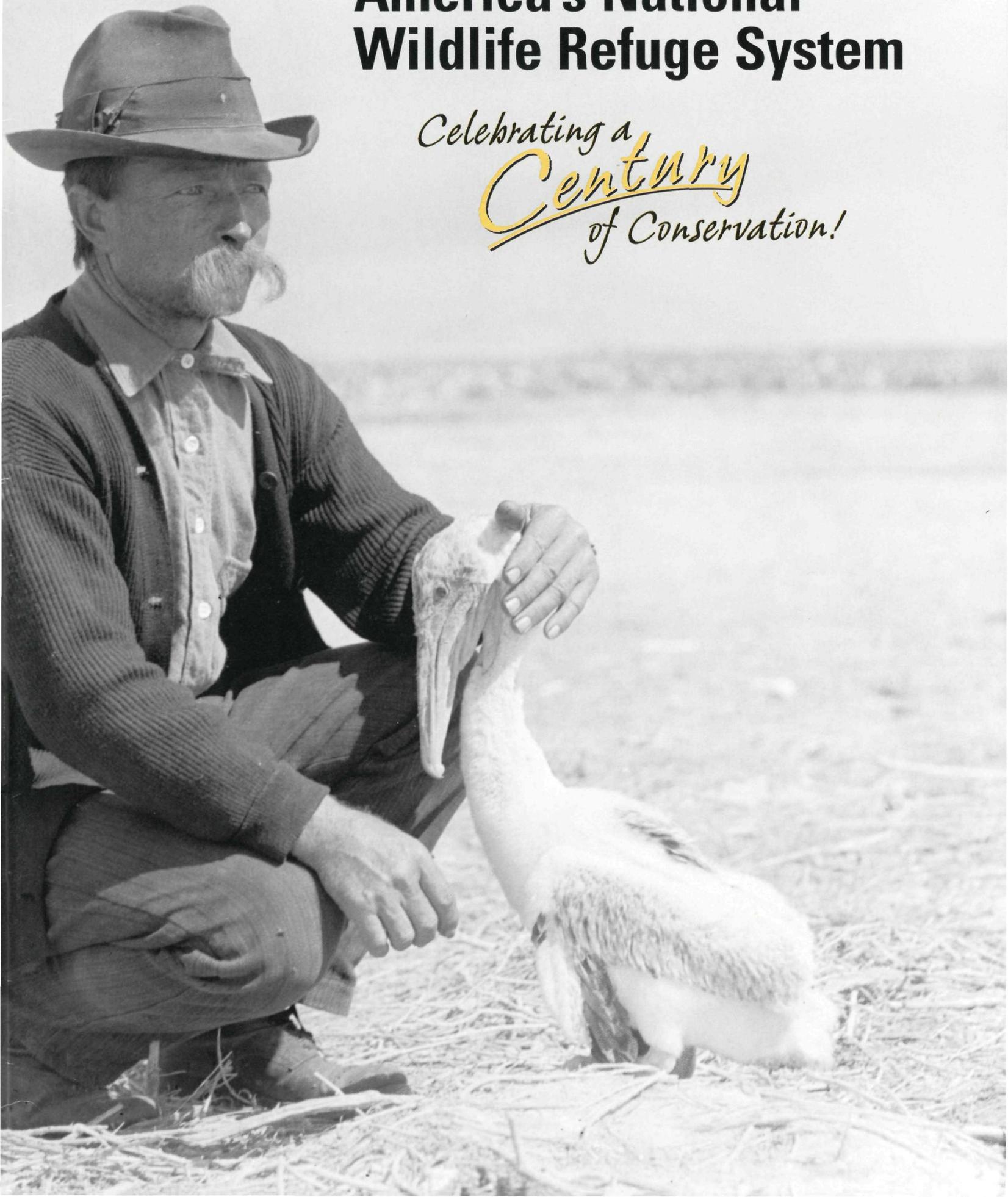


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

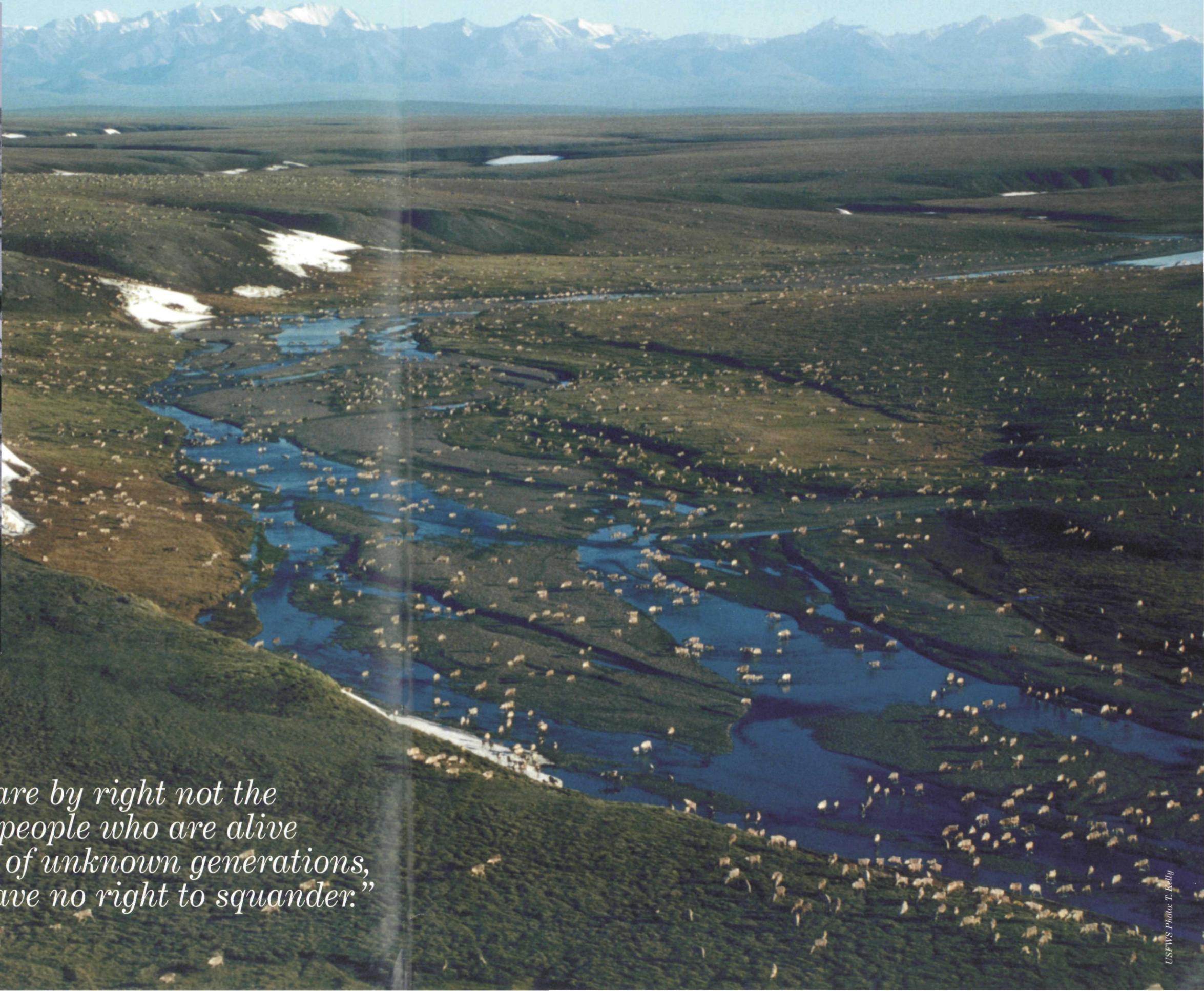
America's National Wildlife Refuge System

*Celebrating a
Century
of Conservation!*





The Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library



“Wild beasts and birds are by right not the property merely of the people who are alive today, but the property of unknown generations, whose belongings we have no right to squander.”

Theodore Roosevelt

Celebrating a Century of Conservation

March 14, 2003 will mark a milestone in the history of wildlife conservation in America—the Centennial anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

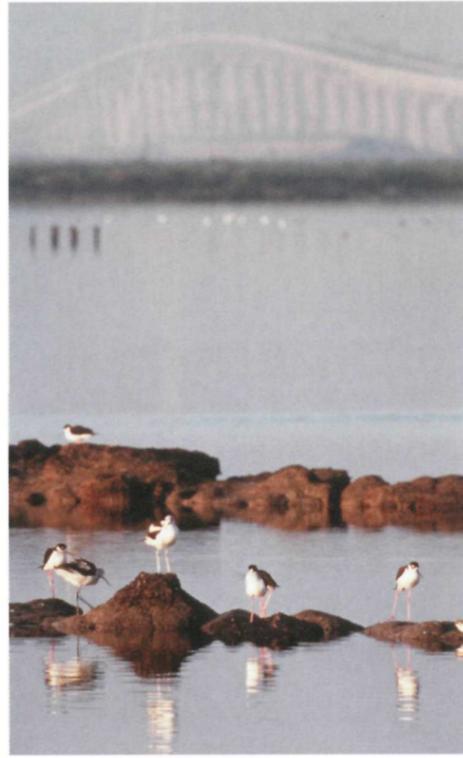
When President Theodore Roosevelt set aside tiny Pelican Island on Florida’s East Coast as a refuge for birds nearly a century ago, he began a conservation legacy that now spans 93 million acres across the United States and its territories, an area about the size of Montana.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is America’s only network of federal lands dedicated specifically to wildlife conservation, representing a steadfast commitment to protecting our wildlife heritage.

This vast network of strategically located habitats protects hundreds of endangered species, serves as stepping stones for millions of migratory birds, and conserves premier fisheries. Wildlife of virtually every variety find a home on the National Wildlife Refuge System.



USFWS Photo: W. Metzner



USFWS Photo: © K. Hollingsworth

As the land management arm of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Refuge System helps fulfill a critical part of the agency’s overarching mission: to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service envisions the Centennial anniversary as a unique opportunity to build broad public understanding and appreciation for the National Wildlife Refuge System, enhance partnerships on its behalf, and strengthen its stewardship and infrastructure through improved wildlife and habitat management, visitor programs, and facilities nationwide.

Our Centennial efforts will reinforce growing interest and support from Congress, partners, and the American people, and will advance our goals to fulfill the promise of the National Wildlife Refuge System in its next century.



USFWS Photo

National Wildlife Refuge System

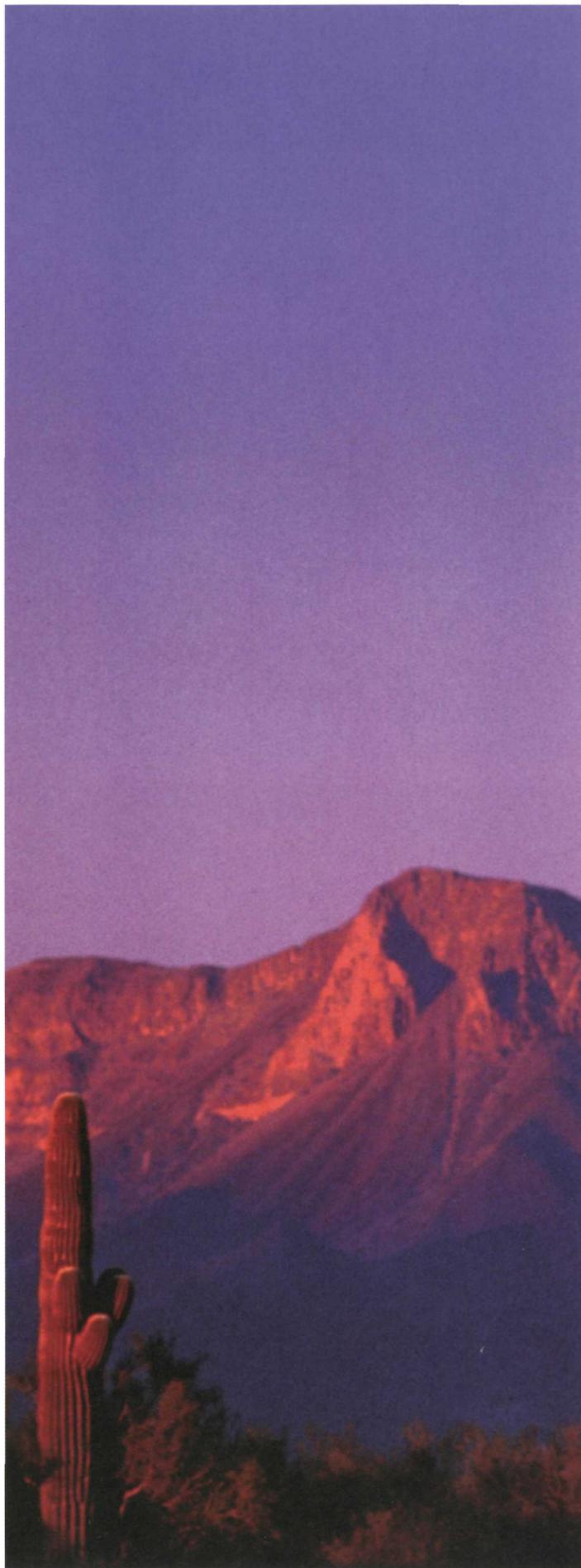
- Only network of federal lands dedicated to wildlife
- Comprises 93 million acres of wildlife habitat
- Includes 535 refuges
- Includes thousands of small prairie-wetlands for breeding waterfowl
- Protects hundreds of endangered species
- Safeguards millions of migratory birds
- Conserves premier fisheries
- Hosts more than 35 million visitors per year
- Supported by 200 refuge community partnerships
- Supported by 30,000 volunteers



USFWS Photo: D. Menke



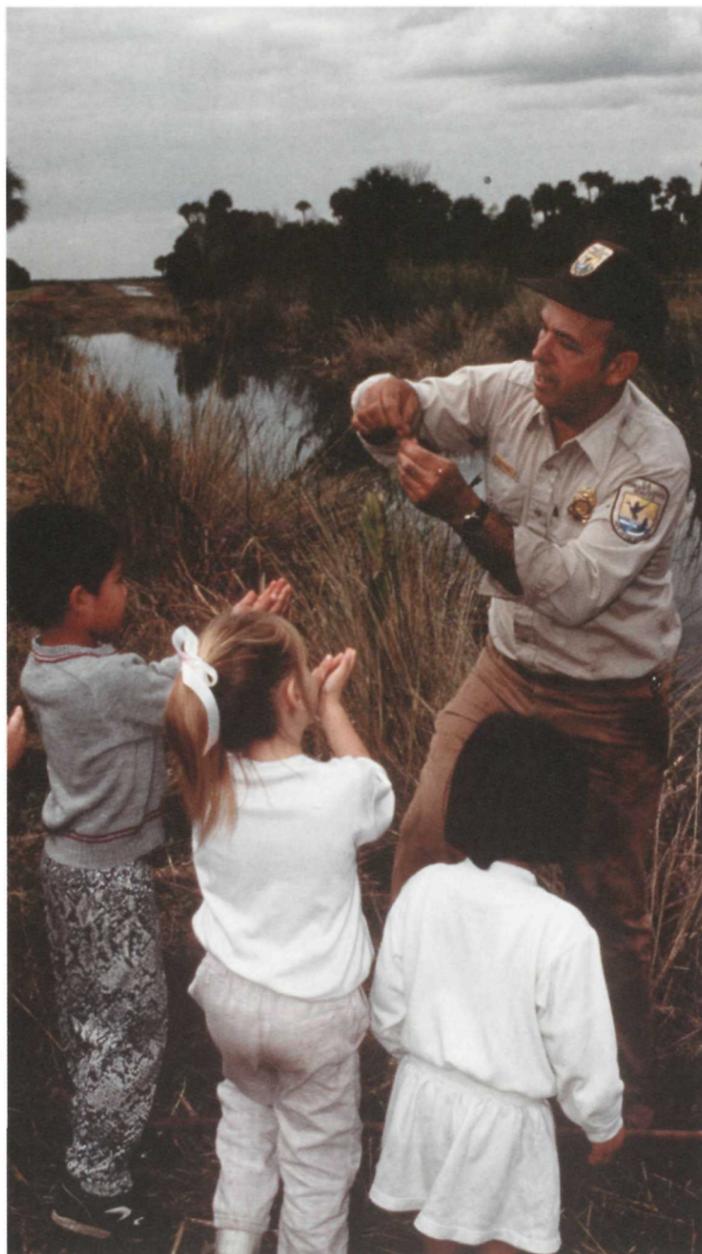
USFWS Photo: EJ O’Neil



USFWS Photo: K. Hollingsworth



USFWS Photo: © F. Hester



USFWS Photo: K. Hollingsworth

Poised for a New Century

The last several years have been marked by tremendous progress for the National Wildlife Refuge System, especially because of Congressional support for key legislative measures and significant funding increases. We've also seen growth in conservation partnerships, support in communities surrounding refuges, and volunteerism. Our efforts for the Centennial occasion are designed to build on this progress.

The biggest recent milestone in our progress came in 1997 with passage of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. This legislation gave the Service a firm foundation for better managing the Refuge System by providing a clear conservation mission and establishing priority wildlife-dependent public uses, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

The Refuge System Improvement Act calls for improved processes for ensuring refuge uses are compatible with its mission, comprehensive conservation plans for individual refuges, and enhanced partner and neighbor involvement in refuge management decision-making and programs. It also advocates efforts to enhance public understanding and appreciation for the System. More and more Americans are discovering their National Wildlife Refuge System, at a rate of about 4 million additional visitors per year. More than 35 million people visited the Refuge System last year to enjoy unique outdoor experiences.

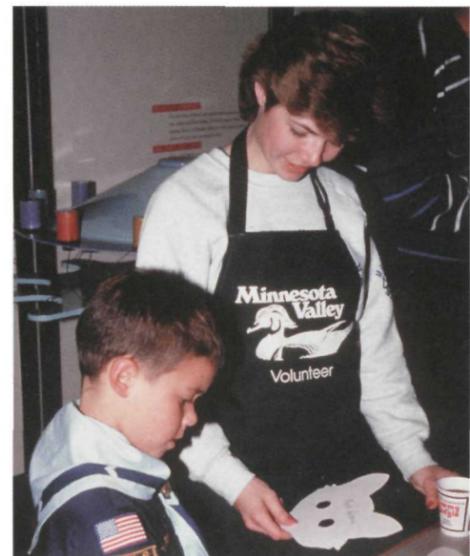
That same year, Congress recognized the National Wildlife Refuge System's extensive resource needs by providing the largest funding increase in the System's history, and has continued to help the Service better address its funding backlogs over the last few years. This Congressional support mirrors growing interest and efforts on the part of numerous conservation organizations, especially the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement. This diverse coalition of 20 organizations, with a combined membership of 13 million people, joined forces in 1996 to find long-term funding solutions for the Refuge System.

Congress' support for the National Wildlife Refuge System also came with passage of the Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 and another law passed that year, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. The Volunteer law recognizes the critical role volunteers and community partners play in managing the Refuge System, and provides means to bolster this support. The number of volunteers supporting the Refuge System, about 30,000, is more than 10 times the number of its actual workforce, with volunteers performing 25 percent of all work on refuges nationwide. Refuge community partners have grown in recent years to now number more than 200. The major transportation law, TEA-21, for the first time included provisions for the Refuge System's road maintenance and construction needs along with other federal land management agencies.

A historic moment for the National Wildlife Refuge System also took place in 1998 when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service mobilized its workforce and partners to chart a future course for the Refuge System. These efforts culminated during the first-ever national gathering of all refuge managers, Service leadership, and more than 200 Refuge System partners held in Keystone, Colorado.

The result was a collective vision called *Fulfilling the Promise* of the National Wildlife Refuge System. This comprehensive road map outlines the best ways to address a broad range of the Refuge System's most critical needs in wildlife and habitat management; visitor programs, partnerships, and outreach; and leadership and career development. *Fulfilling the Promise* is our primary vehicle for building a stronger National Wildlife Refuge System.

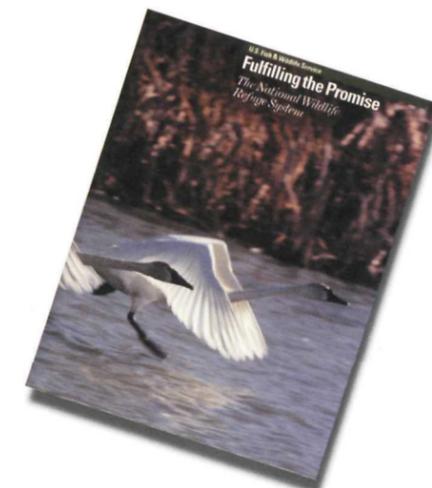
These are just a few examples of the stars aligning in growing support for the National Wildlife Refuge System. This progress sets the stage for a stronger Refuge System to make its debut, performing to its full potential in safeguarding our wildlife heritage, and helping the public understand and appreciate its value to our society. There is still much to be done, but with this stronghold of support, we can maximize the opportunity the Centennial brings to make the National Wildlife Refuge System stronger than it's ever been.



USFWS Photo: K. Hollingsworth



USFWS Photo: M. Hemming



Toward a Stronger Legacy

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's activities for the Centennial occasion will carry out the spirit and provisions of these laws, maximize our growing partnerships, and advance the goals of *Fulfilling the Promise* of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The cornerstone of these efforts is the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act of 2000. This law paves the way for our efforts to broaden public understanding and appreciation for the Refuge System, increase and strengthen partnerships on its behalf, and bolster stewardship and visitor programs and facilities.



USFWS Photo: K. Hollingsworth

Centennial Commission: The Centennial law calls for a Centennial Commission made up of distinguished private-sector individuals to oversee special public outreach activities leading up to and during the Centennial year. The commission is modeled after a similar group that oversaw the National Park System's successful Centennial celebrations in 1972.

It would be composed of the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, members of the Congressional Committee on Resources and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, Congressional representatives of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, and up to 10 others appointed by the Interior Secretary. The commission will accept donations of money, property, and services to leverage efforts with public and private organizations. The Commission also will plan and host a national conference on the Refuge System in 2003.

Special Public Outreach: Through special outreach efforts overseen by the Centennial Commission, we will invite the American people to discover their



USFWS Photo: K. Hollingsworth

National Wildlife Refuge System and foster partnerships with benefits well into the future.

Outreach efforts for the Centennial include a host of special public awareness projects, a national conference, innovative conservation partnership programs, and projects to boost our volunteer and community partnership programs.

The law also calls for a Presidential Proclamation designating 2003 "The Year of the National Wildlife Refuge."

Centennial Campaign Projects

- Make Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge a premier site for conservation education
- Smithsonian Institution Exhibit
- Partnerships with zoos
- Commemorative Postage Stamp Series
- National Wildlife Refuge System Conference
- Volunteer Recruitment and Enhancement Initiative
- Refuge Hunting and Fishing Guidebook
- Internet Partnerships for Outdoor Recreation
- Special media promotions
- Conservation education programs



USFWS Photo: K. Hollingsworth

Strengthening Stewardship and Facilities: The Centennial law requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a long-term plan to address the National Wildlife Refuge System's major operations, maintenance, and construction needs nationwide. This Centennial Legacy Plan will prioritize and address only the Refuge System's most pressing needs.

The Centennial Legacy Plan will help the Service better manage and monitor wildlife, restore habitat, carry out visitor

programs, repair deteriorating facilities, and construct new facilities such as welcome centers, boardwalks, fishing piers, hunting blinds, and wildlife observation platforms.

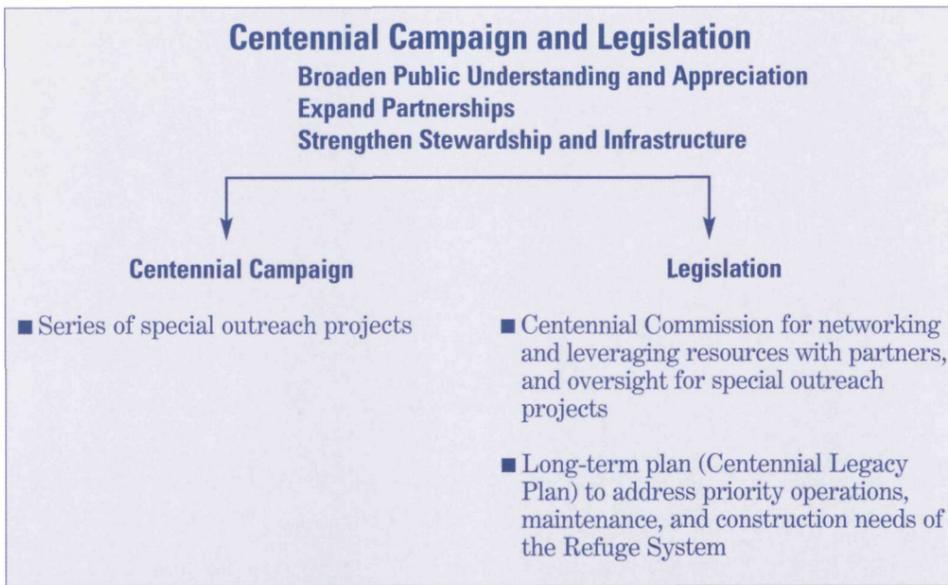
These special efforts will maximize the potential of the National Wildlife Refuge System's Centennial anniversary, to give future generations of Americans respect and pride for our natural heritage, and ensure Theodore Roosevelt's conservation legacy will be even stronger in its next century.

Centennial Legacy Plan

Operations: Operations includes all efforts to protect wildlife, improve habitats, and serve visitors. The Refuge System's total operations backlog is about \$1 billion; approximately \$355 million of which is identified for essential staffing and projects considered critical to fulfilling our conservation mission and ensuring quality outdoor experiences for refuge visitors.

Maintenance: The Refuge System's backlog for maintenance projects for deteriorating facilities totals \$800 million. In keeping with industry standards for maintaining facilities, we should invest at least \$141 million annually to keep our maintenance backlog from growing exponentially each year.

Construction: Many refuges have no visitor facilities, and most are struggling to provide high quality visitor experiences given the rate of growth in visitation. For us to adequately welcome, orient, and provide safe and accessible outdoor experiences for refuge visitors, our Centennial Legacy Plan will identify our high priority needs to construct visitor centers and other public use facilities.

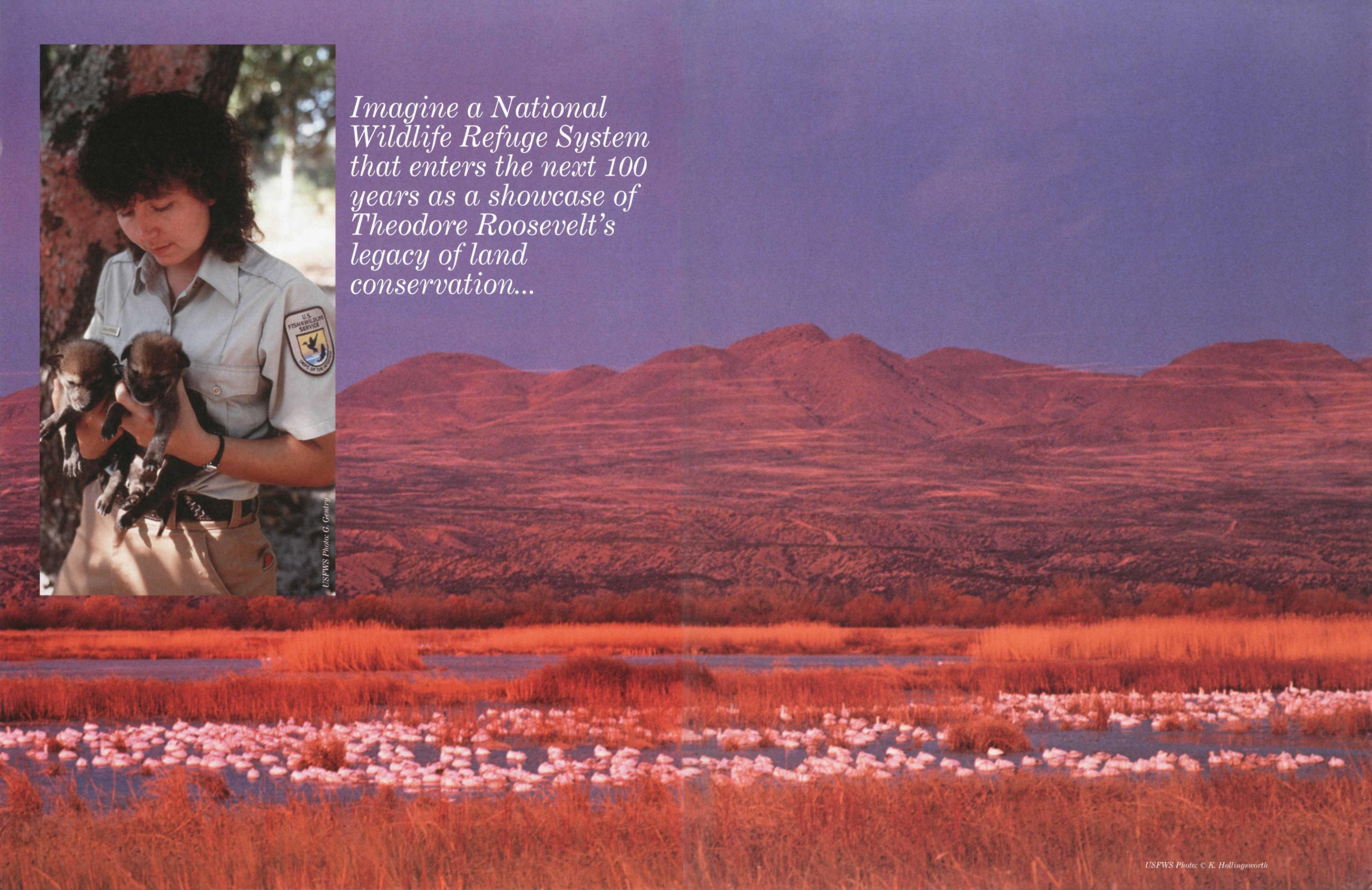


USFWS Photo: © FE Hester

Imagine a National Wildlife Refuge System that enters the next 100 years as a showcase of Theodore Roosevelt's legacy of land conservation...



USFWS Photo: G. Gentry



USFWS Photo: © K. Hollingsworth

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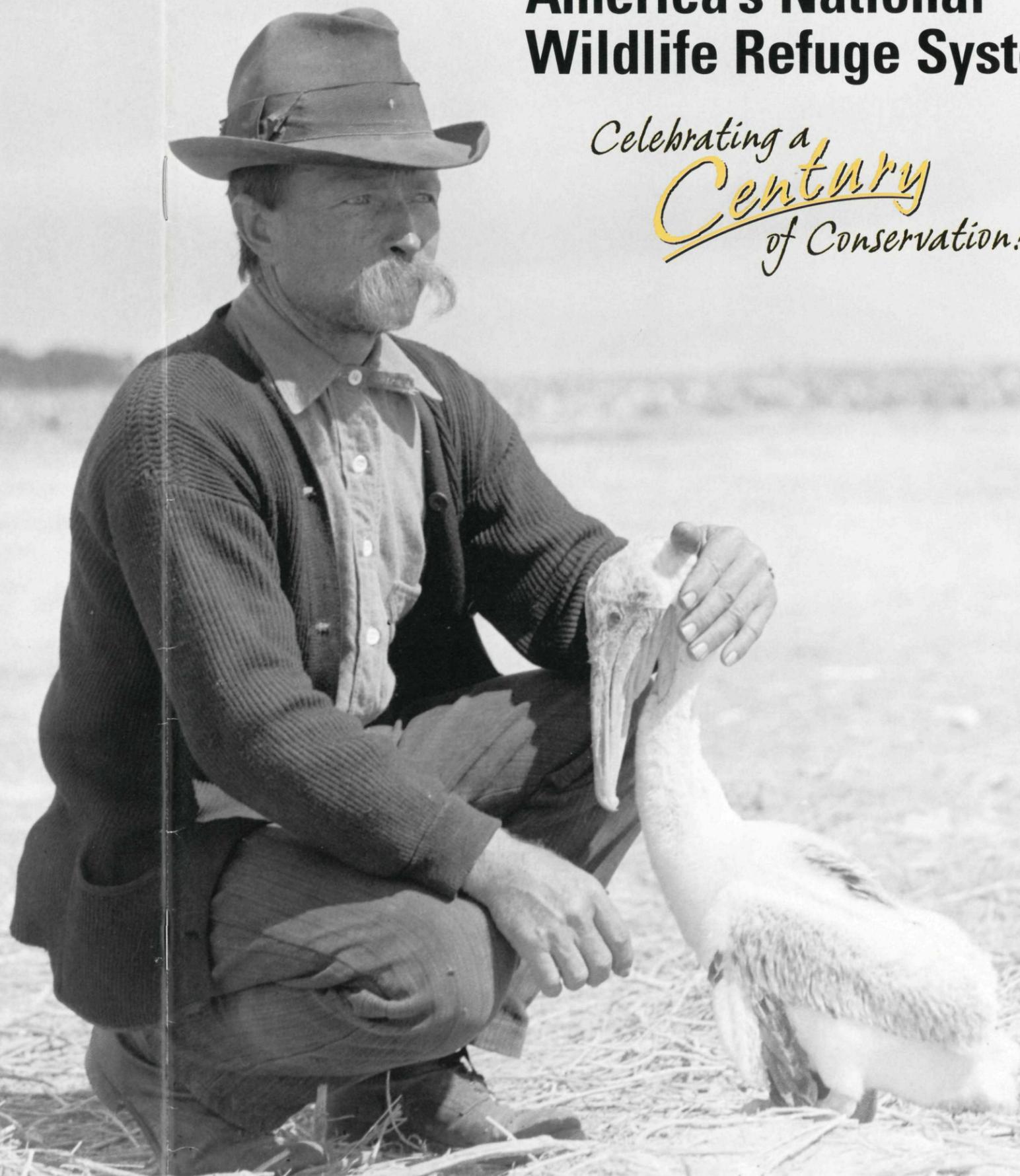


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On the Cover:
Paul Kroegel, our nation's first
refuge manager, at Pelican Island,
Florida.