

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks

# Marais des Cygnes

*National Wildlife Refuge  
and Wildlife Area*



*“Marais des Cygnes” is French for “marsh of swans.” This name is actually a translation of an Osage Indian name for the region, “Mixa-ckau-tse,” which means “where white swans are plentiful.”*

*Trumpeter and tundra swans are now rare visitors, but this area is still well known for its abundance and variety of wildlife.*



Wood duck drake  
© Mike Blair

## Welcome



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



*The bison was selected as the symbol of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks to pay tribute to this prairie resident.*

Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the adjoining Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area, managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, encompass a diversity of wildlife habitat. The two areas are nearly equal in size and together protect 15,000 acres of land along the Marais des Cygnes River in east-central Kansas. Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area was established by the State of Kansas in 1951 primarily for the management of waterfowl. Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1992 by Congress for the protection and restoration of bottomland hardwood forests. Together, the two areas compliment each other and provide a variety of habitat for wildlife and recreational opportunities for the public.

The Marais des Cygnes River was the heart of the Osage Indian Nation's hunting grounds. The Osage people were very reliable fur trappers and thus frequently traded with the French. A number of trading posts were established along the river, including one that eventually became the nearby town of Trading Post.

The Refuge and Wildlife Area are both named for the Marais des Cygnes River, the primary natural feature of the region. Annual floods profoundly influence the wetlands and bottomland hardwood forest found at both sites. Water pumped from the river also helps maintain managed wetlands.

## Wildlife Management on the Refuge and the Wildlife Area

Bottomland hardwood forest protection and restoration is the primary management activity on the Refuge and is an important goal of the Wildlife Area as well. Over 80 percent of bottomland hardwood forests have been destroyed nationally. Remaining tracts are often fragmented and relatively small. In addition, dams, levees, channelization of river systems, and increasing water needs for municipal, industrial, and agricultural use have greatly changed the natural flooding necessary to sustain healthy floodplain forests.



*Bottomland hardwood forest.*

© Karl Karrow

Annual floods supply nutrients to floodplain forests, recharge forested wetlands, and favor the growth of plants adapted to floodplain habitat. Forests slow flood waters, trap suspended sediments, and provide habitat for many species of wildlife. Some wildlife species, such as red-shouldered hawks, broad-headed skinks, and flat floater mussels, are rarely found in habitat other than flood-plain forest and wetlands. Bottomland forest restoration includes tree or nut planting, restoration of forested wetlands, and modification of forest composition.

Wetland management is the highest priority on the Wildlife Area and receives high consideration on the Refuge as well. Water level manipulation within wetland units is the primary management tool on the Wildlife Area.



*Rock riffles on the Marais des Cygnes River.*

Selected marshes are dewatered allowing annual plants to germinate and grow. Some marshes may be burned, disked, or mowed to encourage the growth of desired plants or inhibit undesired species. These units are then flooded in the fall to provide habitat for migratory and wintering wetland wildlife. Marshes that are not dewatered produce marsh plants and harbor fish, amphibians, and invertebrates sought by wetland wildlife.



© Bruce Freske

*Prairie coneflower*

Native prairie and croplands are managed on both areas. Native prairie protection and restoration activities include prescribed fire, mowing, control of invading non-native plants, and planting of native grasses and forbs. Cropfields are managed to provide food for migrating waterfowl and upland wildlife.

“Closed Areas” on both the Refuge and the Wildlife Area serve as sanctuaries where wildlife can feed and rest with little human disturbance. Spring migrants need to feed undisturbed to prepare for reproduction and their journey to breeding areas. Summer resident waterfowl and wading birds require protected areas to forage and rear young. Closed areas also provide safe havens for fall migrants during hunting seasons. Freedom from disturbance is critical to waterfowl and eagles, as well as other wildlife, whenever food is less available and energy requirements are high.

### **Diverse Wildlife Abounds**

The biological diversity of this region is tremendous due to the meeting of the extensive tallgrass prairie in the Kansas Flint Hills, located to the west, and the oak-hickory forests of the Missouri Ozarks, to the east. High-quality stands of bottomland hardwood forest, upland oak-hickory forest, tallgrass prairie, and seasonal and permanent wetlands are found throughout both the Refuge and the Wildlife Area. These unique areas provide habitat for many species that are considered threatened or endangered such as bald eagles, peregrine falcons, broad-head skinks, spring peepers, flat floater mussels, and Mead’s milkweed.



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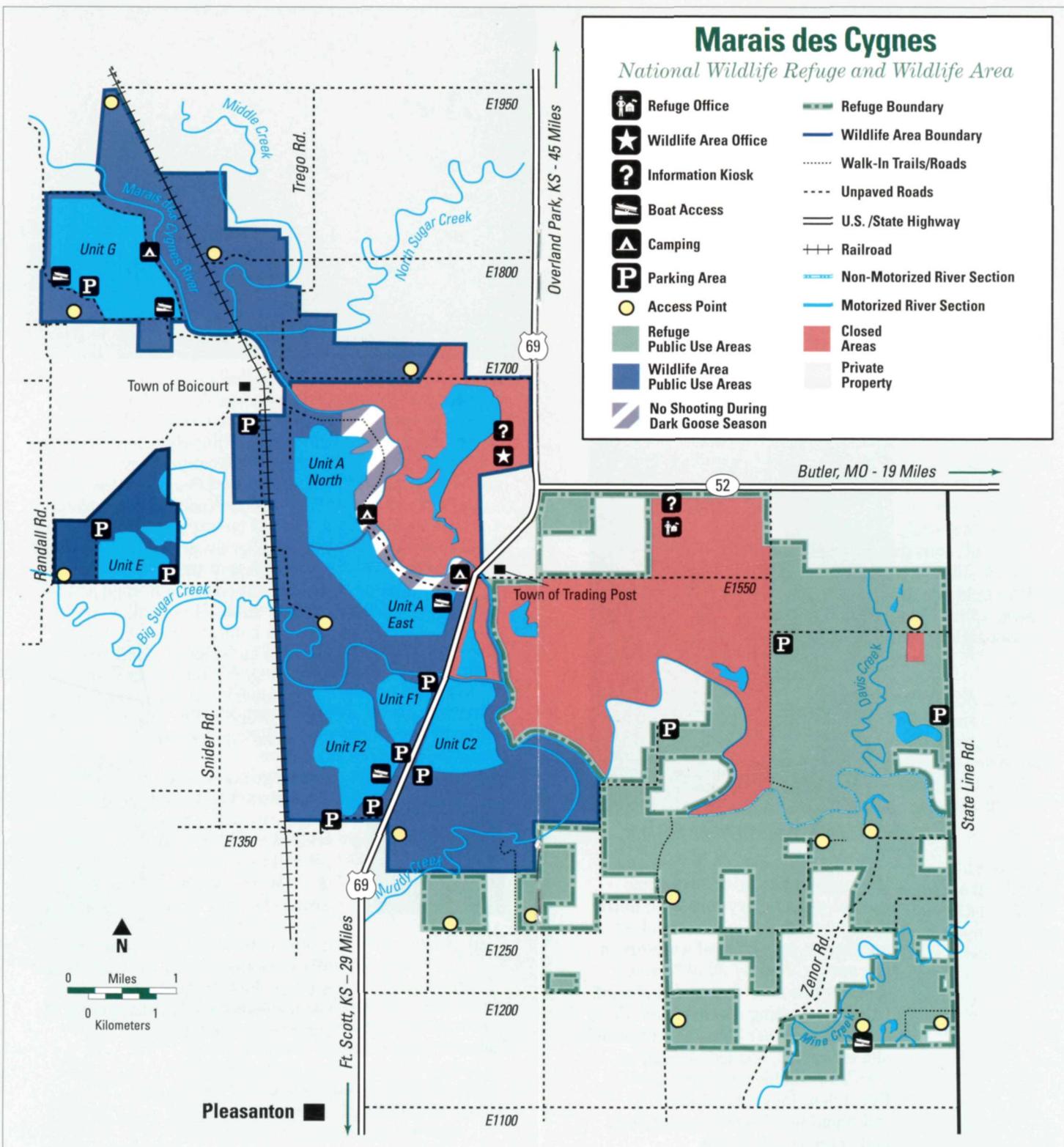
*Mallard drake*

The large marshes on the Wildlife Area attract thousands of ducks and geese each fall. Large numbers of other waterbirds, including white pelicans, egrets, herons, rails, and shorebirds, can also be seen. Trumpeter and tundra swans were once a notable feature of the region but are now rare visitors. Unfortunately, intensive hunting by fur traders and settlers for skins and meat greatly reduced numbers of both species of swan by the late 1800’s.

# Marais des Cygnes

National Wildlife Refuge and Wildlife Area

- |  |                                      |  |                             |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
|  | Refuge Office                        |  | Refuge Boundary             |
|  | Wildlife Area Office                 |  | Wildlife Area Boundary      |
|  | Information Kiosk                    |  | Walk-In Trails/Roads        |
|  | Boat Access                          |  | Unpaved Roads               |
|  | Camping                              |  | U.S./State Highway          |
|  | Parking Area                         |  | Railroad                    |
|  | Access Point                         |  | Non-Motorized River Section |
|  | Refuge Public Use Areas              |  | Motorized River Section     |
|  | Wildlife Area Public Use Areas       |  | Closed Areas                |
|  | No Shooting During Dark Goose Season |  | Private Property            |



Tundra swan populations have recovered much more quickly from over-hunting than trumpeter swans. This is largely because tundra swan nesting habitat is located in the relatively undisturbed Canadian Arctic rather than the upper Midwest, where extensive drainage of wetlands has eliminated much of the nesting habitat for trumpeter swans. Only the Atlantic and Pacific coast populations of tundra swans have recovered. The Gulf Coast population, which once migrated through Missouri and Kansas and wintered on the Gulf Coast of Texas, no longer exists.



© Mike Blair

*Flying squirrel in a tree hole.*

Bottomland hardwood forest and upland oak-hickory forest on both the Refuge and Wildlife Area host an impressive migration of warblers in the spring. Nearly 30 different species of warblers can be found here! Other interesting species found in the area are river otter, bobcat, wood and cotton rat, hooded merganser, cerulean warbler, scissor-tailed flycatcher, loggerhead shrike, red-shouldered hawk, paddlefish, and copperhead snake.

## Enjoy Your Visit

Recreational activities such as fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, and photography may be enjoyed on the Refuge and Wildlife Area.

Hunting is allowed on the Refuge for deer during the archery season, and for turkey during the spring hunting season. Quail, rabbit, squirrel, and waterfowl hunting opportunities are also available.

Hunting on the Wildlife Area is primarily for waterfowl. Over 2,500 acres of marsh provides diverse waterfowl habitat for hunting opportunities. Squirrel, deer, and turkey hunting opportunities are also available.

Several ponds on the Refuge provide fishing opportunities for sunfish, bass, and crappie. On the Wildlife Area, catfish, white bass, and crappie can be found in Unit G. The Marais des Cygnes River, which runs through both the Refuge and Wildlife Area, has flathead, channel, and blue catfish, as well as white crappie, white bass, and walleye. All listed species may be caught in both areas.

Both the Refuge and Wildlife Area have service and levee roads that provide easy access for hiking and wildlife observation. These roads vary in length from one-quarter of a mile to 1½ miles and are not open to public vehicle traffic.

Bird, amphibian, and reptile checklists may be obtained as separate brochures from either the Refuge or the Wildlife Area offices or on the Refuge website listed on the back of this brochure.

**Local Accommodations**

Linn County Park, located 5 miles north of the Refuge and Wildlife Area, provides facilities for camping.

Food and gas are available in Pleasanton, Kansas, 6 miles south of the Refuge and Wildlife Area, while lodging is available in Butler, Missouri, (19 miles east) and Fort Scott, Kansas, (29 miles south).

**Refuge Regulations**

Hunting and fishing 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.

*Motorized Vehicles*

Motor vehicles, including ATV's, are restricted to public roads and parking lots. Do not block gates or access roads.

*Boating*

Outboard motor use is restricted to the westernmost 5½ mile section of the Marais des Cygnes River. Non-motorized boats and electric trolling motors may be used on all open portions of the Refuge including the eastern 4 mile section of the Marais des Cygnes River. Refuge property boundaries are located at the center of the river. Where sections of the river border private property, only the half of the river adjacent to public property is open to public use.

*Camping*

Overnight camping and building of fires is prohibited.

*Fishing*

Fishing is allowed in accordance with statewide seasons and creel limits.

*Firearms*

Firearms are prohibited except when used for appropriate hunting seasons. Center-fire and rim-fire rifles and pistols are prohibited at all times. Non-toxic shot is required for all shotgun hunting except for turkey.

*Pets*

Pets must be leashed except when used for hunting during appropriate hunting seasons.

*Hunting*

Deer and spring turkey hunting is open only to those possessing a valid Refuge Access Permit. To apply for a Refuge Access Permit, call the Refuge office any day in February for spring turkey permits, August for archery deer permits, and November for antlerless deer permits.

Trapping or hunting of furbearers and coyotes is prohibited. Running dogs for furbearers and coyotes is also prohibited.

Blinds, tree stands, and steps may not be fastened with any device which is inserted into trees, except screws. Construction of and hunting from illegal blinds is a violation.

Decoys must be removed each day.

Discharge of firearms within 150 yards of any residence or other occupied building is prohibited.

*Personal Conduct*

“Closed Areas” are closed to all public entry unless specifically opened for a special event.

Disorderly conduct and leaving of any refuse on the land or water is prohibited.

Use of the open portion of the Refuge for nature observation and other related activities is allowed.

*Animals and Plants*

Spotlighting deer on the Refuge is prohibited.

Molesting or injuring any animal or plant, except fish and game taken in season, is prohibited.

Harvest of berries, mushrooms, and nuts, and collecting of shed deer antlers, for non-commercial use, is allowed.

*Artifacts and Historic Items*

Artifacts and historic items are protected on Refuge lands by Federal law. It is unlawful to excavate or remove these objects from the Refuge.

## **Wildlife Area Regulations**

Hunting and fishing regulations generally follow statewide regulations established by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Regulations specific to the Wildlife Area are as follows.

### *Motorized Vehicles*

Motor vehicles, including ATV's, are restricted to public roads and parking lots. Do not park in front of gates or access roads.

### *Boating*

Boats may be used for hunting and fishing. Check posted regulations regarding motor use.

### *Camping*

Primitive camping is allowed at designated sites. Fires must be contained in fire rings, grills, or stoves. No amenities are provided.

### *Fishing*

Fishing is allowed year-round in the river and streams and from April 15 through September 15 in all marsh units except in Units B and C1.

Salvage of fish may be allowed by posted notice during dewatering of marshes.

### *Firearms*

Center-fire and rim-fire rifles and pistols are permitted. Target practice is prohibited.

Nontoxic shot is required for all shotgun hunting.

### *Hunting*

Waterfowl hunters must register and obtain a permit at the Wildlife area headquarters before hunting. Daily permits are free and available after 5 am.

Hunting from dikes, levees, or roads is prohibited.

Portions of Unit A along the Marais des Cygnes River are closed to shooting during dark goose season.

Access permits are required for some deer hunting seasons. Contact the Wildlife Area office for details and permits.

Portable blinds and stands may be used, but must be removed within 14 days of the close of the appropriate season. Pit blinds are prohibited.

Special hunts may be allowed on the Wildlife Area. Contact local personnel or consult the Kansas Special Hunts brochure or Department website.

### *Personal Conduct*

"Closed Areas" are closed to all public entry unless specifically opened for a special event.

Trash barrels are not provided. Visitors must take their trash out of the area.

### *Animals and Plants*

Harvest of berries, mushrooms, and nuts, and collecting of shed deer antlers, for non-commercial use, is allowed.

### **Accessibility Information**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks seek to afford persons of all abilities full accessibility or reasonable accommodation. Contact the Refuge or Wildlife Area staff for information or to address accessibility needs. For visitors in Kansas using TDD, contact the Kansas Relay Service at 1 800 / 766 3777. For visitors in Missouri using TDD or TTY, contact the Missouri Relay Service at 1 800 / 877 0434.

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to their race, color, national origin, sex, age, or handicap. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to the Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 900 Jackson St., Suite 502, Topeka, KS 66612 or to the Department of the Interior, 1849 C. St., N. W. Washington, D.C. 20240.

Marais des Cygnes  
National Wildlife Refuge  
24141 Kansas Hwy 52  
Pleasanton, KS 66075  
913 / 352 8956

<http://www.r6.fws.gov/maraisdescygnest/>

Kansas Relay Service  
TDD: 1 800 / 253 4091

Missouri Relay Service  
TDD/TTY: 1 800 / 877 0434

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

For Refuge Information  
1 800 / 344 WILD

Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area  
15492 US Hwy 69  
Pleasanton, KS 66075  
913 / 352 8941

Kansas Dept. of Wildlife & Parks  
<http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/>

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Pelicans on Unit G, Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area.  
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