

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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## WATERFOWL WEEK DRAWS MORE PEOPLE AT FOUR MID-ATLANTIC WILDLIFE REFUGES

"Waterfowl Week," tied into the Thanksgiving holiday for four mid-Atlantic Coast national wildlife refuges, attracted nearly twice as many observers as the last open house in 1970, the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service reported today.

Among the 10,000-plus visitors who watched great flocks of Canada geese and other birds at Blackwater Refuge, near Cambridge, Md., was Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton, who dropped in unannounced on opening Sunday. Refuge Manager William Julian said his attendance was up to about 10 percent over last year. He felt that the refuge had reached about the limit of visitors it could stand at one time without frightening the winter migrant birds.

At Chincoteague Refuge on the North Virginia coast, Manager J. C. Appel praised his "highly cooperative" visitors although "we had twice as many as last year." Appel reported 2,408 cars by actual count and more than 8,000 visitors to see the main feature, the greater snow goose, which spends late fall and early winter at the island refuge. Visitors came from as far as New Jersey and Georgia.

This was the first autumn open house for Brigantine Refuge in South Jersey, and Manager Gaylord L. Inman estimated 2,500 people attended. Normally only a handful of the hardiest birdwatchers would be out the last week in November. Inman said the biggest attraction from his guests, mostly from Philadelphia and South Jersey, was the concentration of ducks, geese and shorebirds--"and three bald eagles that stayed in the refuge area all week."

At Eastern Neck Refuge on Chesapeake Bay in Maryland, near Rock Hall, rain and coal reduced the whistling swan flocks and human sightseers, but Assistant Manager Kenny Fletcher said that more than 1,200 cars came on the island that forms the area, almost as many as in 1970. About 4,000 people used Eastern Neck's nature trail. The migrating swans, a main attraction, dropped from 8,000 in the area to 2,000 just as Waterfowl Week began, Fletcher said, although he had many ducks and geese. Many of his human visitors were from New York and Pennsylvania.

All four refuges provided displays and habitat demonstrations. The idea of "Waterfowl Week," as Brigantine Manager Inman said, was that "People learned how we are managing habitat for waterfowl, and we learned how interested people were in wildlife."

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