

## Backyard Briefs

*A weekly column*

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***“If you travel much in the wilder sections of our country, sooner or later you are likely to meet the sign of the flying goose—the emblem of the National Wildlife Refuges.***

***You may meet it by the side of a road crossing miles of flat prairie in the middle West, or in the hot deserts of the Southwest. You may meet it by some mountain lake, or as you push your boat through the winding salty creeks of a coastal marsh.***

***Wherever you meet this sign, respect it. It means that the land behind the sign has been dedicated by the American people to preserving, for themselves and their children, as much of our native wildlife as can be retained along with our modern civilization.”***

***~ Rachel Carson, scientist and chief editor  
for US Fish & Wildlife 1939-1952~***

The national wildlife refuge concept, developed in the late 1800's, was primarily the response of our lawmakers to the concerns voiced by the American people about declining populations of migratory birds. Here in this region we do not have to wander very far to encounter the flying goose emblem, for there are several of these important refuges in eastern North Carolina the most recent of which is the Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge (Roanoke Refuge), established in 1989.

If you have lived here for a while you will no doubt remember the establishment of the Roanoke Refuge. It was a memorable time in our recent history, largely due to the year and a half that preceded the Refuge's approval--a contentious time of passionate and sometimes bitter debate between those that supported and those that opposed its creation.

Currently, all national wildlife refuges are in the process of updating current policies and developing a long-range plan that will guide their management for the next 15 years. There have been a series of public hearings to get public guidance and input concerning each refuge's future. One question under consideration is whether to extend the boundaries of the refuges and this may rekindle some of the initial fears folks expressed when the Roanoke Refuge was first established.

There is a great deal to be learned by simply looking back at our history. So, in the next column we will do just that and also look at what national wildlife refuge boundaries mean to private landowners that might live within those borders.