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## Bragging Rights or Visitor Services



*photo credit: Bonnie Strawser*

*Photo caption: Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Acting President Stanley Oliver coaches a youngster on surfcasting.*

Wildfest 2009 marked the end of National Wildlife Refuge Week at Alligator River and Pea Island NWRs. This event geared towards children from pre-school to 12 years old brings together numerous partners to teach children about wildlife and the wild lands around them. Although the damp, wet weather and the opening day of hunting season were instrumental in keeping many families from attending, over 100 children with adults in tow passed through the various stations to participate in fun and educational activities. Some came as far as an hour away to "Go Wild at Wildfest"! Children were given a passport when they arrived. After completing an activity at a station, the child's passport was stamped. Before leaving for the day, a completed passport was exchanged for a goodie bag. Goodies were donated from various organizations and businesses in the area.

The featured guests were the live reptiles and amphibians provided by the N.C. Museum of Natural History. Other critters represented in one form or another included sea turtles, black bears, red wolves, and sharks. In addition to learning about wildlife, the children were able to act like an animal in the Wildlife Olympics. They could also drown a rubber fish with paint and place it on a paper to make a fish print. At the shark table, children were treated to a shark tooth to take along, while another table provided an opportunity to make a pinecone birdfeeder.

Outside they could learn about wildlife conservation at the NC Wildlife Resources Commissions's Sensory Safari Trailer. Older children could try their hand at surf casting while younger children could step inside and "Go Fish". While a D.J. played music in the background, many children were entertained by the costumed critters making their way around the crowd. Refreshments were provided by the Manteo Middle School's A.V.I.D. members who were raising funds for college visits. Even with the less-than- usual turnout, the participants and exhibitors had a great day. Many were quick to ask when next year's Wildfest would be and remarked that they will be back.

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