

United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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NEWS RELEASE

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Spectacular Waterfowl Sightings at Blackwater NWR

Visitors to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, located 12 miles south of Cambridge, have been treated to spectacular waterfowl sights in recent weeks as thousands of snow geese, Canada geese, and other waterfowl have flocked to refuge lands. The best viewing times have been early morning and in the late afternoon, about an hour before sunset, as the geese gather in the refuge fields to feed before going to roost on the Blackwater River. Recent rains have increased both water levels and duck sightings in the refuge's ponds, with northern pintails and hooded mergansers topping the list. Tundra swans, another winter visitor to the Bay area, have been plentiful along Blackwater's 4-mile Wildlife Drive, and several white pelicans, which have wintered here the past three years, have also been recently seen.

The winter months are also a very good time of the year to view bald eagles and other birds of prey, as raptors from colder climates join resident birds in utilizing the vast resources of Dorchester County. Blackwater's recent eagle count yielded a record 145 eagles on and around refuge lands. The area's resident adult bald eagles generally begin nesting activities in January, so sightings of eagles exhibiting courtship behavior, defending territory, or carrying nesting material are common. A golden eagle has regularly been seen at the refuge this winter, and other recent raptor sightings include northern harriers, rough-legged hawks, and short-eared owls.

The Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center is open weekdays 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and weekends 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call the refuge at 410-228-2677, or visit the web site at <http://www.fws.gov/blackwater>.

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