



LONG ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

NARRATIVE REPORT
LONG ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
FISCAL YEAR 1975

REFUGE PERSONNEL

Permanent Personnel

Roger N. Steelman, Jr. (EOD 9/16/74).....	Refuge Manager
Michele F. Sleva.....	Clerk
Frederick C. Schmid (Died 11/8/74)....	Asst. Refuge Manager (Morton)
Domenick R. Ciccone (EOD 8/5/74).....	Asst. Refuge Manager
John B. Gallegos (EOD 9/16/74).....	Asst. Refuge Manager (Morton)
Rocco J. Coronato (Resigned 6/27/75)....	Maintenance Worker
Bruce Marto.....	Maintenance Worker

Temporary Personnel

Eric G. Klerk (Term. 8/27/74)..... (EOD 4/13/75)	Laborer
Harlan P. Bass (Term. 8/17/74).....	Biological Aid
Thomas J. Marcacchi (Term. 8/17/74)....	Biological Aid (Morton)
Paul D. Allen (Term. 12/21/74)..... (EOD 5/25/75)	Summer Aid (Morton)
Catherine G. Hopper (EOD 6/9/75).....	Biological Aid
John G. Rogers (EOD 6/9/75).....	Biological Aid (Morton)
Jane E. Henderson (EOD 5/26/75).....	Summer Aid

Target Rock is the administrative headquarters for the Long Island National Wildlife Refuges:

Morton NWR	Oyster Bay NWR
Wertheim NWR	Seatuck NWR
Conscience Point NWR	Lido Beach (WMA)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL.....	1
WILDLIFE.....	2
REFUGE DEVELOPMENT.....	5
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.....	7
FIELD INVESTIGATIONS.....	7
PUBLIC RELATIONS.....	7
OTHER ITEMS.....	10

NARRATIVE REPORT
LONG ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
FISCAL YEAR 1975

I. GENERAL

The Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge, deeded to the government in 1947, was under the life use of Mrs. Cecile Wertheim until her death on December 3, 1974. This report shall therefore cover Wertheim for only the second half of Fiscal Year 1975, during which the Fish and Wildlife Service was in direct control of the land.

Weather and Habitat

The east end of Long Island suffered under a rather severe heat wave during the months of July and August resulting in a heavy use of Morton's beaches (nearly 8,000 visitors). The winter was a mild one, none of the North Shore harbors were frozen at anytime, and Target Rock recorded only a single snow storm resulting in less than six inches of accumulated snow.

Although some ponds and creeks at Wertheim were frozen at times, the water of the Carmans River was open during most of the winter. The river winds over three miles through the 1,937 acres of Great South Bay. The marsh bordering the river ranges from freshwater at the north, to brackish and then to saltmarsh at the mouth. Phragmites is widespread throughout the marsh due to extensive mosquito control ditching which began in the 1930s. Refuge woodlands are of oak-pine composition and are typical of Long Island forests.

Target Rock's brackish pond remained stable during the period as it is regularly flooded by spring tides. The other small freshwater ponds and potholes were dry during most of the year. Thickets of bittersweet, wild grape and greenbriar continued to provide good food and cover for a limited number of resident game and songbirds. A growing number of dead trees in the formal garden provide an ever-increasing insect population and natural nesting cavities.

II. WILDLIFE

A. Migratory Birds

1. Waterfowl. Mallards and black ducks were abundant on the marshes of Wertheim throughout the winter months. Large numbers of widgeon, scaup and bufflehead were found in the lower river and bay area, while coot were numerous along the entire river. Smaller populations of canvasback, gadwall and red-breasted merganser were present, along with occasional sightings of pintails, hooded mergansers and Canada geese. Early spring brought migratory wood ducks, but none were known to have nested on the refuge. Mallards, black ducks and gadwall did remain through the breeding season, and broods of all three species were observed. Mute swans were present throughout the year, ranging from a single bird to flocks of a hundred or more.

Except for an occasional pair of Canada geese or mallards on the brackish pond, there is virtually no waterfowl use at Target Rock.

2. Other Migratory Game Birds. Target Rock supports a population of 40-50 mourning doves. During April there were several sightings of displaying woodcock.

Mourning doves were plentiful at Wertheim and nesting did occur.

3. Other Water and Marsh Birds. At Wertheim the great blue heron was, by far, the most common of the wading birds. This bird was present in large numbers throughout the period of this report. Other heron species present during the warmer months included the common and snowy egrets, green heron and the black-crowned night heron. Common loons were occasionally seen in the lower Carmans River and double-crested cormorants were frequently observed perched on fish traps in Bellport Bay.

Common egrets, snowy egrets and great blue herons are common during most months on the brackish pond at Target Rock.

B. Resident Game Birds

Ring-necked pheasants are abundant on Wertheim and Target Rock. At Wertheim there are probably pen-raised birds which had been released just prior to acquisition by the government. Bobwhite quail are common on Wertheim, Target Rock and Morton. Several quail broods were seen at all three refuges.

C. Big Game Animals

Wertheim's woodlands provide habitat for a healthy population of white-tailed deer which have disappeared from most of Long Island. The deer population numbers approximately 25 and includes at least one albino (a buck).

D. Fur Animals, Predators, Rodents and Other Mammals.

Only at Wertheim are meaningful populations of mammals present. Muskrat populations, in its marshland bordering the Carmans River, were apparently high, as evidenced by the abundance of houses and other signs in the marsh. Prior to final acquisition by the government, muskrats from the refuge had been trapped on a yearly basis. At the present time there does not seem to be a need to continue the muskrat harvest. Chipmunks were extremely abundant during the warmer periods of the year. Grey squirrel and the eastern cottontail rabbit also find the refuge environment favorable and both species thrive. Red fox, raccoon and striped skunk are infrequently seen, but all three are known to exist on the refuge. An even more elusive creature, the mink, has previously been observed in this area, although none were seen during the past year. An over-abundance of flying insects during the spring and summer supports a number of species of bats. The little brown bat is regularly seen at night devouring insects over the river, and has been found in some refuge buildings.

E. Hawks, Eagles, Owls, Ravens, Crows and Magpies

Two osprey were observed along the Carmans River during May and June, but no evidence of nesting was found. A pair of osprey nested on Morton, eggs were produced but finally abandoned in July.

Marsh and red-tailed hawks and the American kestrel were commonly sighted at Wertheim. There were occasional sightings of rough-legged and eastern pigeon hawks. Great-horned and screech owls were seen or heard in Wertheim's woodlands; short-eared owls were seen hunting its marshes.

Assistant Manager Ciccone and Maintenance Worker Marto successfully reared a fledgling great-horned owl to maturity at Target Rock. This animal, named Ferdinand, ate considerably better than the project leader.

Crows were abundant on all of the refuges throughout the year.

Belted kingfishers were often seen perched on the refuge signs along the Carmans River and fishing the brackish pond at Target Rock.

F. Fish

The Carmans River supports a large variety of fish due to its variation in salinity. The water ranges from nearly fresh at the refuge's northern border to salty at the mouth. Fish species therefore vary from brown trout and carp in the upper river to striped bass and bluefish down by the bay. White perch are numerous in the brackish waters, while eels are extremely plentiful at the mouth of the river. Blue crabs are found in the lower half of the river and are often caught from a public dock on the western shore.

G. Reptiles and Amphibians

Little information was recorded on Wertheim's reptiles and amphibians. Among the amphibians observed were bullfrogs, leopard and green frogs, the American toad and unidentified salamanders. The garter and black rat snakes were often seen, as were bog and painted turtles. Snapping turtles were also seen, but it is not known how abundant they are.

The eastern box turtle is common at Target Rock as are leopard frogs and spring peepers.

Morton's population of northern diamondback terrapins appears to be stable.

I. Disease

There was no known incidence of widespread disease during this period.

During April, refuge personnel, in cooperation with biologists from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, captured a number of American coot from the Carmans River in response to a request from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The coot were examined by Doctor Dennis Murphy and Doctor William Parham. Blood and organ samples were taken to be tested for avian diseases such as fowl cholera, Newcastle's disease and ornithosis. As of this time we have not been informed of the test results.

III. REFUGE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

A. Physical Development

General landscaping and the construction of barriers around the perimeter of the recently refinished parking lot at Morton Refuge was completed in July. A much needed loading ramp was also constructed.

Real Property I-FWS #7, an old two-story dwelling, was removed from the Conscience Point Refuge on February 24.

The Annual Oyster Bay Mill Pond Clean-Up was held on March 22. Members of the Mill River Rod and Gun Club and two local scout troops removed four truck loads of garbage from the pond area.

An effort to stabilize three acres of eroding bluff slope on the Morton Refuge was completed in April. A mix of annual and perennial ryes together with red fescue was sown.

A boardwalk, 248 feet long, was constructed through the salt marsh at Morton Refuge.

The newly acquired Wertheim Refuge was posted in May.

Eight miles of boundary including three miles of river were posted.

B. General Maintenance

The old jet water pump at the Target Rock manager's residence was replaced with a submersible unit in July. Floor sanding and the repainting of various rooms in the manager's residence was also completed.

A number of repairs were necessary on the oil burner at the Target Rock Environmental Center.

Electric hand dryers and a fire alarm system were installed at the Target Rock Environmental Center. The floor in the entrance hall was refinished under contract.

C. Rehabilitation Needed

1. Target Rock. All the buildings on this refuge require immediate and extensive rehabilitation. The following are the most critical needs and their estimated costs:

Q-6 - Repair or replacement of porous slate roof. \$5,000.

Q-7 - Repair of leaky wall plumbing. Repair of rotted wood breezeway. \$2,000.

Office/Shop Complex - Replacement and updating of non-conforming fuse boxes and electrical wiring. Various repairs of plumbing and heating system. \$3,000.

Environmental Center - Replace boiler and associated heating system repairs. Replacement and repair of shutters and screen porches. Repoint chimney and other masonry repairs. Replace doors and install safety devices. \$15,000.

Repaint all buildings. \$8,000.

2. Morton. Construct maintenance and storage building. \$5,000.
3. Wertheim. Refinish $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile of refuge entrance road. Remove existing building and construct new shop building. Rehabilitate two existing water control structures. Remodel cottage for use as refuge office. \$8,000.

IV. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Not applicable.

V. FIELD INVESTIGATIONS OR APPLIED RESEARCH

Not applicable.

VI. PUBLIC RELATIONS

A. Recreational Use

Most of the summer recreational use at Morton continues to be basking and bathing from its beaches. In the near future we hope to be able to implement a program which will discourage such activity and redirect it towards wildlife-oriented or interpretive programs. Winter use at Morton is limited and centers around birders attracted to the refuge by wintering waterfowl in Little Peconic Bay. During the school year several local schools use the trails and Morton's interpretive center which is a remodeled barn housing displays and audio-visual facilities.

Public use at Target Rock is intensified during the spring blooms of rhododendrons and azaleas, and during the period of fall foliage coloration. At other times we serve various school classes, church groups, hiking and biking clubs, and the Huntington, Moraine and Lyman Langdon Audubon Societies. We are also visited by biology classes from C. W. Post, Medgar Evers College, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, York College and Suffolk Community College.

In September, 1974, the Suffolk County Office for the Promotion of Education (SCOPE) made preparations to

continue their rather elaborate program at Target Rock, employing overnight use of the mansion. This was a program in which we had little input and were relegated to a subservient, custodial role. In November, Region Five Safety Officer, Richard Pippenger, and John Teske, Assistant Chief, Office of Safety, inspected the mansion and found its use as a dormitory facility to be in violation of the Life Safety Code No. 101. Mr. Pippenger called an immediate halt to all overnight activities. When they were no longer able to exploit the baronial potential of mansion living, SCOPE seemed to lose interest in using other refuge facilities and subsequently departed. We are presently developing an adult-oriented interpretive program which will begin in the spring of 1976.

We are also investigating a cooperative venture with a local rhododendron club, through which we hope to be able to improve the public's enjoyment of the formal rhododendron garden by a series of programs given by specialists.

We hope to concentrate all public use on Target Rock and Morton Refuges, leaving Wertheim totally for wildlife. Thus, we will publish no Public Use Regulations for Wertheim and hope to limit educational activity to small, serious groups of college students seeking research opportunities.

As George Gage has pointed out in past years, our public is basically urban and often misunderstands our goals completely. They are often truculent and stretch our patience to the limit. They define the public good in terms so self-centered that wildlife goals are beyond their ken, and they perceive all public lands as playgrounds. Even those who call themselves environmentalists are possessed of a naiveté which is astounding. We hope to attend to these public attitudes in our spring adult education program.

B. Violations

Oyster Bay continues to plague us with violations, reported violations, reports of suspected violations and general

neighborhood backbiting. We try to investigate each complaint, but it is a real chore since Oyster Bay is twenty minutes away, and more often than not we find nothing of substance. The following are more or less real violations:

Bartum Homes, Inc., a developer, working near the shoreline in Bayville attempted to extend his building site by about one-half acre at our expense. Working with the Corps of Engineers Inspector Ed Canfora, we directed the developer to pull back his bulkhead to above mean high water.

Mr. Selig Burrows of Mill Neck installed an illegal dock. George Gage, in company with a number of federal and state helpers, persuaded Mr. Burrows to redesign his dock in conference with our regulations.

Steelman made repeated visits to the property of W. James and Carol P. Oelsner of Centre Island in the continuing struggle to prevent Mr. Oelsner from obtaining a Corps' permit for proposed bulkheading. The point may now be moot for the sea has stopped its erosion of the Oelsners' property.

Considerable time has been spent during this period to control the rampant violations at Wertheim. The newly acquired 2,000 acre tract is surrounded by developments and is subject to chronic trespass, trail bike use, camp fires, camping and deer jacking. A number of fires were started this spring, apparently by youngsters attempting to study the efficiency of the local fire company, to whom we owe great thanks. Much gratitude is also due our Special Agents at Kennedy Airport who have always responded to our call for assistance, swiftly and with good humor.

Target Rock is subject to frequent trespass violations at all hours of the day and night. But thanks to an efficient collateral system and an understanding Chief Magistrate, we seldom have problems with the same violators twice. In addition, we have a close working relationship with the Lloyd Harbor Police Department. This cooperation is valuable to both agencies since our location at the end of

Lloyd Neck means that their problems are easily chased into our bag, so to speak.

C. Safety

Summer Aid Paul Allen, an unauthorized vehicle operator, precipitated a collision at Morton Refuge which resulted in a \$700.00 claim against the government. Allen, working alone at the time, attempted to move the refuge Jeep a few feet. Instead, he rammed it so hard broadside into one parked car that he drove it sideways into a second parked car. This accident was the result of no supervision; caused by a lack of funds, I presume. Manager Gage had been assigned to Great Swamp and no replacement had been appointed. There was no Assistant Manager on board at the time.

VII. OTHER ITEMS

A. Personnel

Refuge Manager Roger N. Steelman, Jr. was transferred from Erie National Wildlife Refuge to Target Rock, September, 1974. Assistant Manager Domenick Ciccone was transferred from Blackwater NWR to Target Rock, August, 1974. John Gallegos EOD with the Service September, 1974 and was assigned to Morton Refuge as Assistant Manager.

On June 27, 1975, Maintenance Worker Rocco Coronato resigned. Rocco had been employed by Mr. Eberstadt and came to us along with the Deed of Gift. His help during the period of transition is most appreciated. Rocco's resignation was tendered in order that he not violate Social Security regulations, and he continues to be a valuable part-time employee.

Clerk Michele Sleva's Developmental Training Plan was approved in April, 1975. In May she completed a four-credit Field Botany course at C. W. Post College.

Maintenance Worker Bruce Marto completed a twelve-week course in arc welding at the L.A. Wilson Technological Center.

Assistant Manager Ciccone attended the Supervisor's Job I workshop in Boston.

On November 8, Frederick C. Schmid died. Fred, who had been stationed at Morton since 1967, was an outstanding biologist, and will be mourned by his many friends both in and out of the Service.

Special note should be taken of Assistant Manager John Gallegos who was thrust into the Morton position without any substantial training, and who spent much of his own time helping the Schmid family during the last days of Fred's illness and giving them comfort after his death. In spite of this humanitarian burden, he carried out the duties of Refuge Manager in a most commendable manner.

B. Credits

Portions of this narrative dealing with Wertheim were prepared by Assistant Manager Ciccone. Development and maintenance section was prepared by Maintenance Worker Marto. The rest of the staff contributed in various ways towards its magnificent structure. Clerk Sleva typed it and Manager Steelman pored over it thoughtfully and accepts responsibility for omissions, faults and whatever else irritates you.

Submitted by:

Signature

Date

Reviewed by:

Signature

Date

Dr. Dennis Murphy and Dr. William Parham, U.S. Department of Agriculture, taking blood sample from coot captured on Carmans River.

(Steelman)

