

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Lostwood

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



“This region is high prairie country. Numerous lakes, marshes and meadows are scattered over the country... The only timber in this region was formerly on the southeast corner of (Lower) Lostwood Lake but was cut off by the homesteaders...”

Remington Kellogg 1915

Teal Slough
Sandy Kellinkson / USFWS

Welcome to Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge



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



© Cliff Beittel

Baird's sparrow

Pair of blue-winged teal in courtship.



© Cliff Beittel

Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is one of over 540 refuges administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - a system of lands set aside to conserve wildlife and habitat for people today and generations to come. Lostwood NWR is one of the largest publicly owned tracts of northern mixed grass prairie in the United States. This 26,904-acre Refuge provides key habitat for many unique species of grassland birds.

Lostwood NWR is designated a Globally Important Bird Area by the American Birding Conservancy and the Audubon Society. The Refuge provides essential habitat for prairie-dependent bird species such as Sprague's pipits and Baird's sparrows. Some of the larger, showy members of the upland prairie include marbled godwits, upland sandpipers, and willets.

The 2,000 wetland basins interspersed throughout the Refuge also define Lostwood, and many are home to a variety of waterbirds. Mallard, blue-winged teal, gadwall, American wigeon, northern shoveler, and redhead are among the 12 species of colorful waterfowl that breed and nest here. Other members of the wetland community are more often heard and not seen. Listen for the “slough pump” sound of the American bittern.

Ice to a Sea of Grass

Lostwood NWR is located in the physiographic region of North Dakota named the Missouri Coteau. Coteau is French for "little hill." This distinctive landscape of rolling hills and wetlands was shaped by glaciers. The last glaciers melted away 10,000 years ago leaving behind a moraine or ridge of rocks and soil varying in width from 10 to 60 miles extending from southeast Alberta to northwest Iowa.

The glaciers influenced the land and plant communities we see today. Following glaciation, a spruce forest dominated the landscape. Gradually, as the climate warmed over the centuries, the forest gave way to a sea of grass dotted with ponds, marshes, and lakes.

Human Influences

Native Americans thrived in this area on abundant bison, waterfowl, and other game. Tipi rings, remnants of these previous residents, can be found at a number of locations on the Refuge. In the early 1900's, immigrants began to settle in the Lostwood area in response to the Homestead Act. The first settlers found few trees on the prairie. At one time, a small grove of trees was located near Lower Lostwood Lake. The settlers cut down the trees for fuelwood, and a blizzard buried the wood. The Refuge is named for this "lost wood."

President Theodore Roosevelt created the National Wildlife Refuge System in 1903 to conserve our nation's wildlife heritage. A major drought turned the Great Plains into a "Dust Bowl" during the 1930s, and waterfowl populations plunged. The drought spurred the establishment of many North Dakota refuges as breeding grounds for migratory birds and other wildlife. Lostwood NWR was established on September 4, 1935.

The Civilian Conservation Corps accomplished many projects in this region in the 1930's, including the following projects on Lostwood NWR: the auto tour route, loading docks, boundary fences, and dams. Most of these projects can still be seen today and remain a tribute to this era. The 100-foot lookout tower was constructed through the Works Progress Administration program in 1936.



Karen Smith / USFWS

*Wood lily
in bloom*

In 1964, the Wilderness Act was passed by Congress to protect large representative tracts of ecosystems across the United States. The 5,577-acre Lostwood Wilderness Area was created in 1975 to best represent and protect the northern mixed grass prairie of the Missouri Coteau. The Lostwood Wilderness is managed to preserve wild character, beauty, and native plants and animals.

Almost Lost

Lostwood NWR has a rich diversity of plants with 700 species represented in the region and over 100 species of grasses found in this area of North Dakota. Northern mixed grass prairie consists of species of eastern tallgrass, western shortgrass, northern fescue, and southern sandhill prairies. Like all habitats, prairie plant species represent and are determined by the underlying conditions of temperature, moisture, light, soil type, and topography.
















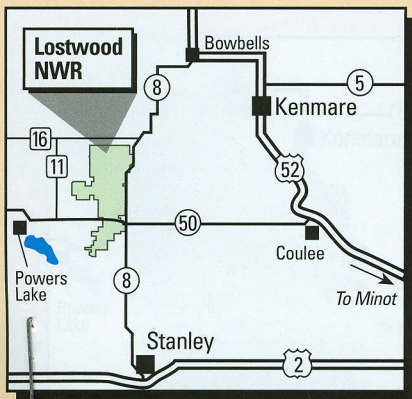
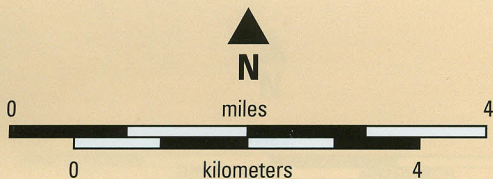
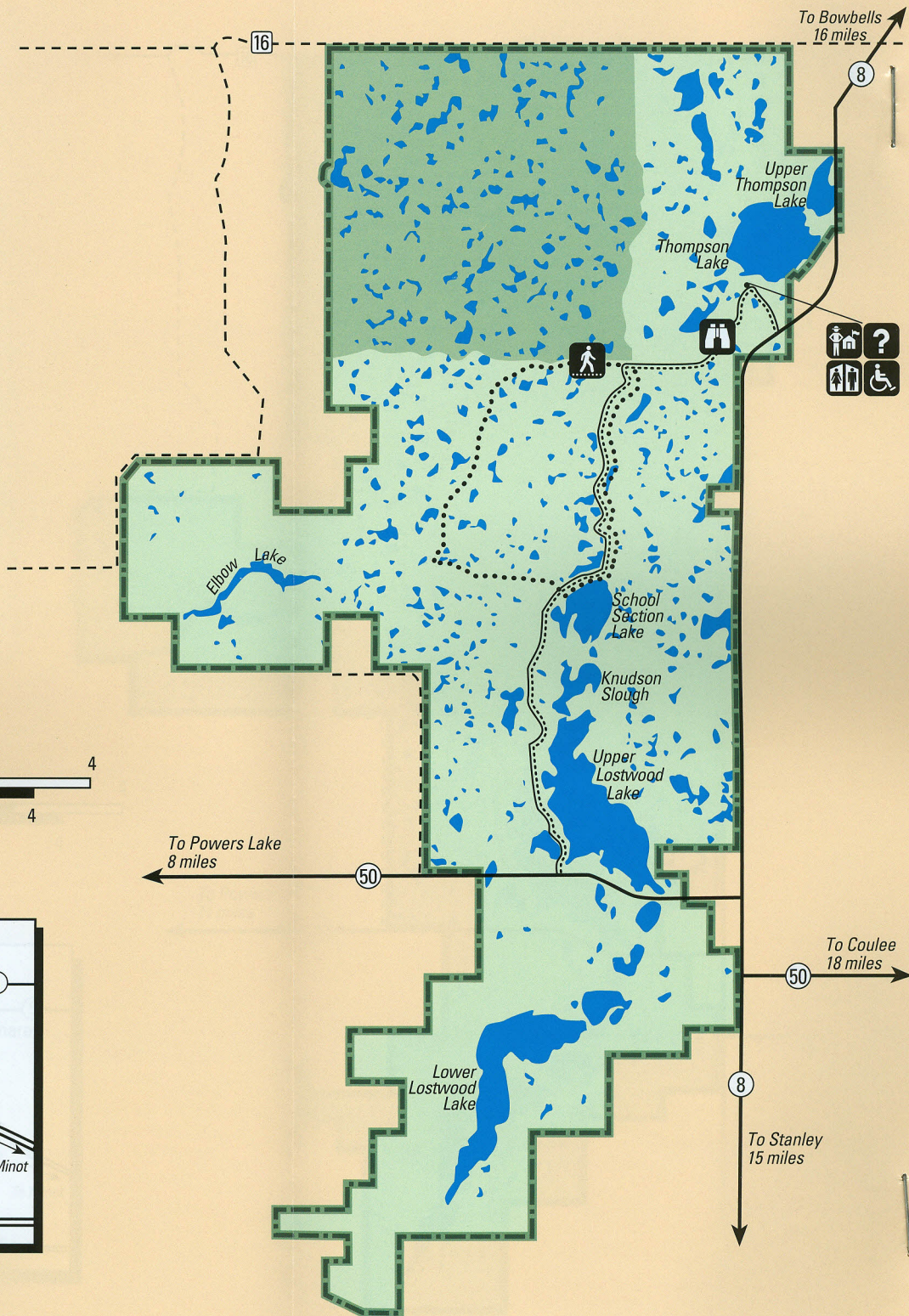
Karen Smith / USFWS

*Hairy golden
aster and spotted
gayfeather*

Lostwood

National Wildlife Refuge

-  Refuge Boundary
-  State Highway
-  County Road (gravel)
-  Gravel Road
-  Auto Tour Route
-  Nature Trail
-  Refuge Headquarters
-  Lookout Tower
-  Information Kiosk
-  Restrooms
-  Accessible Site
-  Wilderness Area
-  Lakes and Wetlands



Historically, periodic wildfires, grazing by large herds of bison, and drought maintained the prairie. As bison herds diminished and wildfires were controlled, the composition of grassland plant and animal species began to change dramatically. By the 1970's, the grasslands of Lostwood NWR were being overtaken by spreading shrubs and aspen trees. Grassland birds were being replaced by woodland and shrubland bird species. To address these changes, Refuge staff began to work toward the restoration of this unique habitat.

Current management practices mimic historical processes as prescribed fire has replaced wildfires, and cattle have replaced bison for grazing purposes. Prescribed fire reduces woody and non-native plant encroachment. Grazing stimulates native grasses to "tiller" or spread their root system. Over time, prescribed burning and livestock grazing is slowly restoring and sustaining native prairie grassland species and the unique mix of animals that rely on this habitat.

Prescribed fire improves wildlife habitat.



R. Wayne Weiler / USFWS

When to Visit Lostwood NWR



Karen Smith / USFWS

Pasque flower



Karen Smith / USFWS

Pied-billed grebe

Wildlife species and their activity levels change throughout the seasons.

From December through mid-April, snow blankets the landscape. A showcase of color begins after April snow melt as wildflowers and butterflies brighten the prairie grasses. Many arctic and boreal nesting birds migrate overhead in large numbers, and some stop briefly. Local breeding birds arrive in May and bring lively sounds and earthy colors to the summer months.

Nesting activities for most bird species peak in June, and by early July, some shorebird species have nested, raised their young, and have started to migrate south. Hawks lazily circle in large flocks or "kettles" moving southward in September.

Late October, cold snaps rapidly freeze wetland potholes. Waterbirds fill the skies and hurriedly exit producing a true wonder of nature. After freeze-up, few bird species are hardy enough to remain in the quiet prairie. White-tailed deer and snow buntings are the most abundant and visible winter residents. A comprehensive species list is available at the Refuge headquarters.

A Place to Enjoy a Grassland Landscape

There are many ways to enjoy Lostwood NWR, but it is important to remember that the needs of wildlife come first. Some of the activities you can do or places you can visit include:

Headquarters Kiosk - Start your visit at the Refuge headquarters where leaflets and outdoor exhibits are available. Accessible rest rooms are available year-round inside the entryway of the Refuge office.

Lostwood Wilderness Area - Experience the prairie much like early settlers did. This area is open for hiking, photography, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. See the special wilderness regulations at Refuge headquarters for more information.

Nature Trail - Take the 7-mile nature trail from May through September. Enjoy the scenery while getting closer to the plants and animals of the prairie.

Auto Tour - Travel the 7-mile self-guided auto tour route through the center of the Refuge, open from May through September. Early morning and late afternoon are the best times for viewing wildlife.

Piping plover



© Cliff Beittel

Photography and Wildlife Viewing - Photograph wildlife and wildflowers, and add to your bird list during your visit. Please ask the Refuge staff for specific locations to find certain plants or animals.

Grouse Viewing Blind - Visit a viewing blind located on one of the Refuge's many sharp-tailed grouse dancing grounds available by phone reservation (best viewing is mid-April to early May).

Hunting - Portions of the Refuge are open to hunting for sharp-tailed grouse, gray partridge, and deer. See the special hunting regulations at the Refuge headquarters for more information.

The Refuge headquarters is located 21 miles north of Stanley, North Dakota, along State Highway 8. Office hours are 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday except for Federal holidays. Lostwood NWR is a field station, and Refuge staff may not be present when you visit.

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 701 / 848 2722 or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge
8315 Highway 8
Kenmare, ND 58746-9046
701 / 848 2722
701 / 848 2702 fax
lostwood@fws.gov
<http://lostwood.fws.gov>

For State transfer relay service
TTY / Voice: 711

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

For Refuge Information
1 800 / 344 WILD

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Sprague's pipit
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