degrade and destroy habitat which negatively impacts native species. The Service actively manages critical habitat areas by erecting fences to keep the nuisance animals out and to prevent habitat damage.

*Why is ATV traffic restricted to the beach?*

The Currituck NWR was established to protect the dynamic and fragile character of coastal barrier islands. Access to the interior of the barrier island must be restricted to foot traffic due to the fragile nature of the dune ecosystem. ATV use in the dunes destroys dune vegetation. Without this vegetation, sand dunes become unstable and more susceptible to wind and wave damage. Established sand dunes provide defense against storms and protect the maritime forest and interdunal habitats from impacts.