

Visiting the DuPont Nature Center (DNC)

and the Mispillion Harbor Reserve

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Is the DuPont Nature Center open year-round?**

- Due to budget constraints, the center is closed from October 1 through March 31. During April and September the center is open two days a week (Wednesdays and Saturdays). Between May 1 and August 31, the Center is open Tuesday – Sunday. Hours of operation for all open days are 10am to 4pm.

- **Can I sit on the deck at the DuPont Nature Center after hours?**

- Yes, you may utilize the deck and grounds from dawn to dusk, and on days that the center is not open.

- **Are food and beverages permitted on the grounds and deck area?**

- Yes. But we are a carry in, carry out area; you must clean up and remove your trash. No alcoholic beverages are permitted. Food is not permitted inside of the Center. And please, do not feed the wildlife!

- **What about my pets visiting with me?**

- Except for guide dogs accompanying blind and/or deaf persons, dogs and other domesticated animals are not allowed inside the DuPont Nature Center. They are allowed on the grounds. Dogs must be on a leash and controlled at all times. Do not leave pets unattended and you must clean up after your pet.

- **What is the best time of the year to see shorebirds, especially Red Knots?**

- The best time to see Red Knots and other shorebirds is around the second week of May until the first week of June, however weather conditions may cause earlier or later arrival and departure times. The low tide provides best viewing opportunities; the exposed shorelines and mudflats enable the birds to forage. We have spotted Knots as early as May 1st!

- **When is the best time to see Horseshoe crabs?**

- When the water temp in the Bay reaches about 59°F (15°C) horseshoe crabs become active. We've seen them on the shorelines here as early as April 11th. The best time to see spawning horseshoe crabs is on the beginning of the high tides in May and June. You will see a higher number of crabs during the new and full moons.

- **How close can I get to the Red Knots and/or Horseshoe crabs when I visit?**

- Wildlife is unpredictable and there may or may not be an abundance of shorebirds and/or horseshoe crabs on the shoreline during your visit. The Center sits on a point which is surrounded by water. The exposed shorelines provide great wildlife viewing opportunities during the low tide cycle. Visitors can view wildlife very close via a high-definition nature cam which is located on the island just north of the center. Footage is streamed live into the inside of the center.

- The bridge on Lighthouse Road coming into Mispillion Harbor allows visitors an awesome view of fish and wildlife up close.

- **When is low tide/high tide at the Mispillion Harbor?**

- The road leading in to the Center is prone to flooding during high tides, new and/or full moon phases, and when the wind direction is from the east. There are times when the road is completely covered by water. Do NOT drive through the water if you cannot see the road or bridge.
- For a tide chart visit: <http://tides.mobilegeographics.com/locations/3817.html>

- **Will mosquitoes, flies, or gnats “bug” me while viewing wildlife?**

- At times. A sea breeze tends to diminish the numbers of biting insects. Insect repellent is recommended.

- **Can I access the shorelines and marsh surrounding the Nature Center?**

- No! Walking along shorelines and marshes disturbs nesting wildlife! The marshes remain saturated and there is a strong possibility you could sink. There is a public access area about one-mile from the DNC at Slaughter Beach. Another mile further is the Slaughter Beach Fire Hall which has a pavilion and public restrooms. To get to Slaughter Beach from the DNC, travel south to the end of Lighthouse Road and turn left on to Route 36. Parking for the beach access will be about two miles down the road on the right side, across the street from the fire hall.

You may see people on the shorelines with the scopes and wonder how they got there and what they are they doing - they are scientists with the Delaware Shorebird Project. They access the shorelines by boat and they are doing research on spawning horseshoe crabs and migratory shorebirds during April, May and June. <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/shorebirds/Pages/default.aspx>

- **Can I crab and/or fish from the shorelines around the center?**

- No. The Mispillion Harbor is a Refuge. The broken-up concrete used to stabilize the shorelines around the center is not safe; therefore it is recommended that you refrain from entering any of those areas.

- **Are there fishing areas nearby?**

- Slaughter Beach does have a public beach access area where you can surf fish. Delaware has public launch and fishing areas statewide; please refer to the Delaware fishing Guide for the areas. Cedar Creek Public Launch is on the same road as this center. There is also an area for individuals to fish at that site. Visit: www.fw.delaware.gov
- Surf fishing: The Division of Parks and Recreation surf fishing beaches are Beach Plum Island, Cape Henlopen State Park, Delaware Seashore State Park and Fenwick Island State Park.
- For Special restrictions and regulations visit: www.destateparks.com/

- **Can my group visit? What about schools and youth groups?**

- Yes! Structured field trip opportunities are offered April 1st to September 30th. Interpreters facilitate guided tours for groups and numerous educational programs are offered throughout the year. Groups must pre-register for structured field trips and/or tours. For more information, call the Center at 302-422-1329.

- Are there any special events that I can bring my family to?

- Every April the DuPont Nature Center celebrates Earth Day. Hands-on Activities are facilitated.
- The third Saturday in May we hold the “Peace, Love, and Horseshoe Crab Festival” event. There’s food, educational fun, and lots of wildlife to see! Folks can participate in an Estuary Eco Challenge, listen to music, and take part in hands on activities throughout the day.
- In June and July youth and families can participate in our fishing programs. They will learn about marine fish, their habitat, visit with an Enforcement Agent on their boat, and cast a line to hopefully catch some fish. Pre-register by calling the center: 302-422-1329

- Aside from visiting, is there anything else I can do?

- Volunteer! We need help staffing the center, facilitating field trips, flipping horseshoe crabs, and removing trash from the marshes and roadways.
- Find us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/DelawareFishWildlife>
- For more information on the DuPont Nature Center, visit: <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/Education/Pages/DNC.aspx>

DID YOU KNOW...

An Estuary is a Nursery of Life?

- A baby oyster is called a spat
- A baby fish is called a fry
- A baby bird is called a hatchling
- A baby clam is called a larva
- A baby duck is called a duckling
- A baby frog is called a tadpole
- A baby goose is called a gosling
- A baby raccoon is called a cub
- A baby seal is called a pup
- A baby jellyfish is called an ephyra
- A baby eel is called an elver
- A baby hawk is called an eyas
- A baby shark is called a pup



Please respect wildlife and their habitat while enjoying Delaware outdoors!

