



Volunteer Newsletter

Michele Whitbeck, Volunteer Coordinator

Summer 2025

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge
2145 Key Wallace Drive
Cambridge, MD 21613



Our Volunteers Rock!



Every May we look forward to celebrating and recognizing YOU, our volunteers, for all you do for the refuge. This year was no exception. Under the cover of the pavilion at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park, we ate, we drank, we played games, and we celebrated all you do for the benefit of wildlife, habitats, and people.

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge's 2024 Volunteer of the Year Award went to Lynda Hicken and Vicki Zobel. Lynda and Vicki have been volunteering at the refuge since 2015, staffing the front desk in the Visitor Center, participating in the mid-winter eagle survey, and promoting the refuge at off-site events – including Earth Day at the Salisbury Zoo, the Dorchester Showcase, Waterfowl Festival, the Native American Festival, and others. Both volunteer at the Eagle Festival every year – each in their own capacity. Vicki loves working the kids tent doing crafts, while Lynda prefers an adult activity – registering festival-goers for Eagle Prowls and Wildlife Drive tours. For the past eight years, together, they have been counting entrance fees for the refuge – all those little orange envelopes that visitors stuff into our iron ranger, filled with ones, and fives, and pennies and quarters. 😊 Together, Lynda and Vicki have contributed nearly 5,000 hours of volunteer service to the refuge, with Lynda accumulating 2,871 hours, and Vicki, 1,977 hours. Lynda and Vicki have made Blackwater an important part of their lives and have worked hard to improve the visitor experience. We can't thank them enough for all they do for the refuge and congratulate them on this well-deserved award!



Refuge Volunteers of the Year Lynda Hicken (left) and Vicki Zobel (right) were surprised with their award prior to the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner.

In addition to our Volunteer of the Year Award, awards were presented to volunteers that reached key milestones in their service to Blackwater NWR during calendar year 2024, including those reaching milestones in the number of years they have volunteered at Blackwater NWR. Those volunteers include: Rhonda Franz-Floyd and Robert Sullivan (5 years); Cindy Burns, Beverly Middleton, Carol Walker and Ed Walker (10 years); and Justin Golden and Greg Inskip (20 years)!



Pictured Clockwise from Top Right: Robert Sullivan and Rhonda Franz-Floyd are recognized for 5 years of service to Blackwater NWR. Middle Right: Ed Walker, Carol Walker, and Cindy Burns have been volunteering at Blackwater NWR for 10 years! Not pictured is Beverly Middleton. Bottom: Our Volunteer Recognition Dinner took place in the pavilion at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park. Middle left: Greg Inskip receives recognition from Marcia Pradines for his volunteer work at Blackwater NWR over the last 20 years. Not pictured is Justin Golden.

Volunteers reaching milestones during 2024 in the number of accumulated hours contributed to the refuge include: Ashley Moreland, Gary Smith, and Robert Sullivan (50 hours); Leslie Baker, Anne Cannon, Sherry Murray, Davie Pina, Greg Schenk, David Stevens, and Steve Sarro (100 hours); Lisa Alfaro, Marcos Alfaro, Herb Floyd, Rhonda Franz-Floyd, Bob Long III, Maureen Long, Sherry Morgan, Kathleen Ogle, Zack Trusty, and George Wilson (250 hours); Phyllis Como, Charles Maguire, and Scott Warner (500 hours); Linda Chandlee, Bob Quinn, and Maureen Rice (750 hours); Merrill Schuetz, Peter Smithson, and Jim Van Ness (1000 hours); Ellie Ludvigsen (2000 hours); Ron Ketter, Mary Lynch, and Beverly Middleton (3000 hours); Harry Heckathorn (3500 hours); and Lisa Mayo (4000 hours)!



Pictured top right: Volunteers reaching 100 hours of volunteer service include Steve Sarro and Les Baker. Not pictured are Anne Cannon, Sherry Murray, Davie Pina, Greg Schenk and David Stevens. Bottom: Volunteers reaching 250 hours of volunteer service include (l to r) Sherry Morgan, Bob Long, Maureen Long, Rhonda Franz-Floyd, Herb Floyd, and George Wilson. Not pictured are Lisa and Marcos Alfaro, Kathleen Ogle and Zack Trusty. Top Left: Linda Chandlee is recognized for contributing over 750 hours of volunteer service to Blackwater NWR. Not pictured are Bob Quinn and Maureen Rice.



Pictured top right: Three volunteers reached the 1,000 hour milestone during 2024 – Jim Van Ness, Peter Smithson, and Merrill Schuetz! Bottom right: Ellie Ludvigsen has contributed over 2,000 hours of volunteer service to Blackwater NWR by the end of 2024. Bottom left: Surpassing the 3,000 hour milestone is Ron Ketter and Mary Lynch. Not pictured is Bev Middleton. Top left: Refuge volunteer Harry Heckathorn surpassed the 3,500 hour milestone during 2024. Pictured with all volunteers is Refuge Manager Marcia Pradines Long.

Although not every volunteer reached milestones in 2024, all of you contribute to making the refuge a better place. Whether you are working in the butterfly garden, constructing hunt blinds, monitoring wildlife, or welcoming visitors, or assisting in some other way, the impact each and every one of you makes can be felt on the refuge. During 2024, 134 volunteers contributed 9,180 hours of volunteer service to the refuge. We can't thank you enough for your dedication and commitment to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.