

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Mammals

*Chincoteague
National
Wildlife Refuge*



Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge provides homes for over 30 species of mammals. These animals are found in all of the refuge's various habitats, but it takes a cautious observer to notice many of them.

As you walk slowly along the trails, listen carefully and watch patiently. Remember that the refuge was established for the benefit of wildlife, and that you are visitors in their homes. Please stay on the designated trails and enjoy the animals from a distance.

*Keep the Wild in Wildlife!
Please do not feed the animals.*

Virginia Opossum
(*Didelphis virginiana*), Common.
The opossum is easily recognized by its pale face and scantily haired tail. This creature is the only marsupial found in North America. Commonly found in wooded areas, the opossum feeds on carrion, fruits, and berries.



Virginia opossum. Photo: USFWS.

Little Brown Bat
(*Myotis lucifugus*), Common. The little brown bat roosts in hollow trees and is seen generally at dusk and dawn feeding on insects.

Eastern Cottontail
(*Sylvilagus floridanus*), Common. The best known rabbit in North America, the Eastern cottontail prefers shrub and forested areas.

*Cover: Eastern cottontail rabbit.
Photo: Irene Hinke Sacilotto*

Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel



Red fox



Muskrat



Raccoon





Delmarva Peninsula Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger cenerus*), Uncommon. An endangered species, the Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel was introduced to the refuge in 1968. The fox squirrel is larger than the gray squirrel with a bushier tail. These squirrels live in wooded areas and generally stay close to the ground.

Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), Common. This semiaquatic mammal can be found in both freshwater and brackish impoundments. The muskrat's rabbit-sized body is laterally compressed and has a sparsely haired tail.

Meadow Jumping Mouse (*Zapus hudsonius*), Common. The meadow jumping mouse can use its large hind feet to jump away from predators (over two feet high and ten feet forward!) and is found around freshwater impoundments. This mouse feeds on seeds, fruit, fungi and insects.



Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), Common. The red fox frequents edges between different types of cover and usually digs dens in open areas such as sand dunes. The red fox is a major predator, eating anything it can find including rabbits, birds, and insects.

Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), Common. This resourceful predator can be found in all habitats, but is most common in marsh edges, woods, and thickets. Raccoons also venture out to the shore to feast on duck and quail eggs as well as various items washed ashore.

Inset photos:
Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel, Photo: W.H. Julian, USFWS;
Red fox, Photo: USFWS; Muskrat, Photo: Irene Hinke Sacilotto; Raccoon, Photo: J. Kent Minichiello.



River otter. Photo: Irene Hinke Sacilotto.



River Otter (*Lutra canadensis*), Uncommon. A large, elongate member of the weasel family, this critter has webbed toes and a thick tail. River otters may be seen in the freshwater impoundments and occasionally on the beach. They eat fish, crabs, and other aquatic invertebrates.



White-Tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), Common. The only native deer present in the mid-Atlantic, the white-tailed deer prefers wooded areas and grazing meadows. Its tail is white on the underside and springs upward when alarmed.



White-tailed deer buck. Photo: Robert Wilson, USFWS.



Sika elk. Photo: Robert Wilson, USFWS.

Sika Elk
(*Cervus nippon*), Common. The sika is an Asian elk which was released on Assateague Island in the 1920s. They are smaller than white-tailed deer and have a distinct all-white rump. Sika can also be distinguished by their white spots, which they retain all year.

Bottlenose Dolphin
(*Tursiops truncatus*), Common. Often seen frolicking in the surf along the shore during the summer, this dolphin's coloration is a blend of brown to charcoal with a lighter belly. The curiosity of the bottlenose dolphin often brings it into close contact with humans.

Humpback Whale
(*Megaptera novaeangliae*), Rare. Its Latin name, meaning large fin or wing, is an accurate description of the long flippers of the humpback whale. They are not especially fast swimmers, but they are the most animated and acrobatic large whale species.



Large fin of a humpback whale. Photo: ©Photodisc.

Other Mammals of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge

Least Shrew
(*Cryptotis parva*), Uncommon.

Silver-haired Bat
(*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), Common.

Red Bat
(*Lasiurus borealis*), Common.

White-footed Mouse
(*Peromyscus leucopus*), Common.

House Mouse
(*Mus musculus*), Common.

Meadow Vole
(*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), Common.

Rice Rat
(*Oryzomys palustris*), Common.

Norway Rat
(*Rattus norvegicus*), Uncommon.

Wild Pony
(*Equus caballus*), Common.

Harbor Seal
(*Phoca vitulina*), Rare.

Hooded Seal
(*Cystophora cristata*), Rare.

Gray Seal
(*Halichoerus gryphus*), Rare.

True's Beaked Whale
(*Mesoplodon mirus*), Rare.



Pony mare with foal. Photo: Irene Hinke Sacilotto.

Goosebeak Whale
(*Ziphius cavirostris*), Rare.

Pygmy Sperm Whale
(*Kogia breviceps*), Rare.

Sperm Whale
(*Physeter macrocephalus*), Rare.

Spotted Dolphin
(*Stenella plagiodon*), Rare.

Rough-toothed Dolphin
(*Steno bredanensis*), Rare.

Common Dolphin
(*Delphinis delphis*), Common.

Atlantic White-sided Dolphin
(*Lagenorhynchus acutus*),
Uncommon.

Melon-headed Whale
(*Peponocephala electra*), Rare.

Atlantic Harbor Porpoise
(*Phocoena phocoena*), Rare.

Risso's Dolphin
(*Grampus griseus*), Rare.

Long-finned Pilot Whale
(*Globicephala melaena*), Rare.

Fin Whale
(*Balaenoptera physalus*), Rare.

Sei Whale
(*Balaenoptera borealis*), Rare.

Minke Whale
(*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), Rare.

Blue Whale
(*Balaenoptera musculus*), Rare.

Black Right Whale
(*Eubalaena glacialis*), Rare.



Common dolphin.
Photo: ©Photodisc.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Chincoteague is one of over 500 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat and represents the most comprehensive wildlife resource management program in the world. Units of the system stretch across the United States from northern Alaska to the Florida Keys and include small islands in the Caribbean and South Pacific. The habitat of refuges is as diverse as the nation itself.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service also manages National Fish Hatcheries, and provides federal leadership in habitat protection, fish and wildlife research, technical assistance and the conservation and protection of migratory birds, certain marine mammals and threatened and endangered species.

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**For further information, contact:
Refuge Manager
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 62
Chincoteague Island, Virginia 23336-0062**

**Telephone: 757/336 6122
Fax: 757/336 5273
E-mail: R5RW_CHNWR@fws.gov**

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