

Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck, Occoquan Bay and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuges are all managed under the Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge is located at
14050 Dawson Beach Road
Woodbridge, VA 22191

For further information, contact:
Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Headquarters Office
12638 Darby Brooke Court
Woodbridge, VA 22192
703/490 4979
E-mail: potomacriverrefuges@fws.gov
Website: www.fws.gov/refuge/occoquan_bay/
Facebook: www.facebook.com/occoquanbay/

Federal Relay Service for the
deaf and hard-of-hearing
1 800/877 8339

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Occoquan Bay

National Wildlife Refuge



Eastern Towhee
©Cindy Kreticos

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge is an oasis where both migrating birds and busy city residents seek a quiet escape from development. Visitors share this feeling of peace as they hike trails and watch wildlife drawn to this sanctuary in an urban setting.

Welcome



This goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Bill Wallen

Male Northern cardinal

The Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge provides 642 acres of unparalleled habitat for migrating songbirds, raptors and waterfowl. The vast man-made meadows and freshwater tidal marshes play a vital role in preserving the diversity of plant and animal life in the heavily populated region of northern Virginia. This unique landscape is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System and has been recognized as an Important Bird Area by the Audubon Society for its significance in providing essential habitat for birds.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge is one of more than 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a federal agency. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat for the continuing benefit of the American people. It represents the most comprehensive wildlife resource management program in the world.

The Service also manages national fish hatcheries and provides 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.

December sunset



Bill Wallen

History


When John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, he found a well established Dogue Indian village at the Occoquan River's mouth. Floods, fire, and farming kept the vegetation low or in early succession, creating meadows and open areas. The Army obtained the site in 1950 for a radio transmitting station, and fields of antennas replaced cows and crops. In the 1970's, the base's mission shifted to electromagnetic pulse testing. Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge was established in June 1998, to protect habitat for upland nesting birds, migrating wildlife, habitat diversity and environmental education. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continues to preserve these grasslands that nurtured wildlife for so long.

Visitor Opportunities

■ *Wildlife and Habitat Viewing*

A network of roads from the site's military days forms the basis for trails and a wildlife drive. Approximately 4 miles of gravel roads are reserved for foot traffic only. The wildlife drive is a one way, 2-mile loop. The wildlife drive and trails are subject to seasonal closures to minimize stress on nesting and breeding wildlife or to facilitate land management activities.

- *Interpretation* - Use our interpretative kiosks and information booths to choose a refuge trail or route to explore. Interpretive sites include the Main Parking Lot Pavilion featuring six interpretive panels and an audio tour trail where visitors can learn about Occoquan Bay's history, wildlife, ecosystems,

refuge activities, and maintenance projects. To access the audio tour, download the free UniGuide app to your phone or computer; search for Occoquan Bay refuge; then choose to either download the audio and listen offline, or just hit play and listen. Nine listening locations are marked with  throughout the refuge. More information can be found at the main parking lot kiosk.

■ *Environmental Education* -

The refuge features several environmental education sites including two outdoor pavilions, a 2.7 acre pond with a dock and ramp, and a floating boardwalk in a freshwater marsh. Environmental education activities are primarily self-guided field trips exploring topics prepared by the teacher. Interested educational groups or institutions are required to obtain a Special Use Permit to gain refuge access for their program (refer to permit section).

■ *Photography* - Wildlife photography

is an increasingly popular activity. Visit the refuge photo blinds situated at the parking lot, Marumsco Creek, or the observation platform near the intersection of Fox and Deephole Point Roads. Photography opportunities are boundless along all refuge roads and trails open to the public.

■ *Hunting* - The refuge uses hunting

as a tool to manage white-tailed deer populations at a healthy level compatible with planned habitat goals and objectives. Deer hunting is available by permit during designated periods and only in certain areas.



Occoquan Bay

National Wildlife
Refuge



Habitat Management

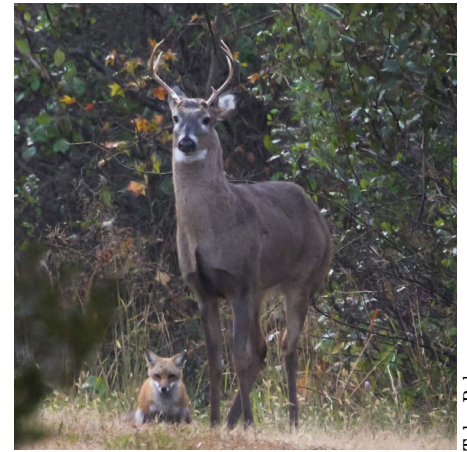
Ocoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge is a mosaic of habitats that benefit multiple species of flora and fauna in a relatively small area. The mix of grasslands, shrublands, wetlands, and wooded areas meet the needs of wildlife by providing breeding grounds, foraging areas, migration stopovers, and winter cover. To maintain desired habitat diversity, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the refuge in various ways. Selective mowing and prescribed burns keep the vegetation as grasses and shrubs, which are attractive to birds and other wildlife. Removal or control of exotic, invasive plant species using physical or chemical methods ensures native species keep their role in the ecosystem. Hunting is used as a management tool and to provide quality wildlife-oriented recreation. Habitat and wildlife management decisions on the refuge are supported by scientific-based research that considers the needs of wildlife and conditions of the ecosystem. Additionally, this knowledge enhances ways to provide wildlife related education and recreation for the American people.

Mowing encroaching brush at Ocoquan Bay



USFWS

White-tailed deer and red fox



Tyler Reber

Hours of Operation:

Ocoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge is open year-round, from 7AM - 5PM October 1- March 31 and 7AM - 7PM from April 1 - September 30. Staff temporarily closes the refuge during managed deer hunts in December. Call the headquarters office or visit the website for scheduled closures.

Safety:

Visitors may encounter ticks, bees, biting insects, and poison ivy while on the refuge. To minimize contact, please stay on the trails and avoid walking through tall grasses. Summers are hot and humid; sunscreen and drinking fluids are recommended. Use insect repellent and dress appropriately for the weather.

Great horned owl and chicks



Bill Walten

Regulations:

On a national wildlife refuge, wildlife comes first! Help staff ensure that wildlife has a place to grow and survive for future generations by respecting refuge rules and obeying posted signs.

Permitted Activities:

- Visitors must stay on posted trails. Wetlands, fields, and forests are for wildlife only.
- Vehicles are allowed on posted roads and parking areas.
- Occupants must stay with their vehicles while touring the wildlife drive.
- Bicycles are considered vehicles and may only access the entry road and wildlife drive.

Prohibited Activities:

- Pets in or out of vehicles
- Picnicking, camping, and fires
- Fishing
- Jogging, in-line skates, and skateboards
- Drones, kite flying, or objects launched into the air
- Audio devices disturbing to wildlife and people including electronic lures of any kind
- Disturbing, introducing, or removing plants and animals, or their parts

Monarch butterfly on thistle



Cindy Kreticos



Randy Streufert

Eastern painted turtle

Prohibited Activities:

- Fireworks
- Feeding wildlife
- Entry into closed areas
- Vehicles including bikes and ATVs on foot trails
- Boat, kayak, and canoe landing or launching
- Alcohol or drug use

Permits:

The Service encourages adults and youth groups to use the refuge for wildlife-dependent interpretive and educational programs but they must obtain a permit from the headquarters office. Group use of the refuge is regulated to minimize conflict with other visitors and avoid pressure on sensitive habitats. Permit applications must be mailed to the Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex Headquarters Office at least three weeks in advance. Visit the following site to obtain permit applications: <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/visitors/permits.html>

Volunteers

The refuge welcomes volunteers to assist with biological projects and perform maintenance duties. Some activities may have age and skill level requirements. Contact the refuge headquarters office for information.