



Friends of Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge

Winter/Spring 2025 Newsletter

Hello Refuge Friends!

Sometimes we have so much going on, it's hard to find the time to publish a newsletter! This past Winter, we've been making great strides in our efforts to establish a visitor center for the Refuge. With support from the Mashpee Select Board, the Planning Board, the Finance Committee, the Conservation Commission and the MNWR Partners, we achieved the passing of a Town Meeting Article to lease a site located at 966 Falmouth Road. This was a huge win for us and creates a path for fulfilling a 30-year dream for this endeavor and a final "Home" for the Friends operations!

Also the past several months saw the culmination of an Eagle Scout Project we sponsored to support the New England Cottontail Rabbit. Our AmeriCorps Cape Cod member for this year, Kaycee Doherty, has worked tirelessly writing articles (including much of this newsletter!), working with schools on polinator gardens, giving talks and contributing to other efforts. We've also been working with the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA), the Coalition of Refuge Friends Organizations (CORFA), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to support efforts to forestall proposed cutbacks to the Refuge system and its staff. Included below is an article published by the NWRA about the current threats to Refuges nationwide.

Finally, keep tuned to the [Osprey Cam](#) at the Waquoit Bay Reserve as we await the arrival of this year's first hatchling!

Scroll down to read more or [download](#) and print the entire newsletter for later enjoyment.

Thank you for your continued support of our vibrant organization!

Glenn Davis and MaryKay Fox
Co-Presidents
Friends of Mashpee NWR

P.S.: If you haven't already renewed your membership, and/or want to get more involved in the Friends organization, see the mail-in form on the last page (or [click here](#) to donate online). More information is always available on our website, with up-to-date info on upcoming events and other Refuge news. Thank you again for your support!

AmeriCorps Member Kaycee Doherty

November 13, 2024 - My name is Kaycee Doherty, and I am a recent graduate of Catawba College in Salisbury, North Carolina and a current member of AmeriCorps Cape Cod here in Barnstable County. I'm serving here at Friends of Mashpee Wildlife Refuge through the AmeriCorps individual placement

program, where we can gain experience working with organizations committed to protecting our natural resources and wildlife.

I spent much of my childhood singing to the plants in my father's garden, catching small invertebrates in the woods with my two older brothers, and simply becoming more and more fascinated with the natural world around us. As I grew up and learned more and more, my passion for the outdoors only grew. Nature became a sanctuary, a safe place where teenage angst, anxiety, and day to day problems no longer existed for me. It also became infinitely fascinating, learning about plant and animal behaviors, niches, and how everything interacts around us.



I only graduated from college in May of 2024, so my professional career so far has been populated pretty exclusively by internships and university-based experiences. My first summer internship after graduating high school was with the New Jersey State Park Service in Wharton State Forest where I learned a lot about the pinelands and got some insight into what I wanted to do with my future. Next was my first experience with AmeriCorps, where I drove my car for 24 hours to North Dakota to work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. I absolutely adored this job and found that I loved to work outside. Most of my time there was spent monitoring fences that surrounded restoration areas, and I was able to see the incredible progress the land that was being protected was making. I had the opportunity to see places that nobody had been in years and identify native plants that hadn't been seen on these plots of

land in centuries. I was able to see and experience incredible things, including banding piping plovers, natural prairie restoration, and learning about a lot of new birds and ducks I had never noticed before.

In my final year at college, I took an ornithology course that fueled my budding interest in birds and led me to do my undergraduate research on sparrow habitat and behavior around my college. I helped in building a small field habitat at my school, where grasses and wildflowers could provide habitat for animals that needed it. As a result, the Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*), a songbird never seen before on campus, began to show up. I became thoroughly interested in how



and why these sparrows ended up there and how they were interacting with the existing sparrows in the preserve as well as how they divided food resources in general with other

species and decided to do an undergraduate research project delving into their habitat and behavior. I learned so much about catching, banding, and observing smaller songbirds and really fell in love with how the birds interacted with each other and with other species.



My most recent role was at The Wetlands Institute back home in New Jersey, where I spent my last two summers researching wetlands and the birds that rely on these critical habitats. This experience helped me realize exactly what I want from my work and life. Whether it was getting up before dawn to catch the high tide or carefully observing bird behavior for hours, I found every part of it fulfilling. The early wake-ups and tough conditions didn't matter—I was energized by the research we were conducting and the interesting patterns I was observing. Being out there in the wetlands, contributing to meaningful conservation efforts, and working with such dedicated people made every challenge feel worthwhile.

Wanting to keep exploring different paths in conservation and get hands-on experience in new areas, I felt that AmeriCorps Cape Cod was a natural next step. I was drawn to the program's focus on natural resource management, disaster response, environmental education, and community outreach—all areas I'm eager to dive into. Working on projects that support local ecosystems and getting the chance to engage directly with communities really appealed to me, especially as I hope to share my passion for the natural world with others.

Now, as a member of AmeriCorps Cape Cod, I am thrilled to be part of a team working to protect and preserve the unique environment of Barnstable County. I look forward to using my field experience to make a positive impact and continue learning from the talented individuals around me. It's going to be an incredible year, and I can't wait to see what we accomplish together!



(Article written by Kaycee Doherty, 2024-25 AmeriCorps Member.)

Volunteers Make A Difference

by Kaycee Doherty, 2024-25 AmeriCorps Member

March 31, 2025 - A questionnaire was recently sent out to the board members of the Friends of Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge. It asked each of them why they were drawn to the group and how their backgrounds led them all to the same place.

"When I moved to the Cape in 2019, I wanted to connect with people and support causes I believed in," one

board member said. Attending an outreach event at the Mashpee Senior Center led to discovering Friends of Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge (FMNWR), which turned membership into active volunteering and becoming a board member.

Many members of the board find themselves deeply engaged.

“It didn’t take long to go from member to board member to officer. Organizations like this rely on volunteers, and the rewards are great,” one responded. Another long-term member echoed, “I joined in 2005 but got really involved in 2009 with trail work and osprey nest repairs. By 2011, I became president, working to revitalize the Friends group.”

Projects range from reestablishing the Friends group to conservation initiatives.

“One of my most satisfying projects was installing the live osprey cam at Waquoit Bay Reserve,” wrote a respondent. “Managing it and interacting with viewers has been an incredible experience.” Others highlight habitat restoration, pollinator gardens and community outreach: “Seeing kids and families engaged in our work is so fulfilling.” Volunteering at FMNWR is more than a commitment; it’s a way of life. “It’s an extension of my personal need to give back, ensuring future generations can enjoy wildlife and natural spaces,” a respondent wrote. Another said, “Volunteering is a gift to yourself if you find the right organization. It gives you purpose and lets you choose your level of involvement.”

With diverse backgrounds, volunteers bring a variety of expertise. From former educators to environmental scientists, each has a personal story that led them to FMNWR. “I spent my youth exploring the wilds of Minnesota, later working in environmental research. Retiring to focus on the Friends group was the best decision I’ve made,” one said.

Whether leading habitat restoration, educating the community or simply sharing their passion, FMNWR volunteers play a crucial role. Their dedication ensures the refuge remains a sanctuary for wildlife and future generations alike.

(Article originally published in the Mashpee Enterprise, March 31, 2025.)



New Eco-Friendly Visitor Center Planned For Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge

by Kaycee Doherty, 2024-25 AmeriCorps Member

March 21, 2025 - The Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge is eager to get started on construction of its new visitor center. Years in the making, the center is expected to become a hub for

environmental education, eco-tourism and community connections. With a critical Mashpee Town Meeting vote approaching on May 5, supporters are eager to highlight the center's potential to enrich Mashpee residents and visitors while setting a new standard for sustainability.

Over the last three years and recently in a series of planning meetings conducted among refuge partners in February, many features of the center have been discussed. The

center will be designed to serve as a model for green infrastructure, featuring renewable energy with solar, rainwater catchment, gray water recycling and a warming south-facing design. Throughout the site, demonstration gardens will showcase sustainable and natural-focused landscaping, including pollinator habitats, native plantings and rain gardens. A greenhouse will support year-round education and native plant propagation for conservation efforts.

The center will offer an array of educational resources and exhibits that highlight the refuge's ecosystems and demonstrate the collaboration of refuge partners. The building will also house a meeting room for workshops, youth programs and community gatherings. It will showcase local artwork, providing cultural heritage alongside conservation efforts. Talks and educational demonstrations will be surrounded by a landscape geared to support the natural resource.

"Despite covering nearly 6,000 acres in Mashpee and Falmouth, the establishment of a visitor center for the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge would finally have a place to pin it on the map. 'Where is it?' people often ask," said Glenn Davis, president of Friends of Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, the friends group would have a designated home base for its operations.

For Mashpee, supporters have said, the visitor center represents more than just a new building. It will be an investment in future education, environmental stewardship and community connections—a place where current and future generations can learn about the natural world and how to protect it.

(Article originally published in the Enterprise, March 21, 2025.)



Students Help Enhance Pollinator Diversity At Lawrence School Garden

by Kaycee Doherty, 2024-25 AmeriCorps Member

January 17, 2025 - In 2017 the Friends of the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge received a \$25,000 grant from

the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which had an educational component to work with 15 teachers at Cape Cod schools to establish educational pollinator gardens that focused on specific curriculum needs.

In November, the Friends' AmeriCorps member, Kaycee Doherty, contacted the schools in Falmouth, Mashpee and Bourne to gauge interest in revitalizing their pollinator gardens. The first school to respond was Falmouth High School.



The Friends team met with teachers Christine Brothers and Elizabeth McLain to talk about the school's goals for the garden renovation. This generated a discussion about the pollinator garden at the Lawrence School and its growing needs. The first step was for volunteers from the Friends group to mow the existing plants and leaves, turning them into mulch. This finely chopped organic mixture would decompose and add nutrients over the next year. Two yards of compost were delivered to the site. A group of seven FHS seniors then volunteered to help move the compost to the mowed area and leveled it using rakes; four community volunteers and Ms. Brothers also participated. Seeds were hand-tossed to evenly distribute them and were covered with a thin layer of soil.

The Lawrence garden is located on the left of the school entrance in an area outlined by tree limbs. Throughout the summer visitors will see the never-ending array of wildflowers attracting beautiful butterflies and other native pollinators. Pollinator gardens are important no matter the size; they provide vital food resources for native pollinators, which in turn help to facilitate a healthy ecosystem and provide a critical service in growing local food.

Students were asked why volunteering for this project was important to them, with these responses: "I like spending time outside, so it was an enjoyable way to help the community," one student said. "Volunteering was important to me because the pollinator garden is very helpful for both the environment and science classes at Lawrence," said another.

The students showed a great desire to show up for environmental restoration efforts, stating, "The least I could do is show up and help when Mother Nature needs a hand."

(Article originally published in the Enterprise, January 17, 2025.)

(Photo credit: Christine Brothers)

Managing Sandplain Grassland Community and Diversifying Habitats Through a Prescribed Burn

May 7, 2025 - The Town of Falmouth recently completed prescribed burns at the Coonamessett fields within the

Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge in Falmouth. Thanks to USFWS funding support, they were able to complete the burn, and we are pleased to help them get this information out to the public. The effort was a collaboration between US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Town of Falmouth Conservation and DPW departments, Mass Wildlife, Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School students, The 300 Committee Land Trust volunteers, AmeriCorps Cape Cod, and other private and public organizations. [Read the full report about the effort here...](#)



Eagle Scout “Rabbitat” Project Completed

November 12, 2025 - During the past month, volunteer Boy Scouts from Troop 42, under the leadership of Eagle Scout candidate, Griffin Jones, installed an interpretive panel along the trail leading from Red Brook Road and repainted the gates on either side of the trail. Griffin’s Eagle Scout project involved leading a group of volunteers in constructing “rabbitat” brush piles at the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge and the Charles T. Eastman Wildlife Habitat near the Upper Childs River Restoration site. One of the rabbitats at each location is further off the trail, nearer locations that may attract rabbits or other wildlife looking for shelter. The other rabbitat is closer to the trail and serves as a demonstration model.



Griffin worked with graphic designer, Susie Perry, of Perry Designs in Bourne, who generously volunteered her services to help design an interpretive panel providing information about the New England Cottontail and efforts that have been made with key local partners, including USFWS and Friends of MNWR to research the species and support the restoration of its population. A QR code on the panel links patrons to further information on the Friends’ website.

After installing the sign next to the model rabbitat, Griffin and the scouts wrapped up the project by sanding, priming, and repainting the gates at the trailheads on Red Brook Road and Amy Brown Road which were peeling and rusty. With fresh coats of paint and new reflective tape, they have a fresh, restored appearance.

Griffin would like to extend his thanks for the support and generosity of the Friends of MNWR, Falmouth Rod & Gun Club, local partners, USFWS staff, Troop 42 scouts, and Ms. Perry in helping to carry out his Eagle Scout project and hopes it will raise public awareness about the



New England Cottontail and the great work of the Friends of Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge well into the future.

Your Voice Matters! Help Protect Our National Wildlife Refuges

Mass Firings of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Employees Threaten National Wildlife Refuge System & Conservation

WASHINGTON, DC – February 14th, 2025 – The National Wildlife Refuge Association is deeply alarmed by today’s Department of the Interior (DOI)-wide termination of approximately 370 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) employees, many of whom are critical to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). These firings, which disproportionately target biologists and natural resource professionals, are a direct attack on science-based conservation and the future of America’s wildlife. According to reports, these positions were deemed “not in the public interest” by DOI—an assertion that fundamentally ignores the role these professionals play in protecting and restoring our nation’s wildlife and wild places.

This sweeping, mass firing comes at a time when the Refuge System is already struggling with a decimated workforce. Today’s cuts will further cripple the agency’s ability to protect and manage America’s 573 national wildlife refuges, which span 95 million acres of land, 750 million acres of marine habitat, and supports countless species, many of which are keystone species, pollinators, and others vital to agriculture and the health of ecosystems.

“Losing this many dedicated employees all at once is an especially devastating blow to conservation efforts nationwide and an intentional dismantling of science,” said Desirée Sorenson-Groves, President & CEO of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. “The National Wildlife Refuge System was already underfunded and understaffed. The people being fired today are the backbone of wildlife protection in this country. Without them, habitats will degrade, endangered species will go unmonitored, trails will remain unmaintained, and visitors will lose access to environmental education and recreation opportunities. This is a crisis. These terminations will have long-lasting consequences for the protection of wildlife and habitat, as well as for the communities that depend on refuges for recreation, tourism, and economic benefits.”

Reports indicate that in order to hire new employees, the agency will be required to eliminate four current positions for every one new hire—a policy that will only worsen the Refuge System’s staffing crisis.

The Refuge Association urges the Department of the Interior and Congress to take immediate action to prevent further damage to the Refuge System and to reverse course and restore these positions and critical staffing and funding for wildlife conservation. Our organization, along with our partners, Refuge Friends groups, and refuge supporters and advocates, calls on decision-makers to prioritize the protection of the dedicated professionals who safeguard our nation’s wildlife. The public must speak out before more damage is done to our nation’s most treasured wild places.

For more information on how you can support our efforts, visit refugeassociation.org.

As the independent voice advocating on behalf of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Wildlife Refuge Association protects, promotes, and enhances America’s

wildlife heritage through strategic programs that serve the System and wildlife beyond its boundaries. The organization addresses Refuge System funding, management, and strategic growth, while also promoting programs that maximize the system's conservation impact.

(This article was originally published by the National Wildlife Refuge Association, a nonprofit dedicated to defending the National Wildlife Refuge System and the wildlife that depend on it. Learn more at refugeassociation.org.)

Creature Feature

Kinglets: Crowns of a Different Kind

by Kaycee Doherty, 2024-25 AmeriCorps Member

January 10, 2025 - On my first day serving with Friends of Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge, as we were gathering signs from our recent “Walk for the Wild” event along Great Hay Road in the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge, the sound of birdsong caught our attention. I recognized the call right away, a Ruby-Crowned Kinglet. These small, lively birds are often found near water and are known for their vibrant feathers on top of their head. Despite their size, Ruby-Crowned Kinglets have a surprisingly powerful voice, and hearing their song that day added a lovely touch to our walk.



The Ruby-Crowned Kinglet is a small, olive-green bird, with a thin tail. They have relatively large heads with a small, black beak and black wings with a distinctive white wing bar. They are named for the bright red patch of feathers sometimes seen on the top of the head in adult males. This “crown” can be concealed or exposed depending on the needs of the bird. The crest can be hidden under olive feathers when under normal circumstances or shown off when trying to attract a mate, adding a vibrant splash of color to their appearance that can make them easy to spot.

This kinglet species is often a rare sight out on Cape Cod, usually only seen in the fall on their migration south for the winter, although some decide to brave the winter up here in hopes of a mild winter and easier migration to their breeding grounds. They spend the summer months up north in Canada and along the western mountains of the United States, and then Migrate to the southern half of the US and Mexico for the winter, with the mountainous populations often simply moving to lower elevations.

The following week, we returned to the same trail to finish collecting the signs. This time, we became surrounded by birdsong in the middle of the woods, but this time it was a Golden-Crowned Kinglet, who has a slightly different song. Though we didn't manage to spot either bird, the beautiful song of both birds created an atmosphere of wonder for the two of us, where Lucinda could tell me about the important history of the Great Hay Road, and I could share what I knew about the birds we heard along the way.

At first glance, the Golden-Crowned Kinglet looks quite similar to the Ruby-Crowned Kinglet. Both species share a similar size, shape, and olive-green



coloring. However, the Golden-Crowned Kinglet has a paler belly and a more striking facial pattern, with bold white markings around the eyes and a golden crest surrounded by black stripes. Unlike the Ruby-Crowned Kinglet, both male and female Golden-Crowned Kinglets have a yellow stripe on their heads that cannot be fully concealed. However, males can make their orange-yellow feathers more prominent by raising them during displays.

The Golden-Crowned Kinglet does have a small year-round population on the cape but is also most often seen in fall during their migration. This species has a much narrower range than the other kinglet, staying in the continental United States for the winter and breeding only in the south of Canada, with small year-round populations around the northern East and West US mountain ranges.

Both Kinglets are among North America's smallest birds, weighing only a few grams more than a hummingbird. If you would like to hear or perhaps even see a kinglet yourself, fall would be the best time to try and do so. Both species like to flit along the canopy in treetops, so it's often much easier to hear them than to see them. However, once you hear them, all it takes is some patience and a keen eye to catch a glimpse at these gorgeous birds. Kinglets can also be attracted to bird feeders in your very own backyard. They may prefer suet products, mealworms, sunflower chips and peanut pieces.

Experiences like these remind us of the incredible diversity of wildlife in our local refuge and the small joys of spending time outdoors. Whether using apps like Merlin to decipher birdsong or a field guide to identify birds along the trail, birdwatching can be both fulfilling and fun. These moments connect us to nature and highlight the simple pleasures of exploring the world around us. They also underscore the importance of protecting these habitats so that future generations can experience the same sense of wonder that we felt on those trails. Every walk through the refuge offers a new story, a new discovery, and a renewed sense of connection to the environment.

(Article written by Kaycee Doherty, 2024-25 AmeriCorps Member.)

References:

"Golden-crowned kinglet overview", Cornell Lab of Ornithology. 2019. All About Birds.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>

"Ruby-crowned kinglet overview", Cornell Lab of Ornithology. 2019. All About Birds.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>

Image credits:

[Photo of Ruby-Crowned Kinglet]. (n.d.) [Canva.com]

[Photo of Golden-Crowned Kinglet]. (n.d.) [Canva.com]

Written by: Grace Vachon, AmeriCorps Cape Cod

Photos by: Grace Vachon, or sourced from Creative Commons

Osprey Cam - Season Four

May 15, 2025 - If you haven't been watching 24/7, the nesting pair of

ospreys, Rachel and Carson, are incubating three eggs as we anxiously await the arrival of the first hatchling. Don't miss the live action at the osprey nest at the Waquoit Bay Reserve. The first chick should emerge any day now!

Check out our [highlights](#) clips from the current and previous seasons!



Please check our website for other upcoming events, activities and volunteer opportunities. Also, don't miss the Town of Mashpee Interpretive Nature Tours on Saturday mornings (see our [events calendar](#) for detail)!

2025 Friends of Mashpee NWR Board of Directors:

Glenn Davis, Co-President, Co-Treasurer

MaryKay Fox, Co-President, Co-Treasurer

Lucinda Keith, Clerk

Neil Barkin

Katelyn Cadoret

F Thomas Fudala, Historian

Tania Lewandowski

Membership Form

YES! I want to support the **Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge** - enclosed are my dues as checked below.

Name: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (C) _____

Street: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

Email: _____

Enclose payment for the membership - please make checks payable to: **FMNWR**
Mail to: FMNWR, P.O. Box 1283, Mashpee, MA 02649

Thank you!

☐ Junior (18 and under) \$10

☐ Individual \$25

☐ Family \$50

☐ Conservation Friend \$100

☐ Wildlife Sponsor \$200

☐ Refuge Sponsor \$500+

☐ Lifetime Gift \$1000

☐ Corporate Gift \$ _____

☐ Other \$ _____

[Donate Online](#)

Volunteer Form

I would be interested in the following opportunities listed below:

- ☐ Stewardship Projects
- ☐ Newsletter Editor
- ☐ Native Pollinator Gardens
- ☐ Education Talks/Walks, Events at Schools
- ☐ Volunteer & Membership Coordinator

The Friends meet monthly on the first Tuesday at 5pm on Zoom. Please join us and get involved with Refuge projects, Friends group, pollinators, and community events! If interested, email us at info@friendsofmashpeenationalwildliferefuge.org for a Zoom invite.

[Download Full Newsletter](#)



Friends of the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge
info@friendsofmashpeenationalwildliferefuge.org
www.friendsofmashpeenationalwildliferefuge.org

FMNWR

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