

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Browns Park

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge is located along the Green River in northwest Colorado. Situated between the Cold Springs and Diamond Mountains, this remote river valley has long been an oasis to both wildlife and humans seeking shelter from the surrounding harsh, semi-arid environment.

Welcome to Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge



This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Throughout time, this sheltered valley known as Browns Park has been and remains a place for wildlife and people. Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established in 1963 by Public Land Order to provide sanctuary for migratory birds, conserve endangered and threatened species, and offer wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities. Wildlife, solitude, scenic beauty, and cultural history combine to make the Refuge a national treasure.

The 13,455-acre Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Refuge is one of over 540 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System – a network of lands set aside specifically for wildlife. The Refuge System is a living heritage, conserving wildlife and habitat for people today and for generations to come.



Meadowlark

History of Browns Park

Remains from prehistoric settlement of the area that is now the Refuge have been found during cultural resource studies. The remains show that people were living within the current Refuge boundaries as early as 1500 B.C. Other peoples, including the Ute, Sioux, Navajo, and Shoshoni, wintered in the mild climate of Browns Park or traveled into this area on trading expeditions.

Today, evidence of the early settlers, traders, and Native Americans can be found throughout the Refuge. Three sites, Lodore School, 2-Bar Ranch, and Fort Davy Crockett, are listed on the Register of National Historic Places. For more information on the rich history of the area, please see the Refuge's historical brochure.

Managing Habitat for Wildlife

Historically, waterfowl were given management priority; however, Refuge management is now also focused on maintaining a variety of native habitats and wildlife with emphasis on migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and species of special concern.

Thanks to current management techniques, Refuge habitats support a rich diversity of wildlife species including 68 mammals, 15 species of reptiles and amphibians, and at least 223 species of birds.



2-Bar Ranch

Riparian Habitat The riparian habitats found along the Green River, and Vermillion and Beaver Creeks at Browns Park NWR are made up of cottonwoods, buffalo-



Woodhouse's toad

berry, willows, and many other plants that are restricted to flood plains or areas of permanent underground water supplies. Similarly, many wildlife species depend on riparian plants to fulfill their life needs.

Thousands of migrating songbirds, like the Lazuli bunting and Wilson's warbler, rely on riparian habitat for refueling as they travel north to their breeding grounds. Other songbirds, such as the black-chinned hummingbird and Bullock's oriole, stop to nest. Moose and river otter also raise their young in the riparian area.

Water development has caused the Refuge riparian habitats to change over time. The riparian area along the Green River has been affected by the Flaming Gorge Dam. Before construction of the dam, the Green River's water levels responded solely to the uncertainties of nature. Flooding usually occurred in the spring, tapering off to reduced flows in summer. Spring flooding was the primary source of water for the natural wetlands bordering the river.

After construction of the dam in 1962, people began to control the river flows. Human control has resulted in a decrease in spring floods and a reduction in the amount of sediment carried by the river. This has resulted in the gradual deepening of the river channel, further reducing the likelihood of flooding, making it difficult for tree and willow roots to reach water, and inhibiting the germination of new seedlings within the riparian habitat.

Field research has confirmed that the riparian cottonwood forests are aging and not being replaced. Instead, nonnative, invasive species such as perennial pepperweed and tamarisk are overtaking this habitat. Pepperweed and tamarisk do not provide forage or appropriate nesting cover for dozens of wildlife species as compared to native willows and cottonwoods. Research is ongoing to help determine how to increase the regeneration of new cottonwoods and willows in the riparian areas.

Wetland Habitat

The seven wetlands at Browns Park NWR provide essential foraging and resting grounds for migratory waterfowl during their spring and fall migrations. During the summer,

these wetlands provide critical nesting habitat for pied-billed grebes and several species of ducks. Other species dependent upon the wetlands include the American bitterns, Woodhouse's toads, and white-faced ibis.

Because seasonal flooding no longer naturally floods wetlands along the Green River, the Refuge staff pumps water from the river into these areas. Water is also diverted from Beaver and Vermillion Creeks. These water diversions create 1,245 acres of wetlands.



White-faced ibis

Surrounded by arid, semi-desert uplands, the Refuge and the adjacent State of Utah's Waterfowl Management Area contain the only significant wetland habitat for many miles around.

Grassland Habitat



Damselfly

Nearly 1,900 acres of the Refuge are covered by grassland plants such as alkali sacaton, inland saltgrass, western wheatgrass, and Great Basin wild rye. These plants provide nesting cover for waterfowl, northern harriers, and songbirds such as the savannah sparrow. The grasslands also provide habitat for small mammals like the montane vole and crucial winter range for elk and mule deer. Over time, vegetation in the grasslands becomes heavily matted, and its habitat value decreases.

Refuge staff uses prescribed fire to remove the matted vegetation which restores the grassland habitat.

Upland Habitat

Semi-desert shrubland dominates the upland habitat. Approximately 7,930 acres of semi-desert shrubland exists on the Refuge. The dominant plant species are shadescale, Wyoming big sagebrush, greasewood, needle and thread grass, and the non-native, invasive cheatgrass. Refuge species that rely on the semi-desert shrubland for breeding include sage grouse, Brewer's sparrow, loggerhead shrike, Ord's kangaroo rat, and sagebrush vole. The shrubland also provides winter range for mule deer and, to a lesser extent, pronghorn. The upland habitat also consists of about 1,083 acres of pinyon pine and Utah juniper as well as interspersed areas of exposed rock along the southern boundary of the Refuge. Many species depend on this arid environment away from the river including the gray flycatcher, pinyon jay, several species of bats, and lizards.

**Habitat
Management
Tools**

In their continuing effort to enhance Refuge habitats, Refuge staff use management tools such as prescribed burning, native plant seeding, big-game hunting, and control of invasive weeds. On



Eastern fence lizard on rock.

thousands of acres, invasive plant species such as perennial pepperweed, cheatgrass, tamarisk, and Canada thistle have become dominant, greatly reducing the value of the habitat available to wildlife on the Refuge. Biological, mechanical, and chemical controls are used to manage these invasive plants.

Enjoying Your Visit

Recreational activities abound at Browns Park NWR. While you are here, take advantage of opportunities to fish and hunt, or take a hike to observe and photograph wildlife.

*River's Edge
Wildlife Drive*

This 8-mile auto tour route takes you near a variety of Refuge habitats and provides good opportunities for viewing wildlife. The route is passable by passenger vehicles. All other dirt roads are only seasonally passable and are not maintained. Four-wheel drive or high-clearance vehicles are recommended for these roads. Seasonal closures may be in effect.

Hiking

Hiking is permitted throughout the Refuge, so park your car and do some exploring on foot. Please avoid disturbing animals by getting too close. You know you are approaching too close when animals stop feeding, when they stand up after they've been resting, when they change their direction of travel, or when they turn and start moving away.

*Directions to
the Refuge*

Browns Park NWR is 60 miles northwest of Maybell, Colorado, on State Highway 318, and 100 miles south of Rock Springs, Wyoming, via State Highway 430. If you are traveling from Vernal, Utah, please call the Refuge staff for directions and road conditions. The Refuge office is located approximately 1-mile east of the Colorado and Utah border on State Highway 318. Because of the remoteness of the Refuge and lack of cell phone coverage, visitors should be prepared in case of an emergency. Bring extra water, food, and warm clothes. Fuel is available at a small convenience store in the valley.



Moth



Refuge Regulations

Special regulations are necessary to protect wildlife and habitat. Please familiarize yourself with the Refuge regulations and respect the privileges of other visitors. Your understanding of regulations will make your visit a safe and enjoyable one.

Hours

The Refuge is open daily from sunrise to sunset. After sunset, public activity is limited to the Swinging Bridge and Crook campgrounds. The office and visitor center are open from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday, and are closed for Federal holidays.

Access

To protect wildlife from disturbance and minimize habitat damage, vehicles and bicycles must stay on developed roads. The speed limit on all Refuge roads is 25 mph unless posted otherwise.

Parking

Vehicles must park in pullouts or within 10 feet of the road. Overnight parking is not permitted unless camping in the designated campgrounds.

Camping

Camping is permitted only in designated sites at the campgrounds and is limited to 14 days. To protect the solitude of the Refuge, the use of generators is prohibited. Please pack out all your trash to keep the Refuge beautiful. Developed Bureau of Land Management campgrounds are available nearby at Irish Canyon, Indian Crossing, and Taylor Flats.

Horses

Horseback riding is permitted only on designated roads. Use of certified weed-free hay is required to minimize further introduction of invasive plants. Horses are not permitted in campgrounds.

Accessible Facilities

An accessible waterfowl hunting blind and fishing pier are located near Hog Lake.

Firearms, Explosives, and Other Weapons

Carrying, possessing, or discharging firearms, including archery equipment, on the Refuge is prohibited except when using legal firearms during hunting seasons, as prescribed and approved by the State of Colorado. Firearms must be unloaded (no ammunition in either the chamber or the magazine), cased, and dismantled when transported in a vehicle. Carrying, possessing, or discharging explosives, including fireworks, is strictly prohibited. Target shooting is prohibited.

Animal and Plant Life

Collecting, possessing, or destroying any plant or animal or part thereof (alive or dead) is prohibited (except legally taken game).

Introduction of Plants and Animals

Plants and animals, or their parts, may not be introduced or placed on the Refuge.

Historical Artifacts and Other Valued Objects

Searching for, removing, or damaging historic items, Native American artifacts, or fossils is prohibited. No person shall search for or remove rocks, stones, or mineral specimens. Possession and use of metal detectors are prohibited.

Pets

Pets are permitted only if they are confined or leashed (except hunting dogs when participating in a legal hunt).

Disposal of Waste

Dumping of litter, sewage, liquid wastes, or any other material on the Refuge is prohibited.



Ladybug on Great Basin wild rye.

Accessibility Information

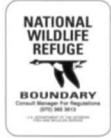
Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. Dial 7-1-1 for a free connection to the State transfer relay service for TTY and voice calls to and from the speech and hearing impaired. For more information contact Refuge staff at 970 / 365 3613 or the U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Refuge Signs and their Meaning

The following information is provided to help you understand the meaning of the regulatory signs that you will see on the Refuge.



This sign indicates the legal boundary of the Refuge. The fence line is not always the boundary line. Regulations and further information are available at the Refuge office.



The areas behind these signs are open to permitted activities only.



The areas behind these signs are closed to all hunting.



The areas behind these signs are closed to vehicle traffic.



Bull moose in Straddle Bottom wetlands.

Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge
1318 Highway 318
Maybell, CO 81640
970 / 365 3613
970 / 365 3614 fax
brownspark@fws.gov
<http://brownspark.fws.gov>

For State transfer relay service
TTY / Voice: 711

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

For Refuge Information
1 800 / 344 WILD

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Western harvester ant hill with evening primrose.

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