

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Buenos Aires

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



Introduction

In the last century, the Altar Valley was an open grassland teeming with large herds of pronghorn. Aplomado falcons swooped down on rodent prey and masked bobwhite quail calls filled the early morning summer air. Mexican wolves, black bear, and an occasional jaguar roamed the grassland, traveling between mountain ranges.

As settlements sprang up in the Altar Valley in the 1860s, the delicate balance of the ecosystem was changed. Overgrazing left the ground bare, exposing it to torrential summer rains that quickly eroded the soil. With the grass gone and natural fires suppressed, mesquite gained a foothold. The grassland could no longer support masked bobwhite quail or aplomado falcon. Pronghorn, wolves, bear, and jaguar were hunted or trapped out.

Lehmann's lovegrass, an African grass, was introduced in the 1970s to help stop erosion. While the grass did hold the soil down and was drought resistant, it was a poor substitute for the diverse native grasses it replaced. An ecosystem without diversity is a bleak landscape for many wild creatures.

Staff at Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge are working to piece the ecosystem together, by restoring habitat, replacing key species, and protecting others still imperiled. At the refuge, you can enjoy a landscape like few others—where sparrows flock in winter, antelope play again, and the valley bottom is once again the sea of grass that greeted early settlers.

Baboquivari, sacred mountain to the Tohono O'odham, towers over the valley floor.

Putting the Pieces Together Again

Preventing Extinction

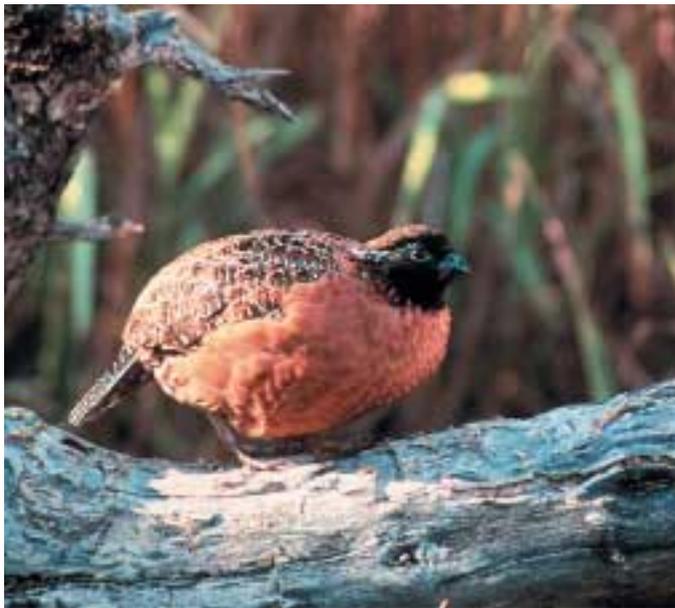
One of the priorities of Buenos Aires NWR is to reestablish a breeding population of masked bobwhite quail, an endangered bird that was once abundant in this area. Changes in the ecosystem caused the population of masked bobwhite to drop, bringing it dangerously close to extinction.

When Buenos Aires Ranch went up for sale in 1985, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchased it to preserve habitat for masked bobwhite and other wildlife for future generations. Refuge biologists do work with ranchers in Mexico to restore the grasslands where the last wild birds are found. It will take a caring partnership of public and private interests to restore this native grassland ecosystem and the masked bobwhite quail.

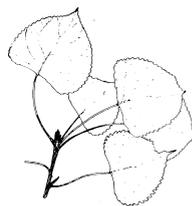
Fire as a Friend

Another tool used to restore native grassland is controlled burning, which helps slow mesquite invasion and revitalize the soil. As the system recovers, the grasses, shrubs, flowers, insects, and animals of the Sonoran grassland will benefit.

Masked bobwhite quail. Photo by Wayne Shifflett



Protecting Natural Diversity



Fremont Cottonwood



Godding Willow



Arizona Sycamore

Additions to the refuge since 1985 protect valuable wetland and riparian habitats at Arivaca Creek, Arivaca Cienega, and Brown Canyon. This combination of grasslands, wetlands, cottonwood-lined streambeds, and sycamore and live oak mountain canyons preserves some of the southwest's rarest habitats for seven endangered species, ten species of concern, and many other native plants and wildlife.

Over 320 species of birds have been recorded at Buenos Aires NWR. Pronghorn, mule deer, coyote, and javelina are some of the mammals frequently seen along refuge roads. Mountain lion, coatimundi, ring-tailed cats, and badger are present, but more secretive. Desert tortoise and gila monsters thrive a short distance from water-dependent amphibians, and a myriad of cactus grow within a stone's throw of watercress. In addition to the masked bobwhite quail, Buenos Aires NWR protects habitat for six other endangered species (ferruginous pygmy-owl, Pima pineapple cactus, Kearney bluestar, peregrine falcon, southwest willow flycatcher, and razorback sucker).

Coati are raccoon relatives living in mountain canyons and along Arivaca Creek. Photo by Gordorn Buchmann



Wildlife Watching Tips



Dawn and dusk are the best times to see wildlife. In warmer climates, little is moving on hot summer afternoons or on windy days.



Observe from the sidelines. Leave “abandoned” young animals alone. A parent is probably close by waiting for you to leave. Don’t offer snacks; your lunch could disrupt wild digestive systems.



Cars make good observation blinds. Drive slowly, stopping to scan places wildlife might hide. Use binoculars or a long lens for a closer look.



Photo by Thea Ulen

Try sitting quietly in one good location. Let wildlife get used to your presence. Many animals that have hidden will reappear once they think you are gone. Often you will hear more than you will see.

Teach children quiet observation. Other wildlife watchers will appreciate your consideration.

Look for animal signs. Tracks, scat, feathers, and nests left behind often tell interesting stories.

Commonly Found Grassland Birds



Vermilion flycatchers look florescent in spring. USFWS Photo



Red-naped sapsuckers glean insects and sap from holes they drill. Photo by Earle A. Robinson



Listen for green-tailed towhee scratching under shrubs. Photo by Earle A. Robinson



The Creek is alive with calls from summer tanagers and yellow-breasted chat in summer. Photo by Norm Smith



Watch for these common yellow-throats and marsh wrens among the cattails at the Cienega. Photo by Earle A. Robinson

Commonly Found Grassland Wildlife



Kangaroo rats come out at night, but you will notice their large mounds anytime. Photo by Robert Campbell



Like their namesakes, antelope jackrabbits display a white rump patch when running. Photo by Norm Smith



Raptors can be seen hunting over open grasslands. Photo by Barbara Haskel



Coyote songs fill the night air. USFWS Photo



Pronghorn were reintroduced to the refuge in 1987. Photo by John and Karen Hollingsworth

Things to do at the Refuge Hours

Headquarters Office Hours:
7 am- 4 pm Monday through Friday
(Closed Holidays)
Visitor Center : 8 am-4 pm daily.
Arivaca Information Office:
8 am- 3 pm (as volunteers are available).

Refuge roads are always open.
Please close gates behind you.

Trails near Arivaca are open sunrise to sunset. Brown Canyon is open by guided tour only.

Nature Trails Near Arivaca



Arivaca Cienega: Seven springs form this rare desert wetland. A boardwalk gives visitors the chance to see vermilion flycatchers, gray hawks, Virginia rails, and other wildlife up close. It's just over 1/2 mile to Willow Pond, or take the entire 2-mile loop to view additional areas.

Location: 1/4 mile east of Arivaca at the Wildlife Viewing Area.

Length: 2 miles.



Arivaca Cienega Boardwalk. Boardwalks at Arivaca Cienega provide close up views of vermilion flycatchers. Photo by Jim Lauer



Arivaca Creek. Shady trails at Arivaca Creek are especially good for woodland birds in spring and summer. Photo by Thea Ulen

Arivaca Creek: Giant cottonwoods and lush vegetation attract songbirds, woodpeckers, owls, and coatimundi to the stream's banks. A short trail leads to the stream's edge next to the home of Eva Wilbur-Cruce who wrote about growing up here in *A Beautiful Cruel Country* (please observe No Trespassing signs at private property).

Location: 2 miles west of Arivaca at the Wildlife Viewing Area.
Length: 1 mile.

Hiking



Mustang Trail: Cross the creek 1/4 mile downstream from the Arivaca Creek Trailhead and begin climbing the surrounding hillside. Hikers should wear sturdy shoes, bring water, and be in good condition for steep sections at the top.

Location: 2 miles west of Arivaca at the Wildlife Viewing Area.
Length: 5 miles roundtrip.

Visitor Center



Brochures and restrooms are available here from sunrise to sunset. The entry road to refuge headquarters is a good bet for finding mule deer early winter mornings or late afternoons. Pronghorn may be here or along Antelope Drive. Check the small pond on the entry road for wayward avocets during migration. Feeders at headquarters attract some of the common southwestern birds. Pens near the Visitor Center provide a look at secretive masked bobwhite and a grassland exhibit will help you identify over 20 species of grasses.

Location: Mile 7, Highway 286.

Antelope Drive



Antelope Drive's unobstructed grassland views are accessible to 2-wheel drive vehicles and RVs (except after rains). Late fall is a good time to identify native grasses making a comeback.

Location: Follow signs off entry road just before reaching headquarters.
Length: 10 miles.

Aguirre Lake (seasonal)



Ranch founder, Pedro Aguirre, built a lake in the 1880s to water his fields and stock. Migrating waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds use the seasonal lake today.

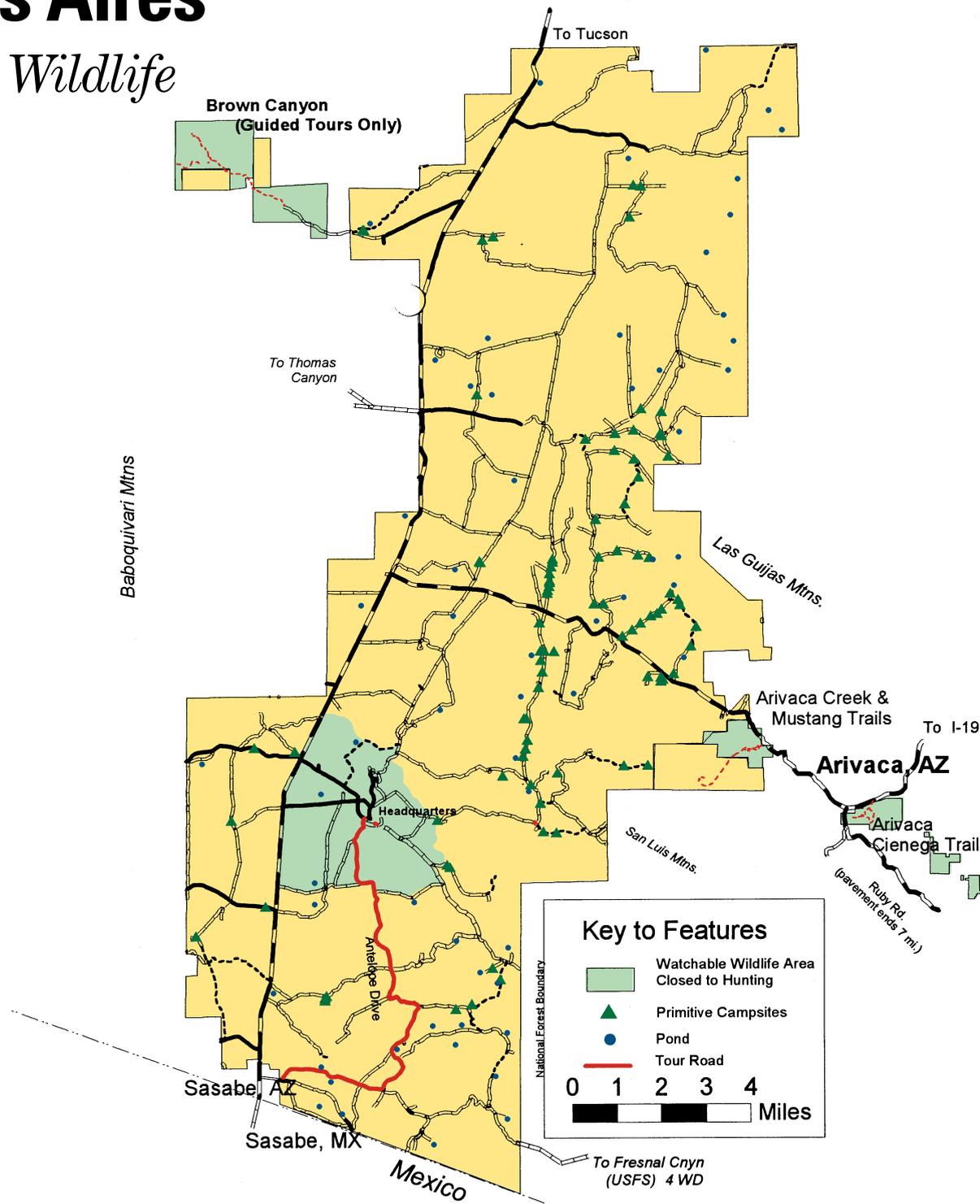
Location: 1/2 mile north of the headquarters.
Length: 1/2 mile.

Roadrunners, pronghorn, and sparrows are the main attractions at headquarters. Photo by John and Karen Hollingsworth



Buenos Aires

National Wildlife Refuge



Taking to the Back Country

Visitors looking for more challenge should try some of the over 100 miles of back roads open to vehicles, horses, and mountain bikes. Be prepared with maps, spare tire, and water for a back country experience without signed, maintained roads. Not all roads are passable without high clearance vehicles, and many become impassable after rains. *Driving or riding off road or in washes is prohibited.* Hikers will find many of the back roads in the southeast and northeast suitable for hiking and backpacking.

Camping



Primitive campsites are scattered along the back roads. You may camp only at sites marked with the campsite symbol. Camping stays are limited to 14 days. Keep campsites small to reduce damage to area, and limit your camp to three vehicles. Pack out all trash, do not bury it. Fires are permitted only in established fire rings at designated campsites. Use only dead and down wood. Observe posted fire restrictions. Never leave a fire unattended. Dispose of human waste using a 'cat hole.'

Horseback Riding



Riders may use any of the refuge roads north of Arivaca Road. Campers traveling by horseback must provide their own feed and water enroute, and tether horses at night. Commercial groups must obtain a special use permit.

Mountain Biking

Dirt roads provide mountain bikers with a variety of terrain and wildlife viewing. Bikers should be prepared for hot weather and know how to do minor on-the-road repairs. Photo by Cynthia McArthur



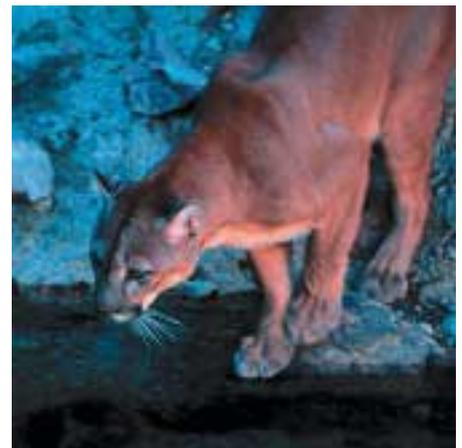
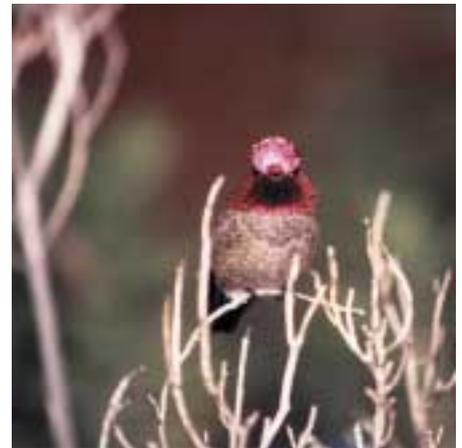
Brown Canyon

You'll find excellent birding along this sycamore and live oak mountain canyon and a 47-foot natural bridge hidden in the upper canyon. Brown Canyon is open by guided tour only at this time. Call 520/823-4251 x116 for a current public tour schedule and fees, or to arrange a group tour.

Environmental Education Center



Weekend workshops are offered on topics such as Birding, Sky Island Geology, Nature Photography, Bat Ecology, and Plant, Sparrow, and Hawk Identification. Call for a schedule. Groups interested in renting the Center for environmental education activities should call 520/823-4251 x115 for more information.



Anna's hummingbird and mountain lions are some of the higher elevation animals found in Brown Canyon. Top photo by Jack Murray, bottom photo by Gordon Buchmann

Would You Like to Help?

*Friends of
Buenos Aires*

The Friends of Buenos Aires is a nonprofit group established to assist the refuge through conservation, research, and education. Their donated time and fundraising will help the refuge achieve its goals in future years. For more information, membership, or donations, contact:

Friends of Buenos Aires Refuge
P.O. Box 41657
Tucson, AZ 85717

Refuge Volunteers

Volunteers assist biologists, staff visitor centers, guide tours, present slide programs, and maintain trails and facilities. For more information or an application, call 520/823-4251 x115.

Summer YCC

The summer Youth Conservation Corps employs four area youths ages 15-18. YCC members work on various conservation projects while gaining work experience. Application deadline is usually around March 15.

The League of Conservation Voters donated over 2,000 hours building gabions to repair erosion damages. USFWS photo



When is the Best Time to Visit?

*Everyday...
Here's a sample
from Nature's
Calendar*

January: Look for golden eagles among the red-tailed hawks perched on telephone poles along highway 286. Pintails, gadwalls, American wigeon, and other waterfowl will be at Aguirre Lake and the Cienega. Loggerhead shrikes are plentiful on the grasslands.

February: Great horned owls are pairing up—listen for their hooting in the Alepo pines next to the visitor center. First signs of spring include Mexican elderberries leafing out at Arivaca Creek, meadowlarks singing at the Cienega, and butterflies found on mountaintops like El Cerro on Mustang Trail. A few hummingbirds start arriving at headquarters feeders.



Meadowlark songs are one of the first signs of spring. Photo by Larry Ditto

March: Female vermilion flycatchers join males at the Cienega. Listen for first night calls of common poorwills. Clouds of pink fairy duster cover the hills west of Arivaca. At the end of the month, orioles start showing up at headquarters, gray hawks arrive at the Cienega, and zone-tailed hawks start nesting in Brown Canyon.

April: Warblers use Arivaca Cienega and the Creek as migration rest stops, shorebirds and wading birds drop by Aguirre Lake. Rattlesnakes are active. Endangered Kearney blue star is flowering in Brown Canyon early in the month. Colorful mesquite bugs with red and black striped legs can be seen sucking sap from twigs. Check blooming ocotillo for hummingbirds.



Gila monsters and other reptiles become active after the weather warms up. USFWS photo

May: Look for the first pronghorn fawns along the entry road at headquarters. Colorful summer and western tanagers, yellow-breasted chat, and blue grosbeaks are setting up housekeeping at Arivaca Creek. Hepatic tanagers and sulphur-bellied flycatchers are in Brown Canyon.

June: Masked bobwhite quail start calling. Pronghorn hang out on their fawning grounds near headquarters. Prescribed burns this month will bring in Swainson's hawks. Little blue butterflies show up on any wet piece of mud.

July: Expect afternoon thunderstorms, fantastic lightning shows, and flooding July through August. Couche's spadefoot toads chorus loudly after the first heavy rains. Iridescent, metallic-green fig beetles can be seen feeding on prickly pear cactus fruit.

August: Hummingbird wars are going on at the feeders in Brown Canyon and headquarters. Gila monsters and coachwhips (big pink snakes) are seen on roads. Caltrops (summer poppies) carpet areas burned earlier this year. The grasslands turn to a lush green carpet.

September: Migration mid-month brings waders and shorebirds to Aguirre Lake and hawks overhead. Horse lubbers, those huge black grasshoppers with small green-veined wings, are everywhere.



You won't believe the large moving objects on the road are grasshoppers. Horse lubbers are the largest and brightest, with green and yellow markings. USFWS photo

*More from
Nature's
Calendar*

October: Fall sunflowers brighten Highway 286 and headquarters. Waterfowl start arriving.

November: Native grasses display a variety of seedheads along Antelope Drive. Burrowing owls might be seen standing on kangaroo rat mounds next to roads near headquarters.

December: Coati mundi are sometimes seen in large groups at Arivaca Creek and Brown Canyon. It's a good time to practice sparrow identification near headquarters. Rufous-sided towhees show up at lower elevations at the Creek.

For Your Safety: Plan Ahead and Be Prepared

Keep an eye out for rattlesnakes while walking along trails and cross country.

Prepare for hot summer days. Bring plenty of water and wear a hat and sunscreen.

Use extreme caution with fire. Open fires are permitted only in established fire rings at designated campsites.

Never enter a flooded wash. Dry washes can become fast moving rivers after rains. Dirt roads become impassable after rains. Expect late afternoon storms July-August.

Africanized bees are present in southern Arizona. Stay away from active bees.

Backcountry bikers and drivers should carry spare equipment and be prepared to make their own emergency repairs.

All accidents involving injury or property damage shall be reported to a refuge official within 24 hours of an incident.



Barrel cactus sport an orange crown of blossoms in July. Photo by Thea Ulen



Hunting at the Refuge



Big bucks and beautiful country make mule deer hunters happy at Buenos Aires NWR. Whitetail and javelina can also be found in good numbers in the foothills along the refuge's eastern boundary, and in wet years, dove and waterfowl can be found near ponds. The refuge makes up about half of units 36A and 36B and a small portion of 36C. Lower hunt permits are being used to increase hunt quality in Unit 36B. Check out Arizona Game & Fish Department web page at www.gf.state.az.us for further information regarding game availability and access locations.



Photo by Thea Ulen

Legal Game

Only the following may be hunted: Mule and whitetail deer, javelina, white-wing and mourning dove, waterfowl, coot, and cottontail rabbit. Feral hog may be hunted during other big game seasons, with a valid hunting license *and* valid big game tag for the season.

Coyote may be hunted only with a Special Use Permit, available April through May. All other plants and animals are protected. *Quail hunting not open.*

No Hunt Zones

Hunting is permitted on approximately 90 percent of the refuge. Hunting is *not* permitted in high public use areas and near residences. These *no hunt zones* are identified on the map and are posted on the ground. Hunting is *not* permitted on refuge lands in Brown Canyon where boundaries are not posted.

Permits and Seasons

All hunters must possess a valid state hunting permit and applicable big game, waterfowl, and archery tags and/or stamps. The refuge is open to hunting from September 1 through March 31. Hunting is permitted only during daylight hours.

Weapons



On national wildlife refuges, possession of firearms is unlawful except for hunting. Handguns may only be carried and used in conjunction with handgun season. Weapons must be unloaded and cased while traveling on refuge roads. Target shooting is not permitted.

Vehicle Access



Vehicles are restricted to roadways. *Road access may be limited by weather conditions. All vehicles (including ATVs) and drivers must be licensed for the road.*

Flagging, Stands, Baiting

Using flagging tape, reflective tape, or other signs or markers is prohibited.

Stands may be used but must not be attached to trees with a nail, spike, or other metal object. Stands must be removed by end of hunt season. Baiting or hunting over bait is prohibited.

Camping



See other portions of this brochure for regulations regarding camping, campfires, firewood, dogs, etc.

Check Station

Please check your game where signs are posted. Your information helps determine the health and status of game populations.

Maps

Obtain maps prior to your visit and plan ahead. U.S. Geological Survey maps covering refuge areas include: Las Guijas, Wilbur Canyon, Fresno Wash, Presumido Peak, and Cumero Mountain.

Help Us Protect the Refuge

Collecting

Bring your camera to take home memories. Collecting rocks, plants, insects, or historic objects is not permitted. Prospecting and metal detectors are not permitted.

Access



All vehicles (including all-terrain vehicles) must be licensed for the road. Off road travel, including driving or riding in washes, is prohibited. Speed limit on refuge roads is 25 mph unless otherwise posted. Roads may be closed after rains. Trails are open sunrise to sunset. Brown Canyon is open by guided tour only.

Pedestrian traffic only on hiking and nature trails.

Firearms



Possession of firearms on the refuge is unlawful except in hunting areas during hunting season. (See hunting section for more information)

Campfires and Firewood



Fires are permitted only in established fire rings at designated campsites. Use only dead and down wood in the immediate area of your campsite. Cutting or removing firewood is not permitted. Observe posted fire restrictions. Never leave a fire unattended. Make sure your campfire is out cold, clean all debris out of fire ring, and scatter cold ashes.

Picnicking



You may enjoy your lunch at trailheads or at picnic tables provided at headquarters. Please help pick up litter.

Pets

Pets must be on a leash, and are not permitted in Brown Canyon.

Other Activities



Special Use Permits are required for commercial tour groups, research activities, special events, commercial photography or filming, or any activity not specifically permitted in this brochure.

Directions to Refuge Headquarters

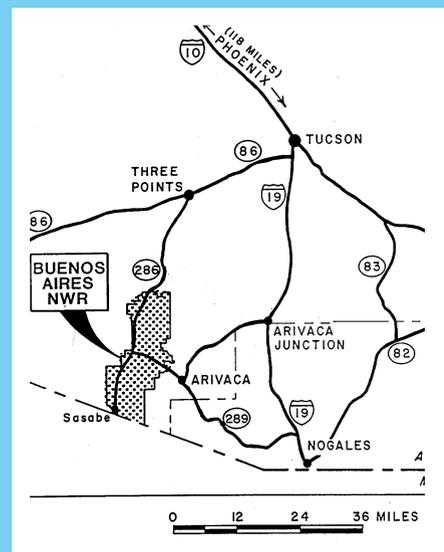
Take Highway 86 (Ajo Way) west from Tucson to Three Points. Turn south on Highway 286. Proceed south for 35 miles to mile post 7.5. Turn east and follow signs to Refuge Headquarters.

Directions to Trailheads near Arivaca

Take I-19 south from Tucson to the Amado/Arivaca exit. Exit west, turn right at the T, and then left at the Cow Palace onto Arivaca Road. Proceed west for 20 miles to Arivaca. Trails are located both east and west of town.

Vicinity Map

Refuge Headquarters is located approximately 55 miles south west of Tucson



Meeting Your Needs



Restrooms, drinking water, picnic tables, and brochures are available at Refuge Headquarters. Brochures are also available at trailheads and the Arivaca Information Office.

Primitive camping is permitted at designated refuge campsites. RV sites are located near Amado and Arivaca.

Nearby Services

Lodging is available at area guest ranches in Sasabe and Amado. Complete facilities are available in Green Valley and Tucson.

Arivaca has services including a bed and breakfast, cafe, groceries, bakery, and gas.

Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge

P.O. Box 109

Sasabe, Arizona 85633

520/823-4251

520/823-4247 Fax

<http://southwest.fws.gov>

Arizona Relay Service

1 800/367-8939

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

<http://www.fws.gov>

For Refuge Information

1 800/344-WILD

October 1999

