



Spring at Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge A Nature Lover's Paradise

By Mark Dever

As the chill of winter fades, Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Delaware comes alive with vibrant colors and bustling wildlife, making spring one of the best times to visit this 16,000-acre haven. Here's what you can expect during your springtime visit.

Wildlife Awakens

Spring marks the arrival of migratory birds returning from their wintering grounds. Birdwatchers can spot a variety of shorebirds, songbirds, and wading birds, including great egrets and snowy egrets. The refuge's freshwater pools and tidal marshes become feeding grounds for these feathered visitors. Watch for bald eagles and ospreys as they soar above, searching for prey.

Blossoming Flora

The refuge's landscape transforms as wildflowers bloom along trails and marsh edges. The vibrant greenery and colorful blossoms provide a picturesque backdrop for nature walks and photography. Native plants begin to thrive, supporting the area's diverse ecosystem.

Frogs and Other Amphibians

Listen for the chorus of spring peepers and other frogs filling the refuge with melodic calls. These amphibians become more active as temperatures rise, signaling the season's change.

Nature Trails and Scenic Drive

The refuge offers several trails, such as the Boardwalk Trail adjacent to Raymond Pool and Parson Point Trail, perfect for a leisurely hike. The Tree Discovery Trail offers a longer walk and provides a view of the back side of Shearneck Pond. For all trails, keep in mind that deer flies can be a challenge beginning in early June.

For those who prefer a scenic drive, the 12-mile Auto Tour Route provides excellent views of marshes, woodlands, and open fields teeming with wildlife activity.

Tips for a Memorable Visit

- ☑ Bring Binoculars: Essential for birdwatching and spotting wildlife from a distance.
- ☑ Dress in Layers: Spring weather can be unpredictable, so prepare for changing temperatures.
- ☑ Bug Repellent: As temperatures warm, insects become more active.
- ☑ Check the Visitor Center: Get maps, wildlife checklists, and updates on recent sightings.



Spring at Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge offers a unique opportunity to witness nature's rebirth. Whether you're a birdwatcher, photographer, or someone seeking peace outdoors, this refuge promises an unforgettable experience.

**Bombay Hook NWR
88th Anniversary
Open House and Spring Festival
March 22, 2025
8:00 am – 2:00 pm**

Join us for a day of fun as we celebrate the arrival of Spring and the 88th anniversary of Bombay Hook NWR's establishment. We'll showcase our recently installed exhibits and updated Visitor Center. There will be fun activities, educational booths, and interesting programs. At noon, Animal Behavior and Conservation Connections will present their live bird program. Here is a list of activities and times.

•**8:00 am – 10:00 am: *Delaware Ornithological Society Bird Walk***

Guided bird walk along the Forest Discovery Tree Trail.

•**9:00 am: *Refuge Van Tour***

Take a trip around the Auto Tour route with a Delaware Master Naturalist.

•**10:30 am: *Ceremonial Welcome***

Refuge Project Leader Kate Toniolo will greet and welcome visitors.

•**11:00 am – 2:00 pm: *Information, Activities, and Games Around the Visitor Center***

Volunteers and partner organizations will offer information, activities, and games at tables around the building. Be sure to complete the scavenger hunt for a prize!

•**11:00 am: *Refreshments***

Enjoy complimentary refreshments while exploring the exhibits and learning about Refuge history and wildlife.

•**12:00 pm: *Animal Behavior & Conservation Connections Live Bird Program***

Phung Luu is back at Bombay Hook with his fantastic avian wildlife ambassadors. Enjoy an educational free flight program while learning about conservation and stewardship.

•**1:00 pm: *Creation of a Legacy***

The history of how a unique troop of the Civilian Conservation Corps built the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge.

•**2:00 pm: *Refuge Van Tour***

Take a trip around the Auto Tour route with a Delaware Master Naturalist.

For further information or updates, please contact the Refuge at (302) 653-9345 or email Joshua Smith at Joshua_smith@fws.gov.

**Bombay Hook NWR Prescribed
Spring 2025 Burning**



Bombay Hook NWR will conduct controlled burns to manage targeted refuge habitats again this spring. Specific areas across the refuge have been selected for burning this year. The exact days and times will depend on many factors, including the burn crew schedule, wind conditions, and field moisture. If conditions are not suitable, there might not be a burn this season. As in past years, sections of the refuge may be closed to the public on selected burn days.

You may ask why the refuge areas are burned. In general terms, the refuge staff uses prescribed burning

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Bombay Hook NWR Prescribed Spring 2025 Burning *(Continued from page 2)*

as one of their tools to manipulate the refuge's vegetation to benefit wildlife. In addition, it's a valuable tool for maintaining desirable plant communities. For example, by design, the Pollinator Meadow has a variety of native flowering plants and grasses. Periodic controlled burns across the meadow control the successional advance of woody plants.

The burn crews that do the burning are well-trained and highly skilled. Their goal is to accomplish a successful burn in a controlled manner while being ever mindful of the fire crews and neighboring community's safety. On burn days, the burn crew and their partners monitor weather conditions, use test burns, flank fires, black lines at pinch points, and even watercraft to manage the burn. In addition, they manage the smoke, rate of spread, and even flame heights. After the burn, the crews revisited the burn sites to reignite unburned areas.

So, if you experience the inconvenience of a portion of the Auto Drive or a side trail closed for a controlled burn, you'll be comforted to know why. The Bombay Hook staff and their partners, particularly the Delaware Forest Service, are working hard to manage habitat communities for our resident and migratory wildlife populations.

**Bombay Hook NWR**

2591 Whitehall Neck Rd., Smyrna, DE 19977

(302) 653-9345

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/bombay-hook>

The **Wildlife Drive** is open daily from ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.

The **Bombay Hook Visitor Center** is open during the week from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

The **Blue Heron Gift Shoppe** (run by Friends of Bombay Hook) is open M - F, Saturday & Sunday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, depending on volunteer availability.

The Allee House remains closed until further notice.

Spring 2025 Calendar of Events

Programs are free and no registration is necessary unless otherwise specified.

To request a reasonable accommodation please call the Refuge office at (302) 653-9345 or email Joshua_Smith@fws.gov 2 weeks before the event.

Saturday March 15, 2025 Signs of Spring (11:00 am)

Bruce Lantz will discuss the natural worlds visible signs of the transition from Winter to Spring. From new plant growth to new assemblages of birds migrating through to characteristic animal behaviors. There are better ways to know if Spring has sprung than a groundhog's shadow. Bruce will also discuss the life history of red foxes and how they got their sly reputation.

Sunday, March 16, 2025 Bird Identification Station (9:00 am – 2:00 pm)

Get a close look at the different bird species in the impoundments. Randy Murphy will be set up on the wildlife drive with scopes and binoculars to help you identify shorebirds, wading birds, and whatever else flies by. Look for the blue ID Station sign along the Auto Tour route.

Saturday March 22, 2025 New Exhibit Open House (8:00 am – 2:00 pm)**Activities all day**

•8:00 am – 10:00 am: *Delaware Ornithological Society Bird Walk*

Guided bird walk along the Forest Discovery Tree Trail.

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Spring 2025 Calendar of Events (Continued from page 3)

- **9:00 am: *Refuge Van Tour***

Take a trip around the Auto Tour route with a Delaware Master Naturalist.

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Take a trip around the Auto Tour route with a Delaware Master Naturalist.

Saturday March 29, 2025 Photo Workshop (2:00 pm to 4:00 pm)

Join wildlife and landscape photographer Terry Willis for a Wildlife/Nature Photography Workshop. Learn how to optimize your camera for photographing wildlife and landscapes. In this workshop we will discuss camera settings, and how to go beyond the “Auto” setting on your digital camera. We will also begin to delve into editing your photos using software like Adobe Photoshop, beginning with the Raw Image and proceeding to the final version suitable for printing or using on the web. **Call (302) 653-9345 to register.**

Saturday, April 5, 2025 Monarch Presentation and Gardening Tips for Monarchs (2:00 pm – 3:30 pm)

Learn how to identify monarch butterflies and about their migration. Participants will learn about their habitat requirements and gardening tips to attract butterflies. Come learn about the amazing monarch and how you can help them survive. While monarchs will be the main focus, other local butterflies and pollinators will be included.

Saturday, April 12, 2025 Fishing Basics (11:00 am – 12:00 pm)

Fishing is a fine way to relax and enjoy nature. It’s easy to get started, you just need to know a few basic things and you’re ready to go try your luck. We’ll teach you a few basic knots, how to rig the rod, how to cast the line, and how to use various lures.

Saturday, April 19, 2025

- **Delaware Ornithological Society Bird Walk (8:00 am – 10:00 am)**

The Delaware Ornithological Society sponsors a monthly bird walk, each month from September through April, which starts 8:00 am from the Visitor Center. The walks will utilize the newly completed Forest Discovery Tree Trail (2.7 miles) and last approximately 2 hours. Walks will take place rain-or-shine unless the weather is extreme (check www.DOSBirds.org or the [DOS Facebook](#) page). Bring sturdy shoes that can stand mud and moisture; water bottle; insect repellent; and, of course, binoculars if you have them (loaners will be available). A hand lens or loupe will also be handy if we stop to examine trees, flowers, mushrooms, lichens etc.

(Continued on page 5)

Spring 2025 Calendar of Events (Continued from page 4)

- **Delaware Bats (2:00 pm -3:00 pm)**

Come join us in learning the importance of bats and their natural history. Attendees will learn about bat rehabilitation efforts in Delaware and how they can help bats in their communities. The program will be presented by Delaware Bat Rehabilitation and Conservation a non-profit organization dedicated to the care and release of sick and injured bats in Delaware.

Saturday, April 26, 2025 Beginning Birding : Warbler Program (11:00 am to 12:30 pm)

Eileen McLellan and Terry Willis will give a presentation on the warblers migrating through Bombay Hook during the spring.

Various Days, May through June, 2025 Purple Martin Nest Checks (11:00 am – 11:45 am)

Joël Martin will perform weekly purple martin gourd nest checks during April, May, and June. Individuals can observe and assist with recording data, counting eggs and hatchlings, and after they hatch hold a chick. You will see birds that spent the winter in Brazil and you may see an adult sitting on a nest. The nests need to be checked quickly to make sure the purple martins are not disturbed for a long period of time. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Saturday May 3, 2025

- **Warbler Walk (8:00 am – 10:00 am)**

The walk will be on one or two trails along the wildlife drive with expert birders Eileen McLellan and Terry Willis. This will be an excellent way to practice what you learned at the Warbler Program the day before or for anyone who wants to look for warblers.

- **Here Come the Bugs! (7:30 pm – 9:00 pm)**

Join entomologist Anthony Gonzon for a journey through the diversity of Delaware's invertebrate life. Learn about life histories, identification, and fun facts. After the program Anthony will set up lights to draw in insects for observation and identification.

Saturday, May 10, 2025 Beginning Birding: Shorebird Program (10:00 am – 12:00 pm)

Eileen McLellan and Terry Willis will give a presentation about shorebirds, their amazing migrations, and simple identification techniques. After the presentation, participants will take the bus to the impoundments to practice their new skills (11:15 am – 12:30 pm). The presentation is open to unlimited participants. The bus is limited to 14 participants, pre-registration is required to reserve your spot. Any un-reserved spots will be available on the day of the event. **Call (302) 653-9345 to register.**

Saturday, May 17, 2025

- **Horseshoe Crab Life History and Ecology (11:00 am)**

Learn about one of the planets oldest migrations as we discuss the fascinating story of the horseshoe crab, and its critical role for both people and wildlife.

- **Dragonflies of Delmarva (2:00 pm)**

Aimed at the beginner, the class will cover the life phases and the natural habitat of these summer dwellers of stream and marsh side. Participants will also be introduced to easy identification methods of some of the most common members.

Saturday, May 24, 2025

- **Delaware Ornithological Society Bird Walk (8:00 am – 10:00 am)**

The Delaware Ornithological Society sponsors a monthly bird walk, on the 4th Saturday of each month

(Continued on page 6)

Spring 2025 Calendar of Events (Continued from page 5)

from September through April, which starts 8 :00 am from the Visitor Center. The walks will utilize the newly completed Forest Discovery Tree Trail (2.7 miles) and last approximately 2 hours. Walks will take place rain-or-shine unless the weather is extreme (check www.DOSBirds.org or the [DOS Facebook](#) page). Bring sturdy shoes that can stand mud and moisture; water bottle; insect repellent; and, of course, binoculars if you have them (loaners will be available). A hand lens or loupe will also be handy if we stop to examine trees, flowers, mushrooms, lichens etc.

- **All About Purple Martins (11:00 am)**

Local Naturalist Jöel Martin will be presenting on the life history of the Purple Martin. Learn about these long-distance travelers. The presentation will include information on Purple Martin identification, behavior, breeding, incubation, migration, and ways in which you can assist in supporting the growth of this species. Following the presentation, he will conduct nest checks at the nesting gourds adjacent to the Visitor Center. Visitors are welcome to observe and may even get to participate.

WATCH FOR PROGRAM UPDATES ON OUR BOMBAY HOOK [FWS](#) WEBSITE AND FOBH [FACE-BOOK](#) THROUGHOUT THIS SPRING!



Monarch Butterflies
By Flavia Rutkosky

Little Things Mean A Lot

- ◆ Small flowering gardens (including container gardens) can provide habitat for migrating monarchs and other insect pollinators.
- ◆ Monarch butterflies need plants in the milkweed family for the caterpillars to feed on and provide food for the adults.
- ◆ Be sure to include locally native milkweed species; common milkweed is essential for supporting monarch caterpillars.
- ◆ Swamp and common milkweed are also important for monarchs and other pollinating insects.
- ◆ You will need more milkweed than you think, so plant densely, as monarch caterpillars are voracious feeders.
- ◆ Dense planting will minimize open ground and provide visual impact, as well as protection from predators, strong winds, and rain.
- ◆ Choose other locally native nectar-producing plants with a wide range of blooming times (spring through fall) to support monarchs and other pollinating insects.
- ◆ Many locally native plants, from perennial wildflowers to small shrubs, will thrive in small garden spaces—even in containers.



Bald-faced Hornet

(*Dolichovespula maculata*)



Photo by B.J.L.

- Common at Bombay Hook NWR and the southeastern U.S.
- Also called the white-faced hornet, spruce wasp, and blackjacket.
- Technically, it is a yellowjacket wasp and not a true hornet.
- Easily identified by its black and white head and striped body.
- This is a large hornet at ¾" in body length.
- They build large, round, hanging paper nests.
- The nests are gray in color and can be 4' to 60' off the ground.
- The nest is made with chewed wood fibers mixed with their saliva.
- Each nest can have 400-700 workers.
- Do not bother them or get too close to their nest colony.

- They can be extremely aggressive and defensive and should be respected.
- They can threaten humans who venture too close to nests in low shrubs.
- Each worker hornet will defend its nest with repeated venomous stings.

- In addition, they can spray venom into the eyes of their intruders.
- This venom can cause eyes to water and temporarily blind the person.
- These hornets can play a beneficial role, feeding on flies and caterpillars.
- They often eat fallen fruit, tree sap, and nectar.
- The white-faced hornet can become prey to skunks, raccoons, and birds.
- During the winter months only, fertilized queens remain.
- In the spring, fertilized queen hornets fly off, select a nest site, and start laying eggs.
- Worker hornets hatch and begin building a nest colony over the summer.



Photo by B.J.L.

- In the fall, all the hornets in the colony will die off, but for several new queens.
- The Refuge pollinator meadow trail in spring is a good location for seeing worker hornets collecting nectar.





Photo by B/JL

Caution! Spring Turtle Season

In early May, turtles on the refuge will be on the move. You'll see their tracks across the mud flats of the impoundments. It's breeding season, and they are much more visible around the refuge in the morning. If you're lucky, you might see a snapping turtle laying eggs in a freshly dug nest along the shoulder of the road.

You may also see Diamondback Terrapins, as well as Painted, Mud, and Box Turtles on the refuge roads early in the morning. Slow down and check them out. Often, these turtles are on the move, with no fear of attempting to cross the road.

It's hard to believe that, even with a speed limit of 25mph, on the Refuge Auto Tour, we move multiple dead turtles off the road each year that have been hit by visitors' cars. Please give them a break.



Dry Spring Conditions: Survival or Opportunity?

Every year at Bombay Hook NWR the seasons are different, and this year is no exception. Last summer we saw hurricane events which normally produce large rainfall into the impoundments. Late summer and fall were very dry. Our impoundments didn't see the rainfall to recharge them up to normal early winter levels.

The refuge is currently very dry, as evidenced by low water levels in both Shear-ness and Raymond pools. These impoundments are fed by ditches and a managed spillway from Finis Pool; all are currently low. Bear Swamp is only fed by runoff from surrounding fields and forest habitat. Nearly all the vernal pools in the hardwood forests are dry. Delaware is currently under a drought watch. The dry refuge habitat conditions will continue unless conditions improve with a wet winter and spring. Wood ducks, muskrats, fish, frogs, salamanders, and turtles may not find all the ideal breeding habitats they are accustomed to. However, predators like Foxes, Snapping Turtles, and Herons could benefit. Reduced wetland habitats could create a concentration of prey species. The Refuge plants and animals adapt to seasonal weather cycles, providing a unique and engaging outdoor classroom for the Refuge visitor to learn about opportunity and survival.



Photo by B/JL



Friends of Bombay Hook... 35 Years!

By Mark Dever

In 2025, the Friends of Bombay Hook proudly celebrates its 35th anniversary, marking over three decades of dedicated support to the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Smyrna, Delaware. Established in 1990, this non-profit organization has been instrumental in fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the refuge's unique ecosystems.

Over the years, the Friends of Bombay Hook have sponsored various activities, including festivals, school or group field trips, art exhibits, and lectures. They also operate the Blue Heron Gift Shoppe with profits directed towards supporting and enhancing educational and recreational programs at Bombay Hook. Volunteers from the organization assist with event planning, conduct refuge tours, lead bird walks, and publish a quarterly newsletter, among other services. Some also volunteer for USFWS at the visitor center and in other capacities.

In recent years, the organization has supported the construction and landscaping of the new Senator Thomas R. Carper Visitor Center, which features updated interpretive exhibits, two multipurpose rooms, and office spaces.

As the Friends of Bombay Hook commemorate this milestone, they continue to play a supportive role in providing the visiting public an opportunity to enjoy the refuge's natural beauty. They continue to support the conservation efforts of the refuge to promote habitat opportunities for wildlife. And finally, their ongoing efforts help to ensure that Bombay Hook remains a cherished sanctuary for wildlife and a place of learning and enjoyment for all visitors.

For more information about the Friends of Bombay Hook and upcoming events, please visit their official website: www.friendsofbombayhook.org.

Friends of Bombay Hook Board of Directors

President: Mark Dever
Vice President: Brandi Besecker
Treasurer: Joanne Lantz
Secretary: Tammy Lewis

Members at Large: Bill Bond
 Larry Cook
 Gale Christensen
 Arlene Davis
 Bruce Lantz
 Randy Murphy



Contributions by Friends of Bombay Hook NWR in 2024



Photo by BJL

Visitors often inquire about the diverse range of refuge projects that the Friends of Bombay Hook (FOBH) partially or fully fund. Here, we present a snapshot of the project funding requests the refuge made to FOBH, showcasing the breadth of their support.

- Funded flagpole lights at the Refuge Visitor Center.
- Trail mower head purchased with funding from BH and PH Friends groups.
- Summer biological intern position funding commitment for a 2-year grant program (Tidal Marsh Migration Research and Restoration at Bombay Hook and Prime Hook Refuges).
- Funding for signs at the new Shearness photo blind and Pasture Point Pond.
- Funding for native plant stock, soils, and materials for the Visitor Center front plant beds.
- Funded handicapped accessible door controls for the new Visitor Center near restrooms.
- Funded the staining supplies for the new photo blind at Shearness Pool (Eagle Scout project).

- Partial funding support for the refuge fall deer hunting program.
- Funded maintenance costs related to the purple martin colony program.
- Funded the Forest Discovery Tree Trail sign at the trailhead.
- Supplied food and refreshments for the BHNWR Visitor Center ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremonies.
- Funded the design and construction of the new Blue Heron Gift Shop.
- Funded a second acoustic bat recorder system for the refuge.
- Funded the establishment of a historical archive of seasonal bat recordings.
- Funded the staining supplies to re-stain the Refuge Visitor Center pavilion (Eagle Scout project).



***Bombay Hook
NWR
In the Spring***



***Photos By
Lois Wilkinson***

Block Island National Wildlife Refuge

By Joanne and Bruce Lantz



Photo by BJL

Block Island is about 12 miles off the Rhode Island coast, just east of the mouth of the Long Island Sound. It was formed by receding glaciers during the last ice age and is only 7 miles long and 3 miles wide. Block Island is a popular summer vacation spot, rich in history, and great for biking and hiking.

In early October, we drove to Point Judith, RI, to catch an early morning ferry to Block Island. With the tourist season slowing down, getting tickets and our passage over was easy. Once on Block Island, we headed north to Sandy Point and the Block Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Block Island is a popular birding destination for seeing fall migrants. Local birders post a checklist of 250 species seen. The island habitat is internation-

ally recognized for its importance to migrating Atlantic flyway songbirds in the fall. The Block Island Refuge was established in 1973 to help preserve critically important island habitats. Migrating songbirds use the island as a rest stop on their southern migration flight. This small USFWS refuge has grown to 134 acres in recent years. The refuge provides essential coastal nesting beachgrass habitat and sandy and rocky beaches. In addition, it's a rookery site for colonial nesters like the Black-crowned Night Heron (on the refuge quarter).

On this refuge trip, our targets were the sea ducks gathering in the bays, sparrows in the coastal dunes, and dramatic shorelines in the fall. Like coastal Maine, conditions change, and the fog can change your plans quickly. As you travel west of the ferry terminal in New Shoreham, you pass through rural habitat along Corn Neck Road. The bayberry scrubs are dense and shaped by the coastal winds that often blow. You catch glimpses of the bay shorelines on both sides of the road and realize how small the island is. Suddenly, the road ends, and you're at a small refuge parking lot and the large Block Island Refuge welcome sign - you're there!

You must decide what's essential for the next 3-4 hours of shoreline hiking. We spent 4-5 hours birding the shoreline beachgrass dunes and scoping through sea ducks. When you get close to the Block Island North Lighthouse, much of the rolling beachgrass dunes are replaced with sand flats like our Cape Henlopen point in Delaware.

At low tide, we found an abundance of sea life and sea vegetation that washed up between the round glacial beach stones. Offshore, we studied size rafts of both Common and King Eider Ducks. A steady flow of flying flocks of all three Scoter duck species passed us just off the shoreline. We had Song and Savanna Sparrows, but surprisingly, no Ipswich Sparrows.

Eventually, the two shorelines of the refuge peninsula meet at the Block Island North Lighthouse. In front of the lighthouse is a broad, flat, sandy point with no vegetation. You find yourself imagining this vast beach area underwater during winter storms. However, on this day, it was a popular roosting spot for gulls and terns. We spent much time scanning and re-scanning these mixed flocks - mostly Herring and Greater black-backed Gulls and Common and Forster Terns. We also found Lesser black-backed Gulls but none of the locally breeding Roseate Terns. The North Lighthouse complex is awe-inspiring but was closed to the public for the season.

We spent another day exploring Block Island and revisiting the refuge. The island has several wildlife areas and tracks, both state and private. It's easy to get confused about who controls the promising habitat in front of you. Our trip was a great success and lots of fun. We would return, maybe in early spring next time.

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Block Island National Wildlife Refuge (Continued from page 12)**Trip notes:**

- ✓ Watch the jetty rocks coming into the ferry terminals; there are many great birds.
- ✓ Check out the fresh seafood shacks around the wharf if you're spending the night in Point Judith for an early morning ferry. And sample the local Rise IPA to wash those clam cakes down.
- ✓ In New Shoreham, many shops and restaurants close by mid-October for the winter.

**Artist Spotlight: Susan Jacobs**

Our "Artist Spotlight" series highlights artists, photographers, and carvers who gain inspiration from Bombay Hook NWR. In this spring Newsletter, we are featuring Susan Jacobs, who just recently began drawing with a combination of graphite, colored pencils, and watercolor pencils. She enjoys drawing birds and native plants and finds Bombay Hook NWR an important resource as she creates her subjects on paper.

Susan grew up in Rehoboth Beach, close to Thompson's Island. She remembers the special habitat and wildlife when that area was much less developed. Susan is now retired after a career in Delaware and Maryland area schools as a Behavior Analyst working with special needs children. She recently started drawing and has an interest in nature journaling. She enjoys studying birds, mammals, reptiles, and native plants. She is pursuing a Botanical Art Certificate from the Botanical Art League of the Eastern Shore.

Susan has no formal art training but has developed her painting skills with help from other artists and online teachers. She finds wildlife and bird artist Claire Milligan especially inspiring. A great deal of subject study is required for her to draw the plants and birds that become her artistic subjects. Susan works with colored pencils and watercolor pencils. She reports that using both "creates a butterfly effect on feathers and helps with details."

With her interest in forestry, she finds the trees along the Discovery Tree Trail at Bombay Hook NWR especially exciting. Another one of her favorite spots is the Parson Point Trail. She appreciates the variety of unique habitats and species to study and draw at Bombay Hook. Susan enjoys drawing threatened bird species or birds and plants at risk. She feels her artwork can draw the public's attention to these important species and often contributes her artwork and notes to regional science journals to aid their studies.

Susan finds the best times at the Refuge are late afternoon and early evening because there is less visitor traffic, and the wildlife appears more relaxed. She likes all four seasons at Bombay Hook, with late summer and early fall migration being some of the best periods of the year. We thank Susan Jacobs for sharing with us how Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge inspires her in the creation of her artwork.



Bluebird on Holly
By Susan Jacobs



Bombay Hook NWR Volunteer Spotlight

This edition of the newsletter will feature not only one, but two profiles of our Bombay Hook NWR volunteers who work at the Visitor Center: Ben Church and the Meekins Family.



Ben Church

Ben Church is a refuge volunteer at the Visitor Center. You will often see him at the front desk, greeting visitors. During the week, Ben works in medicine and studies to become a doctor someday. On the weekends, he directs and guides the public visiting Bombay Hook. If you need a seasonal pass, Auto Tour map, bird checklist, or directions to the Tree Discovery Trail, Ben can help you. When asked why he volunteers, Ben reports that he enjoys socializing with people. He is interested in conservation and enjoys assisting people to see and enjoy the refuge. Ben might greet and assist well over 100 Refuge visitors on a good weather day. Volunteers like Ben make the Bombay Hook NWR visiting experience unique. Thank you, Ben, for all you do!



Photos by BJL

The Meekins Family

Barry, Barbara, Jennifer, and Austin are dedicated FOBH refuge volunteers. Jennifer usually works the refuge front desk, greeting visitors and helping them obtain the passes, maps, and specific directions they need to maximize their refuge experience.

On Mondays, Barbara helps make the Blue Heron Gift Shoppe so successful. She knows the shop's stock and can help you find that unique gift or souvenir. Barry takes Austin on the Refuge Auto Tour to tally the weekly bird list at the Visitors' desk.



Initially, Austin volunteered by himself to maintain the weekly bird list. Shortly after COVID, his mom and grandparents joined him as volunteers for the visitor center and gift shop.

When asked why they volunteer at BHNWR, the Meekins family reports that they all enjoy meeting visitors and helping them enjoy their refuge visit. The Meekins family loves nature and finds many visitors to be very positive.

Barry is especially interested in refuge history and enjoys helping guests understand how the past has shaped the refuge we see today. A unique "thank you" to the Meekins family for making the Bombay Hook NWR visiting experience memorable. Thank you!





Hello Friends!

Wow, we had a great first year in our new store! Thank you for supporting us and for all of your kind words!

We are looking towards spring with gusto and hope to have some items that strike your fancy. We are looking to bring back our frequent shopper cards this spring and investigating store gift cards.

Blue Heron Gift Shoppe hours are Mon-Sun 9:00 am - 4:00 pm. Though we try and keep these hours, we do not have enough volunteers for replacements when there is a call out, etc., so we may close with little or no notice on occasion. If you are coming to the refuge to shop, you may want to call first to make sure we will be open that day.

There is no doubt about the need for volunteers in the gift shoppe and the front desk at the Visitor Center. If you would like to volunteer in the store, please email Karen at fobh@comcast.net. If you would like to volunteer for the front desk or any other position, please email Josh Smith at joshua_smith@fws.gov. Training will be provided!

I have added a few photos of some of our new merchandise. We have new leather bags for your cell phone. We are trying out these adorable new animal mugs, suncatcher stickers, new jewelry, these super cute mini stools, fashion scarves....and so much more!



Photos by KD

Wishing you a great spring season and looking forward to seeing you!

Karen Dever, BHGS Mgr.



HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT FRIENDS???**Donate or Become a Member!**

Since 1990, the **FRIENDS OF BOMBAY HOOK (FOBH)** have been working with Bombay Hook NWR in supporting the message of conservation! Without memberships, donations, and proceeds from the Blue Heron Gift Shoppe, we surely would not exist today. Throughout the years, we have been able to aid the Refuge by supporting environmental education programs, fund transportation for field trips to Bombay Hook for school children, purchase audio/visual equipment, secure grants, paid for internships, purchased new chairs for the auditorium and for outside programs to name a few. Because of our supporters, we continue with our mission!

To donate or become a member, please fill out the form on the right and mail your check or money order to **FRIENDS OF BOMBAY HOOK, 2591 Whitehall Neck Rd., Smyrna, DE 19977.**

Or go to <https://www.friendsofbombayhook.org> and follow the prompts to either donate or obtain/renew membership. And you can always stop by the Visitor Center during gift shop hours to do it in person! We would love to see you! **The Blue Heron Gift Shoppe** is operated by volunteers and is only open when the volunteers are present. If you are uncertain of days and hours, please call ahead.

FOBH Membership Benefits include voting privileges at the FOBH Annual Meeting; 10% discount on merchandise sold at Blue Heron Gift Shoppe; and eligibility to join the Dover Federal Credit Union (<https://www.doverfcu.org>).

FOBH Memberships and Donations help support and finance Refuge programs, and are tax deductible.

Our Mission Statement

The **Friends of Bombay Hook (FOBH)** is a non-profit corporation (501c3) working in conjunction with **Bombay Hook NWR** and the **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)**. It supports and enhances educational and recreational programs at Bombay Hook, provides volunteer services and financial assistance and serves as a link between the Refuge and the public.

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**FOBH MEMBERSHIP / DONATION APPLICATION**

Submit completed application at the Visitor Center (payment by cash, check/money order, or credit/debit card), or by mail (with a check/money order) to

**Friends of Bombay Hook; 2591 Whitehall Neck Rd.;
Smyrna, DE 19977**, or go to

<https://www.friendsofbombayhook.org> and follow the prompts to either apply/renew membership or make a donation online.

☐ **Membership** ☐ **Donation**

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____

Newsletter Preference:

☐ **Print** ☐ **E-mail (require E-mail address)**

Membership Plan (Check One)**Amount**

- ☐ **Student (must be under 18)** \$ 5.00
☐ **Individual** \$ 15.00
☐ **Family** \$ 20.00
☐ **Sponsor**** \$ 25.00
☐ **Sustaining** \$ 50.00
☐ **Corporate*** \$ 100.00
☐ **Lifetime**** \$ 200.00

*Corporate sponsorship includes link to FOBH website; no voting privileges or store discount.

**Sponsor and Lifetime memberships include family.

Donation (Check One)**Amount**

- ☐ **Miscellaneous/General** \$ _____
☐ **Allee House** \$ _____
☐ **Memorial for:** \$ _____

Method of Payment

- ☐ **Cash (payment at Visitor Center only)**
☐ **Check/Money Order (payment by mail or at Visitor Center)**
☐ **Credit/ Debit Card (payment at Visitor Center only)**