

MONOMOY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

During any given year in Massachusetts, the area frequented by the greatest variety of shorebirds, gulls, terns and their allies is very likely Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge. Located in Chatham on Cape Cod, the refuge is comprised of about 2,700 acres of sand dunes, water, marsh, and tidal flats. It was established in 1944 by a Declaration of Taking under the authority of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. It was bought with funds derived from the sale of migratory waterfowl hunting stamps, to be set aside as a nesting, resting and feeding area for waterfowl.

The refuge was active for many years with managers manipulating the habitat to provide freshwater ponds, marshes and crops for waterfowl. It was placed under restricted management in 1965. In 1970, much of Monomoy Island was designated as Wilderness under the Wilderness Act. This status insured for posterity the preservation of the island in its natural state.

Both Wilderness and Refuge regulations are applicable to Monomoy and are oriented primarily towards protection of the wildlife and the habitat. These regulations prohibit camping, alcoholic beverages, littering, disturbance of wildlife, fires other than on the beach, and all nuisance and vandalous acts. All pets must be kept on a leash. Recreational uses of Monomoy Refuge are varied, birding, clamming, and fishing being very popular.

Birding on Monomoy is at its best in the late summer and early fall when migrant shorebirds may be seen at low tide probing the tidal flats in search of food. The areas most popular with the shorebirds and Common Flats and Camper Cove. American Oystercatchers nest near Inward Point. For marsh birds, try North Point Marsh and Big and Little Station Ponds; a Louisiana Heron was observed at the latter last summer. On rare occasions Peregrine Falcons may be seen in the fall, usually around Lighthouse Marsh. Waterfowl may be observed nearly everywhere on and around the island. Canada Geese and Black Ducks are present in large numbers during the fall and winter in North Point Marsh and Hospital Pond Marsh. Eiders, Scoters and Old Squaw are abundant offshore, particularly around Monomoy Point. Brant are becoming rare, but may sometimes be seen during the spring, offshore between Pothole Marsh and Powder Hole. A variety of freshwater ducks may be observed on Big and Little Station Ponds which are generally fresh to brackish water.

Clamming is excellent in the intertidal areas of Morris Island and in the shallow water west of Inward Point. A permit from the town of Chatham is required and can be purchased at the town hall. When the stripers and blues are running, fishing is also excellent. The whole east side of Monomoy Island, and particularly off Monomoy Point, are premier fishing areas. All state laws governing sizes, limits, seasons, etc. are applicable.

A small herd of approximately 20 whitetail deer inhabit Monomoy Island where they are safe from dogs. They are usually seen between Pothole Marsh and Station Pond Marsh, but particularly in Lighthouse Marsh. A small herd inhabited the Morris Island portion of the refuge a few years ago, but encroachment by humans and constant harassment by dogs have now driven them out.

Access to the refuge is by way of Morris Island Road. Proceed southerly onto Morris Island where the road becomes Tisquantum Road. Turn left just past the first house on the left, and you will enter the refuge after about 100 yards. There is a small parking area next to the large white building, and a leaflet dispenser should contain a refuge bird list for your use. Please do not park at the weather station or disturb the personnel unless necessary. As you enter the gate, notice an old blacktop road to the left. After you park, walk down this road to the beach. Then turn southerly down the beach. A fence delineates the refuge boundary. You may continue down to the southern end of Morris Island.

Enjoying Monomoy Island is a different experience entirely. Access is by boat only. Do not go down the east side except on very calm days or in a large boat. The west or sound side is usually the best for boating, and the only side for beaching a boat as the surf is overpowering along the east shore. Beware of sand bars at low tides, particularly around Common Flats and west of Inward Point. The best areas to beach a boat are Ham-

mond's Bend, the area above the Powder Hole, and Camper Cove. Do not try to go around Monomoy Point in a small boat as it is an area of rip tides and a strong chop.

All in all, the area makes a good Wilderness because of its solitude and difficulty of access. If you have the means to get there, miles of beautiful, isolated beaches are waiting; also green head flies!

No personnel are assigned to Monomoy Refuge; it is administered from Great Meadows Refuge. For further information, call 617-369-5518 or write: Refuge Manager, Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, 191 Sudbury Road, Concord, Massachusetts, 01742.

Berlin Heck
Acting Refuge Manager

