

# Summer is Just Getting Started

By Michael Perez, Natural Scientist Supervisor



*Painted buntings can be found singing across the Refuge in the summer. Photo courtesy of Tom George.*

Summer isn't over yet. Throughout July and August, the Nature Center is offering many opportunities for families to get outside and enjoy a variety of educational programs, hikes, and specialty camps that will allow kids and adults alike to learn about and gain an appreciation for the great outdoors.

This year, the 4th of July is not the end of festivities honoring our country. Join us on July 5 as we celebrate our national mammal, the American Bison. On May 9, 2016, President Obama signed the National Bison Legacy Act, which officially named the bison as the country's national mammal. Come greet our bison herd and see the young calves that were born just a couple of months ago. This family-friendly event allows you to learn about the role bison play at the Nature Center, hear how they are adapted for their environment, and assist staff in feeding them.

A wide variety of other programs are also available. Fields of wildflowers are blooming, and pillars of verdant trees are covering the Refuge. Accompany a naturalist on the trails to learn why wildflowers are essential to the lives of pollinators, learn how to

identify local flora, and discuss the importance of the tall green machines that fill our forest habitat. Sign up for a weekly bird hike to help you identify by sight and sound the local species found in our area. Summer residents include buntings, cuckoos, tanagers, and more. If you want to venture near the water, take advantage of an aquatic adventure, including kayak and canoe tours, full moon paddles, dip netting, and more.

July and August will also continue to bring young summer campers to the Refuge as they learn about wildlife and their habitats through Summer Natural History Adventures. Camps are designed for students who have completed K – 7th grade during the 2020-2021 academic year. Camps are filled with safe outdoor exploration, age-appropriate activities, fun games, and more.

Staff naturalists are eager to explore the Refuge with you and your family. We are confident there is an activity for your particular area of interest, whether it's on land or water. Visit the Nature Center's website at [fwnaturecenter.org](http://fwnaturecenter.org) to learn about the programs that are available during the remainder of the summer.