FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Ray Paterra, Tom Miller, Michele Whitbeck
Phone: 410-221-8155, 56, 57

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge Hosts 19th Eagle Festival

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge is hosting its 19th Annual Eagle Festival on Saturday, March 14th, 2020 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Many great activities are planned for the day as we celebrate birds of prey and the 117th anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System! All programs and activities will take place at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center as well as in large heated tents adjacent to the building. Unless otherwise noted, entrance to the Festival, the Wildlife Drive, and all activities are free thanks to the support of the Friends of Blackwater and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Eagle Festival celebrates birds of prey with educational programs that provide visitors with an up-close view of this unique class of birds. Scheduled presentations will include: a raptor identification program with naturalist and raptor educator Liz Smith; a “Raptor’s Rule!” program highlighting Maryland’s native birds-of-prey with Mike Callahan of Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center; a live bald eagle program with Maryland DNR ‘Scales and Tales’ Rangers; and a peregrine falcon program with falconer Andrew Bullen.

Additional programs taking place at this year’s Eagle Festival will help visitors better enjoy wildlife both at the refuge and in their backyard. Joe Soares will conduct a Nature Photography program, covering tips, techniques, and equipment that yield great wildlife photos. Visitors can also learn how to properly attract and feed a variety of birds in their backyard with Tim and Rhonda Matterson of Wild Birds Unlimited.

Blackwater’s experienced volunteers and staff will be leading several guided tours throughout the day. “Early birds” to the Eagle Festival can meet at the refuge’s Environmental Education Building on Wildlife Drive for a guided birding tour with Terry Allen at 8:00 am. During the event, visitors can choose to look for eagles on one of our “eagle prowl” van tours, or take a motor coach bus ride around the Wildlife Drive to view wildlife (including eagles) and learn about refuge habitats. Free registration for all eagle prowl van tours and bus tours will begin at 9:30 am the day of the festival (there is no pre-registration). Tour spaces fill up quickly, so visitors are encouraged to plan accordingly. A map of eagle “hot spots” will also be available for folks who wish to
explore the area on their own.

There will be no shortage of fun for children at the Eagle Festival. The youth “Hoverball” archery range and National Wild Turkey Federation’s BB gun range will be open from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm. Kids’ “make-and-take” activities will also run throughout the day while supplies last. Activities include a build-your-own nesting box for wrens, owl pellet exploration, make-your-own wildlife magnet and bagel bird feeder, a monarch migration game, and face painting.

Exhibitors include the Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center, Salisbury Zoo, and Raptor’s Eye, each with live birds of prey that you can see up close. Maryland DNR ‘Scales and Tales’ naturalists will have live reptiles on display, and Warren Saunders will be demonstrating the art of decoy carving. Other exhibitors include Pickering Creek Audubon Center, the Friends of Blackwater, Dorchester 4-H Program, Maryland DNR and the USDA Nutria Project, who will conduct Nutria Detector Dog demonstrations at 11:30 am and 2:30 pm.

As always, the Friends of Blackwater’s “Eagle’s Nest” Bookstore will be open for business, stocking one of the best collections of nature-related books and gifts on Delmarva, as well as Blackwater-specific items. Food and drinks will also be available for purchase throughout the day, benefitting Boy Scout Troop 532. Don’t miss out on this free event for the whole family! For more information and a schedule of programs, visit www.fws.gov/refuge/Blackwater, or call 410-228-2677. No pets, please!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to providing access to this event for all participants. Please direct all requests for sign language interpreting services, close captioning, or other accommodation needs to Ray Paterra (410-221-8155, ray_paterra@fws.gov, TTY 800-877-8339) with your request by close of business March 9, 2020.

*Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, located on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, protects over 32,000 acres of rich tidal marsh, mixed hardwood and pine forest, managed freshwater wetlands and cropland for a diversity of wildlife. To learn more, visit our website at [www.fws.gov/refuge/blackwater](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/blackwater) or @BlackwaterNWR.*

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).*

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