

Motels and restaurants are easily found in both the towns of Alamosa and Monte Vista. Commercial campgrounds are also in the area.

For further information phone (719) 589-4021 or write:
 Refuge Manager
 Alamosa-Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuges
 9383 El Rancho Lane
 Alamosa, CO 81101

VISITOR OPPORTUNITIES

At Alamosa Refuge, the Bluff Overlook is open to the public and offers excellent wildlife and wildlands viewing. A hiking trail along the Rio Grande River is available for more energetic visitors.

A single headquarters for both Refuges, located at Alamosa Refuge, provides information and exhibits. Alamosa Refuge is located 4 miles east of the town of Alamosa on Highway 160 and 2 miles south on El Rancho Lane.

Monte Vista NWR is accessible on all-weather roads year-round. Within the Refuge is a self-guided auto tour route as well as county roads offering fascinating wildlife viewing. A volunteer-staffed visitor contact station is located at Monte Vista Refuge, 6 miles south of the town of Monte Vista on Highway 15.

Hunting waterfowl and small game is permitted on a portion of each Refuge. Special regulations and specific areas open to hunting are applicable.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
 Department of the Interior



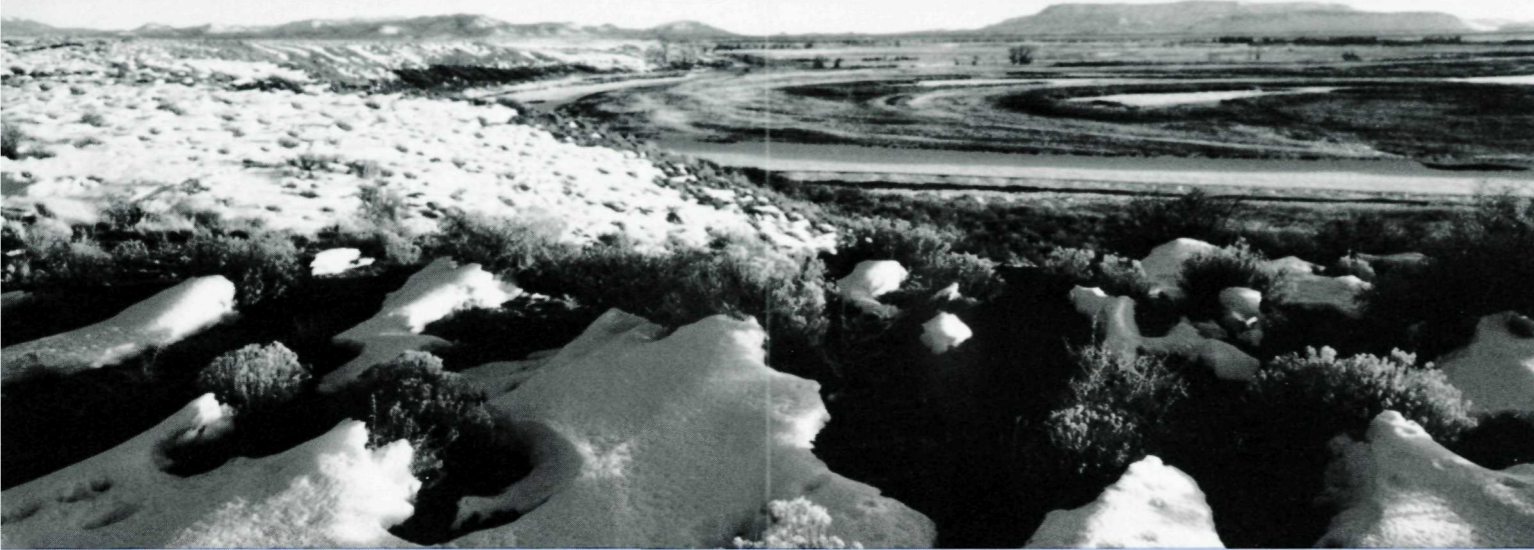
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ALAMOSA - MONTE VISTA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES





Melting snow feeds the Rio Grande River and replenishes Valley water resources each year.
PHOTO BY FRANK BRYCE, FWS.

VALLEY SANCTUARY

Long a sanctuary for man and wildlife, the San Luis Valley was once Ute territory. These “Blue Sky People”, as the Utes were called by other Indian peoples, shared an abundance of elk, deer, antelope, small game, and waterfowl with occasional Comanche raiding parties.

In 1694 an early Spanish explorer, Diego de Vargas, recorded the first Europeans in the San Luis Valley. While the Valley was still Spanish Territory, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike’s winter trip traveled through the Valley and probably passed through the present refuges. At the conclusion of the Mexican War in 1848, the Valley became American Territory. The development of mines, ranches, farms, and railroads soon led to the establishment of small communities throughout the Valley and surrounding mountains.

As large numbers of people came into the Valley, wildlife declined. Realizing the urgent need for a place for wildlife in the Valley, particularly waterfowl, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission created Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge in 1953. Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1962, also for migratory birds and other wildlife.

In 1979, these two Refuges were combined administratively into the Alamosa-Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The Refuges are administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

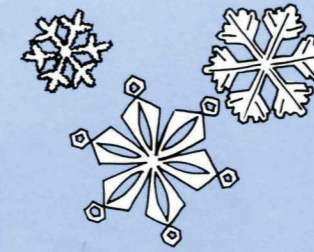
The major focus of the Refuges is wetland and water management to provide food, cover, and production habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. Farming, grazing, and other programs are also used to ensure a healthy wildlife and wildland resource.

Mallard brood.

PHOTO FWS.



VITAL ELEMENT



Water is the lifeblood of the San Luis Valley and the Wildlife Refuges. On the desert floor of the Valley total precipitation averages only seven inches annually, but snowpack in the Sangre de Cristo Range to the east and the San Juan Mountains to the west rescues the valley. Each spring melting snow feeds the Rio Grande River and Valley streams and replenishes the underground water tapped through artesian and pumped wells. A “ditch boom” in the 1880’s sent irrigation canals fanning out through the Valley and making it agriculturally productive. Many of these canals still provide water to the Refuges and other parts of the Valley.

In a unique phenomenon, deserts and wetlands exist in the Valley side by side, each with its own plant and animal community. When water is in short supply, as in a drought, migratory birds must pass by the Refuges in search of wetter areas. Locally nesting birds may fail to nest, and other wildlife may decline.

The Alamosa–Monte Vista Refuges conserve and build upon this environment, managing wetland habitat and providing food and cover for thousands of water birds and a variety of Valley wildlife.

WETLANDS—NATURAL AND MANMADE

Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge includes 11,169 acres of highly varied wetlands located primarily within the Rio Grande flood plain. The natural wet meadows, river oxbows, and riparian corridors sustain a rich wildlife diversity. While not favoring an abundance of any one species, these wetlands support songbirds, water birds, raptors, deer, beaver, and coyotes. This unspoiled riverine wilderness is Alamosa’s legacy for the future.

The artificially created wetlands of Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge’s 14,189 acres are intensively managed to provide additional habitat for a wide variety of waterfowl and other water birds. Mallards, pintail, teal, and Canada geese are common, as are avocets, killdeer, ibis, egrets, and herons. Irrigation canals and wells provide precious water to maintain important wetland habitat.

SAN LUIS VALLEY WILDLIFE SEASONS

Both spring and fall, thousands of sandhill cranes migrate to the Valley. A few rare whooping cranes accompany their sandhill crane foster parents during these spectacular migrations. During the spring, summer, and fall, ducks, geese, avocets, ibis, and herons abound. Winter, with its “ice-box” conditions, is the time for eagles, hawks, and owls. Deer and elk move during the winter from the high country to the foothills of the Valley for their winter food supply.