

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Kirwin

*National Wildlife  
Refuge*



*“Grass and sky would be enough. With only those, the summer prairie would be a smiling, running spread of cloud shadow and wind pattern. But . . . sometimes as secret and solitary as jewels, and often in broad painted fields, the prairie flowers come on . . . .”*

*John Madsen,  
Where the Sky Began*



## **Welcome to Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge**



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

The 10,778 acre Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is located in the rolling hills and narrow valley of the North Fork of the Solomon River in north-central Kansas. The Refuge lies in an area where the tall-grass prairies of the east meet the short-grass plains of the west. As a result of this merging of prairies and plains, grasses and wildlife common to both habitats are found on the Refuge.

Two centuries ago, the Refuge and the surrounding area was a sea of grass, unbroken except for wooded streams and rivers. Historically, herds of bison and elk inhabited the area along with prairie chickens, prairie dogs, wolves, mountain lions, bears, and other wildlife. Native Americans, who depended upon the bison herds for their subsistence, also resided in this area.

Kirwin NWR, the first National Wildlife Refuge in Kansas, is one of a system of more than 550 refuges spread across the United States. National Wildlife Refuges are managed to provide for the needs of migratory birds, to preserve natural habitat diversity, and to protect endangered plants and animals. National Wildlife Refuges are a living heritage, conserving wildlife for people today and for generations to come.

## **Managing Refuge Habitats for Wildlife**

The primary purpose of Kirwin NWR is to conserve, maintain, and manage wildlife and habitat for migratory birds. The Refuge supports diverse wildlife habitat including grasslands, stream corridors, open water, and wetlands. Refuge staff uses a variety of management practices to provide optimum habitat for wildlife by controlling invading non-native plants, and planting native grasses and forbs. In the cooperative farming program, crops such as corn, wheat, and milo are planted on the Refuge by local



farmers who work on a share basis. A portion of the crop is harvested for use by the farmer, and the rest is left in the field to provide food for the thousands of ducks and geese that use the Refuge during spring and fall migrations. Other habitat management tools used to promote native grasslands include haying, grazing, and prescribed burning.

The grasslands of yesteryear were much more vigorous than they are today. Historically, prairie wildfires and massive migrating herds of bison controlled the amount of decaying vegetation that was left covering the grasslands. The bison would graze on and trample vegetation areas only for a short time, then move on, thus allowing the native grasses to re-grow and continue the prairie life cycle. Since bison no longer roam the Great Plains, Kirwin NWR emulates this natural cycle of high intensity grazing over a short period of time with cattle.

While dead and decaying plants from previous years' growth are necessary for shelter and nesting habitat for some animals, too much of this plant material can inhibit new plant growth and make it difficult for small animals to nest and move about. Prescribed burning by Refuge staff has replaced wildfires, which removes litter accumulation, releases nutrients in the litter layer, and kills invading weeds, brush, and trees.



*Fremont's  
leatherplant*

Remnants of the once vast prairie landscape are still found on hillsides and in small scattered tracts around the Refuge. A wide variety of grasses, including big and little bluestem, Indian grass, switch grass, and western wheatgrass, are common. Black samson echinacea, Maximillian sunflower, pitcher sage, and purple prairieclover are just a few of the colorful wildflowers found in native prairie areas. As a result of this diverse habitat, Kirwin NWR is home to a rich variety of wildlife species including more than 234 bird species, 34 species of mammals, and 38 species of reptiles and amphibians.

Kirwin NWR is the only Refuge to have Fremont's leatherplant (*Clematis fremontii*) on its premises. It was named in honor of General John Fremont who made expeditions across the west and discovered many new plant species. The plant's entire distribution is limited to north-central Kansas, where it prefers limestone prairie hillsides.

## Diverse Wildlife Abounds



*Dickcissel*

The grasslands found on the Refuge provide cover for grassland nesting birds such as upland sandpipers, greater prairie chickens, bobolinks, and grasshopper sparrows. Look and listen for prairie songsters including the western meadowlark, Bell's vireo, and dickcissel as they begin to nest. Wooded areas along Bow Creek and the Solomon River provide nesting areas for warblers, orioles, flycatchers, woodpeckers, and other songbirds.

Beaver find food and cover in an aquatic habitat, while raccoons and skunks search for a meal along the reservoir, and bobcats and coyotes hunt the uplands. Reptiles and amphibians are here in great numbers, but are often difficult to observe. Fields of native grass hide mice and rabbits, the prey of red-tailed hawks, rough-legged hawks, peregrine falcons, and American kestrels. Resident species include upland game birds such as pheasant and bobwhite quail.

*Greater prairie chicken*



*Jackrabbit*

Rio Grande turkey and spotted fawns can be seen in the grasslands and along the trees.















Visitors to the Refuge are often in awe of the tremendous numbers of waterfowl, water birds, and shorebirds that pass through the Refuge during spring and fall migrations. More than 20,000 Canada geese and 10,000 mallards, along with bald and golden eagles, winter on the Refuge from November until March. During spring migration, the Refuge once again becomes a staging area for even more ducks, geese, shorebirds, and other migrants en route to traditional nesting grounds.

Summer residents include least sandpipers, American avocets, Wilson's phalaropes, marbled godwits, gulls, egrets, and grebes. Rookeries are inhabited by double-crested cormorants and great blue herons. Watching wildlife can be a fun and enjoyable experience. Enjoy your visit to Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge!



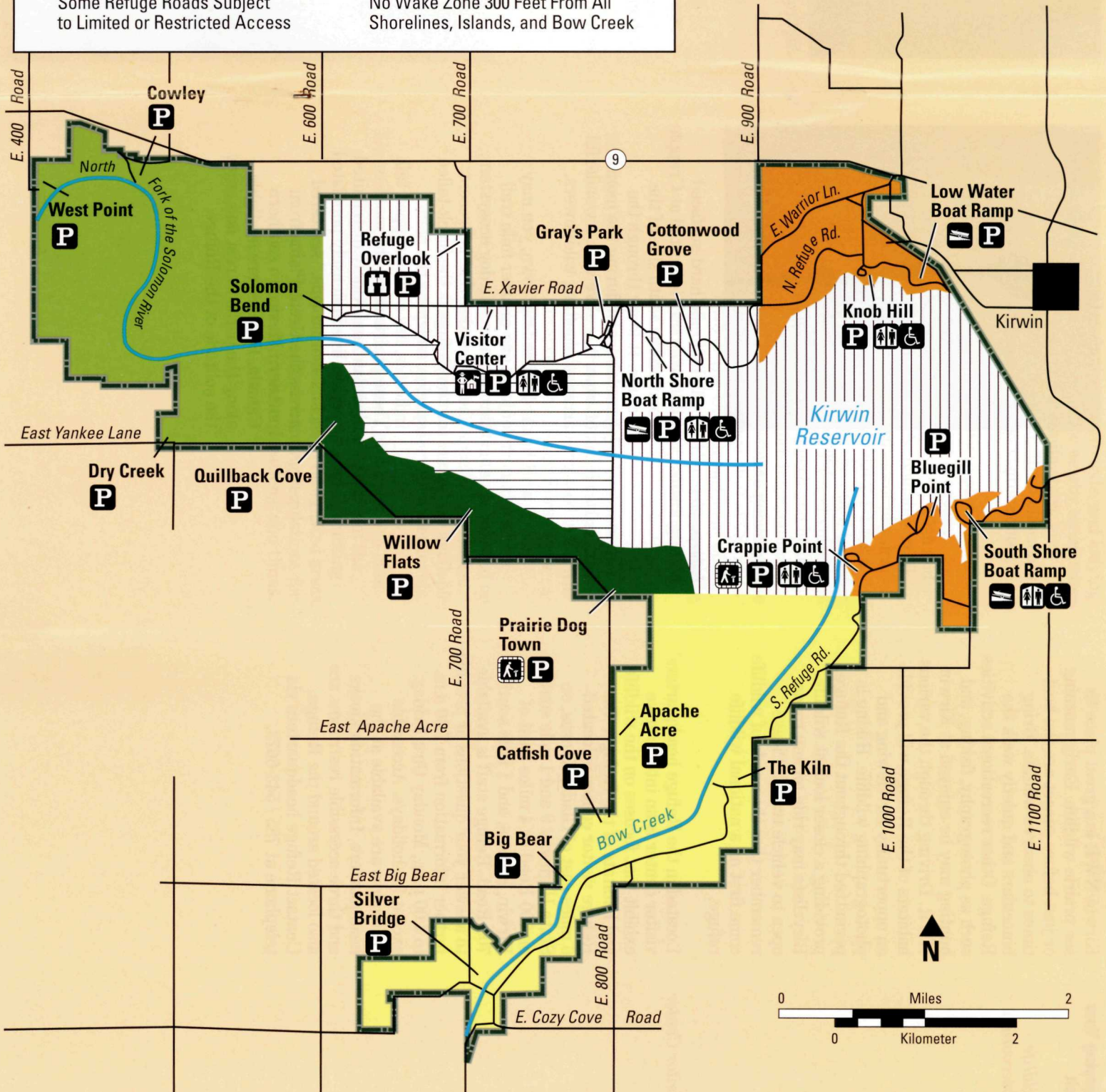
# Kirwin

## National Wildlife Refuge

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Refuge Boundary            |  Archery Deer Hunting Only, No Boating. Motorless Boats Allowed Aug. 1 - Sept. 30                  |
|  State Highway              |  Hunting Area for Legal Refuge Species   |
|  Visitor Center             |  Hunting Area for Legal Refuge Species, Except Waterfowl   |
|  Accessible Restroom        |  Closed to Hunting   |
|  Parking                    |  Closed to Hunting and Boating. Motorless Boats Allowed Aug. 1 - Sept. 30                          |
|  Interpretive Walking Trail |  Hunting Area for Waterfowl and Other Legal Refuge Species. Six Shotgun Shells Per Person, Per Day |
|  Refuge Overlook            |   |
|  Boat Ramp                  |   |

Some Refuge Roads Subject to Limited or Restricted Access

No Wake Zone 300 Feet From All Shorelines, Islands, and Bow Creek





## Enjoying Your Visit

### Wildlife Observation

Kirwin NWR is a great place to see prairie wildlife. Early morning or just before sunset are the best times to observe wildlife. Bring binoculars and quietly walk the Refuge. Other recreational activities such as photography, fishing, and hunting may be enjoyed at Kirwin NWR. Driving through the various habitats of the Refuge will provide an opportunity for viewing and photographing wildlife. Hiking is permitted throughout the Refuge, providing a closer look at wildlife. Bicyclists may ride on any roads open to vehicle travel. Please remember that the needs of wildlife come first on a national wildlife refuge.

### Visitor Center

Located in the Refuge headquarters' visitor center is an interpretive exhibit that focuses on the wildlife and habitats of the Refuge. The Refuge visitor center is located 6 miles east of Glade, Kansas, on State Highway 9 and 1 mile south on 700 Road or 4 miles west of Kirwin, Kansas, and 1 mile south on 700 Road. Refuge staff is available to answer your questions or provide further information from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday thru Friday, except for holidays. Accessible restrooms are available at the headquarters. Information kiosks and three accessible restrooms are also located around the Refuge. Contact Refuge headquarters via telephone at 785 / 543-6673.

### *Burrowing owl*

### *Interpretive Nature Trails*



A one-half mile hard-surfaced wildflower trail is located at Crappie Point on the south side of the Refuge. It loops through the grassland, and during the month of June, it is alive with a wonderful array of blooming wildflowers.

At Prairie Dog Town, you may enjoy a one-quarter mile trail through a prairie dog ecosystem. The prairie dog that is present on the Refuge is the black-tailed species, which, as the name indicates, has a black-tipped tail. These prairie dogs, the most abundant and widely distributed species, live in densely populated colonies or "towns," scattered across the Great Plains from northern Mexico to southern Canada. Benches are available along the paths to rest and enjoy the solitude of the Refuge.

### *Nearby Accommodations*

Gas, food, campgrounds, and lodging can be found in the nearby communities of Kirwin and Phillipsburg and surrounding area. More information is available at the visitor center.

### *Accessibility*

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 or to address accessibility needs, please contact the Refuge staff at 785 / 543 6673 or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

### *Fishing*

Fishing for walleye, largemouth bass, black crappie, channel catfish, and other species is permitted in Kirwin Reservoir, the North Fork of the Solomon River, and Bow Creek. Anglers may fish from the shore year-round, and boats are allowed on the reservoir in specified locations. One or more boat ramps are available, depending on reservoir water levels.

### *Hunting*

The Refuge is a great place to hunt. Approximately 5,800 acres of the Refuge are open to public hunting of various species in designated areas. Please check hunting regulations for specific species, locations, and times.

## Refuge Regulations

The following rules and regulations are necessary for the protection of visitors, and wildlife and their habitats. Kirwin NWR is subject to Federal, State, and local laws and regulations. The Refuge is patrolled by Federal Law Enforcement Officers, State Game Wardens, and County Deputies. All violations of Refuge regulations are subject to a fine, arrest, or both.

### Fishing

- Kirwin NWR is open to sport fishing in accordance with Kansas State Fishing Regulations, unless signs or buoys indicate otherwise.
- Boating between October 1 and April 1 is prohibited, except for south of Scout Cove. Boats may be launched at Scout Cove during this period.
- A no wake zone is in effect within 300 feet of all shorelines and islands, as well as on the Bow Creek arm.
- The Solomon River arm is closed to all motorized boats. Motorless boats and float tubes are allowed on the Solomon River from August 1 through September 30.
- Boats must be equipped and operated in accordance with Kansas Boat and Water Safety Laws and appropriate Federal regulations.
- Disposing of fish cleanings on the Refuge or in the reservoir is littering. A fish cleaning station is located on the square in the city of Kirwin.

### Hunting

- All hunters must possess a valid Kansas hunting license and all the necessary stamps and/or permits as required by Federal and State laws.
- **Archery deer hunters are required to obtain and carry a Refuge Access Permit on the Refuge.** Permits are available at the visitor center.

- Not all hunting areas are open for all species, so be sure that you hunt in the proper area. Areas open for hunting are outlined on the map. If you are unsure, contact the Refuge visitor center staff for assistance.
- Hunting regulations generally follow statewide regulations including seasons and bag limits established by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Regulations specific to the Refuge are as follows:

#### *Species, Shot, Firearms, and Shell Limits*

- The only species that can be hunted on designated areas of the Refuge are: waterfowl, doves, pheasants, quail, turkey, prairie chickens, snipe, coots, cottontail rabbits, fox squirrels, and deer (archery only). Hunting of cottontail rabbits and fox squirrels is allowed only during pheasant season. Hunting of other wildlife, such as sandhill cranes, is prohibited.
- Rifles and handguns are prohibited.
- Discharge of a firearm for any reason other than the legal taking of game animals is prohibited.
- Federally approved non-toxic shot must be used for shotgun hunting, including turkeys.
- ALL hunters in the area from Quillback Cove to Prairie Dog Town are restricted to possession of a daily maximum of six (6) shotgun shells.

#### *Portable Tree Stands and Hunting Blinds*

- Portable tree stands and hunting blinds are permitted. They may be installed no more than seven (7) days prior to the season and must be removed no later than two (2) days after the season. The use of nails, wire, screws, or bolts to attach



a stand to a tree or hunting from a tree into which a metal object has been driven is prohibited on the Refuge. The construction or use of any permanent stand or blind is prohibited.

- All portable tree stands and blinds erected on Kirwin Refuge must have the name, address, and phone number of the owner permanently affixed to the tree stand or blind. Portable tree stands and blinds without owner information will be considered abandoned property and will be immediately removed.
- Natural vegetation may be used to construct a temporary blind. However, the digging or use of holes or pits is prohibited.
- Baiting and trail cameras are prohibited.
- Retrieving game from a NO HUNTING ZONE or from an area that is not open to the hunting of that species is prohibited. Regulate your hunting to ensure that game does not fall into an area where it cannot be retrieved.

#### *Alcohol and Other Controlled Substances*

Possession, distribution, and/or consumption of a controlled substance, including, but not limited to, marijuana on Kirwin NWR is prohibited by Federal law. Kirwin NWR prohibits the possession of drug paraphernalia, including any instrument that facilitates the consumption of a controlled substance.

Kirwin NWR also prohibits the possession and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages by persons under the age of 21 on the Refuge. Providing alcoholic beverages to persons under the age of 21 is also prohibited on the Refuge.

#### *Motor Vehicles*

The use or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited. Hunters may not possess alcoholic beverages in their motor vehicles while hunting on Kirwin NWR.

Federal and State traffic laws apply to all motor vehicles. Federal and State speeding and drunk driving laws are enforced. The speed limit on the Refuge is 25 miles per hour unless otherwise posted. Drunk driving on Kirwin NWR is a violation of Federal law which may result in fine, arrest, or both.

We prohibit the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATV's), off-highway vehicles (OHV's), non-highway vehicles (NHV's), and snowmobiles on the Refuge.

Driving off-road is prohibited.

#### *Other Prohibited Activities*

To minimize disturbance to wildlife and to comply with Federal laws, policies, and regulations, these activities are also prohibited on the Refuge.

- Camping
- Fires
- Water skiing
- Personal watercraft (jet skis)
- Speed boating
- Swimming
- Collecting plants, animals (including antlers), or historical artifacts
- Fireworks
- Dogs and other pets must be on a leash or under the owner's immediate control. Free roaming pets are prohibited.
- Littering
- Disorderly conduct
- Intoxication
- Commercial use (including guiding)



Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge  
702 East Xavier Road  
Kirwin, KS 67644  
785 / 543 6673  
<http://kirwin.fws.gov>

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

For State transfer relay service  
TTY / Voice: 711

For Refuge Information  
1 800 / 344 WILD

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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## *National Wildlife Refuge*



Upland sandpiper  
All photos by Tony Hland / USFWS