

Massasoit

National Wildlife Refuge

Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Represented by the following Members of Congress:

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D)
Senator John F. Kerry (D)
Rep. William D. Delahunt (D-10th)

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This unstaffed refuge is part of the Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which has a FY 2006 budget of about \$2 million and a staff of 15.9 people.

Purpose

Massasoit National Wildlife Refuge was established to conserve fish and wildlife that are listed as endangered or threatened species.

Public Use Notes

- The refuge is closed to the public to protect the northern red-bellied cooter.

Management Activities

- Support research, manage and restore undisturbed habitat for the endangered northern red-bellied cooter.
- Work cooperatively with partners to protect northern red-bellied cooters through land acquisition, cooperative management, research and education.
- A 10-acre parcel that is critical to the recovery of the cooter was acquired in 2005.

Highlights

Refuge habitat includes one coastal pond (Crooked Pond) and pitch pine/scrub oak forest. The refuge also protects sandy, shrubby beach front along two other coastal ponds.

Researchers have released head-started turtles (hatchlings gathered from the wild in late summer and raised in captivity for 9 months) in suitable ponds since 1985.

Because northern red-bellied cooters do not reach sexual maturity for 13 to 15 years, the head-start program's success is unverified.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>

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Northern red-bellied cooters

USFWS

Issues

Since the refuge is located in a fast growing area, development and disturbance are constant threats to the turtle and its habitat.

Thinning of understory and developing a prescribed fire plan will reduce wildfire threats to neighbors, but could be controversial.

Regional and refuge staff have proposed an 8,015-acre expansion of the refuge to protect all the populations sites of the northern red-bellied cooter. The proposed expansion has not yet been approved.

