

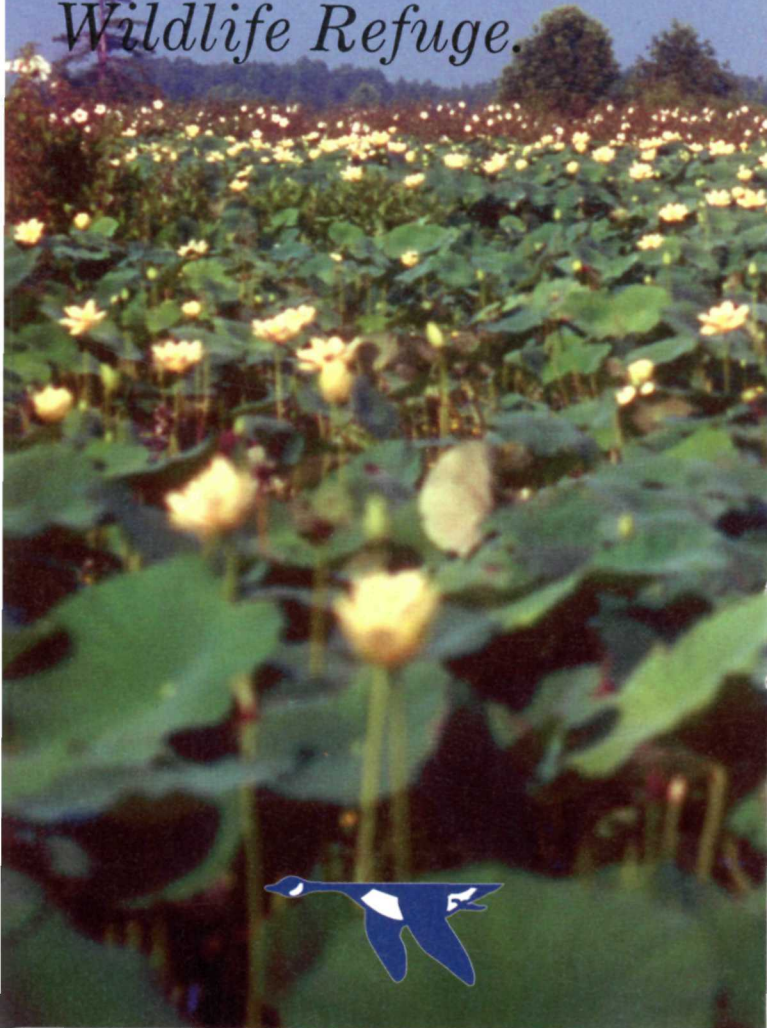
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Mingo

National Wildlife Refuge



When the last of the glaciers retreated over one million years ago, the mighty Mississippi River carved its way through the area we call Mingo National Wildlife Refuge.

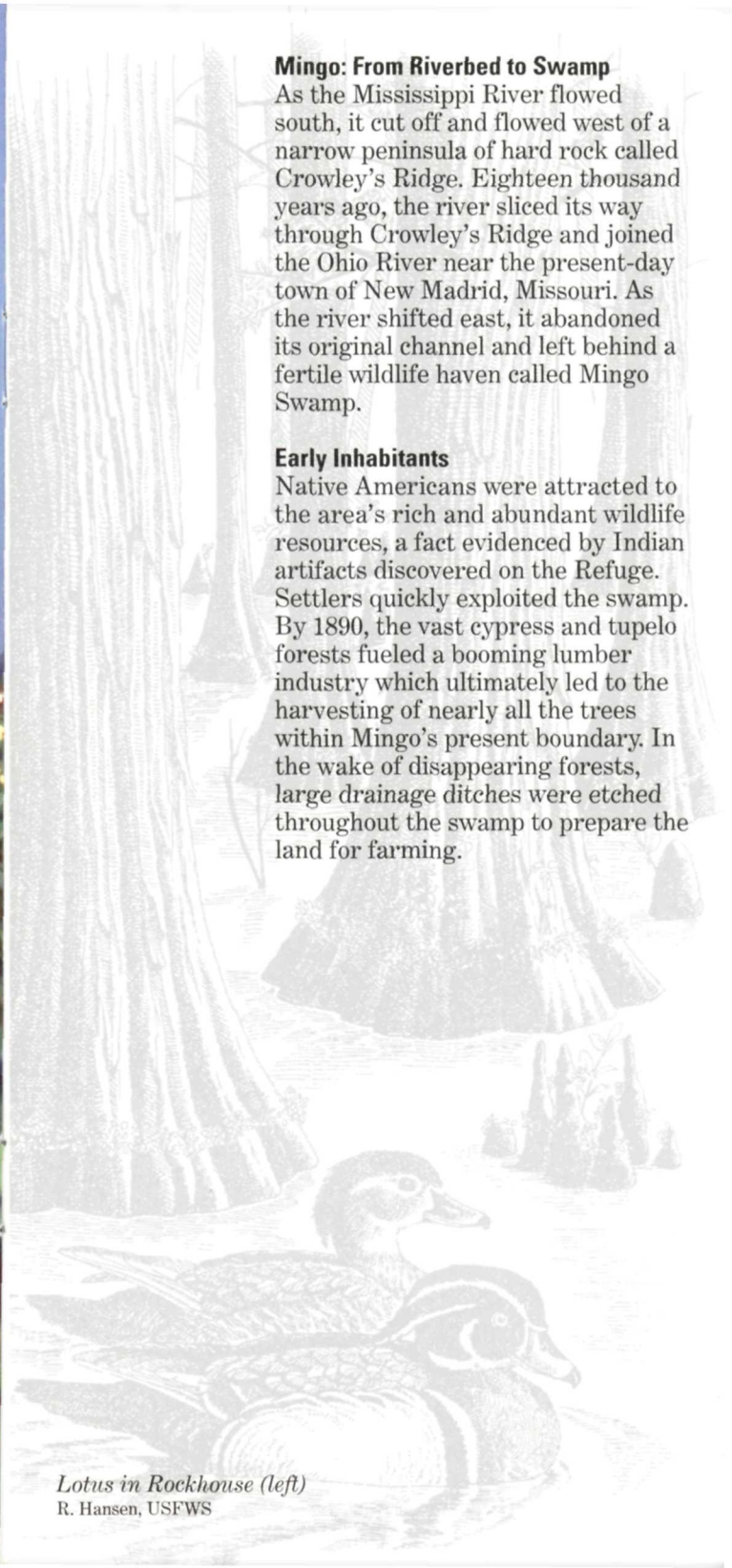


Mingo: From Riverbed to Swamp

As the Mississippi River flowed south, it cut off and flowed west of a narrow peninsula of hard rock called Crowley's Ridge. Eighteen thousand years ago, the river sliced its way through Crowley's Ridge and joined the Ohio River near the present-day town of New Madrid, Missouri. As the river shifted east, it abandoned its original channel and left behind a fertile wildlife haven called Mingo Swamp.

Early Inhabitants

Native Americans were attracted to the area's rich and abundant wildlife resources, a fact evidenced by Indian artifacts discovered on the Refuge. Settlers quickly exploited the swamp. By 1890, the vast cypress and tupelo forests fueled a booming lumber industry which ultimately led to the harvesting of nearly all the trees within Mingo's present boundary. In the wake of disappearing forests, large drainage ditches were etched throughout the swamp to prepare the land for farming.



Lotus in Rockhouse (left)
R. Hansen, USFWS



Eagles at Sunset
Dave Menke, USFWS

Many dollars were spent, but efforts proved only partially successful. This futility sharply contrasted with other drainage projects in southeastern Missouri which drained hundreds of thousands of acres of hardwood swamplands. The combination of a depressed economy, expensive drainage attempts, poor farming practices, over-grazing, and numerous fires quickly brought economic and ecological bankruptcy to the Mingo area during the Great Depression.



Though scarred from long-term, improper land use, the area's natural and wild resources recaptured interest in the 1930s, and in 1945 the purchase of refuge lands began. Today, much of the swamp's natural vitality has been restored through diligent and careful land and wildlife management practices. Although the refuge is managed for wildlife, habitat, and people, the primary purpose of Mingo's 21,676 acres is to provide food and shelter for migratory waterfowl.

Managing Habitat for Wildlife

Wildlife habitat management at Mingo emphasizes the natural productivity of the swamp. Water levels are manipulated with water control structures, ditches, and dikes, helping produce annual crops of natural foods. Water levels are lowered during the summer months, exposing mud flats around the perimeter of the marshes and encouraging growth of seed-bearing moist soil plants such as wild millet. The water levels are then raised in the fall to flood the marshes, making food for waterfowl plentiful.

Acorns from oak trees are also an important source of food for dabbling ducks, turkey, deer, and squirrel, so water levels on the refuge are adjusted to provide for healthy growth and reproduction of the forest. Food for wildlife is also produced by farming some 500 acres, most of which is tilled by neighboring farmers on a sharecrop basis. The refuge's share of the crop is left standing in the field for wildlife.



Photos (from top)
Barred Owl
© Dave Kneir

White-tailed Deer
J.Mattson, USFWS

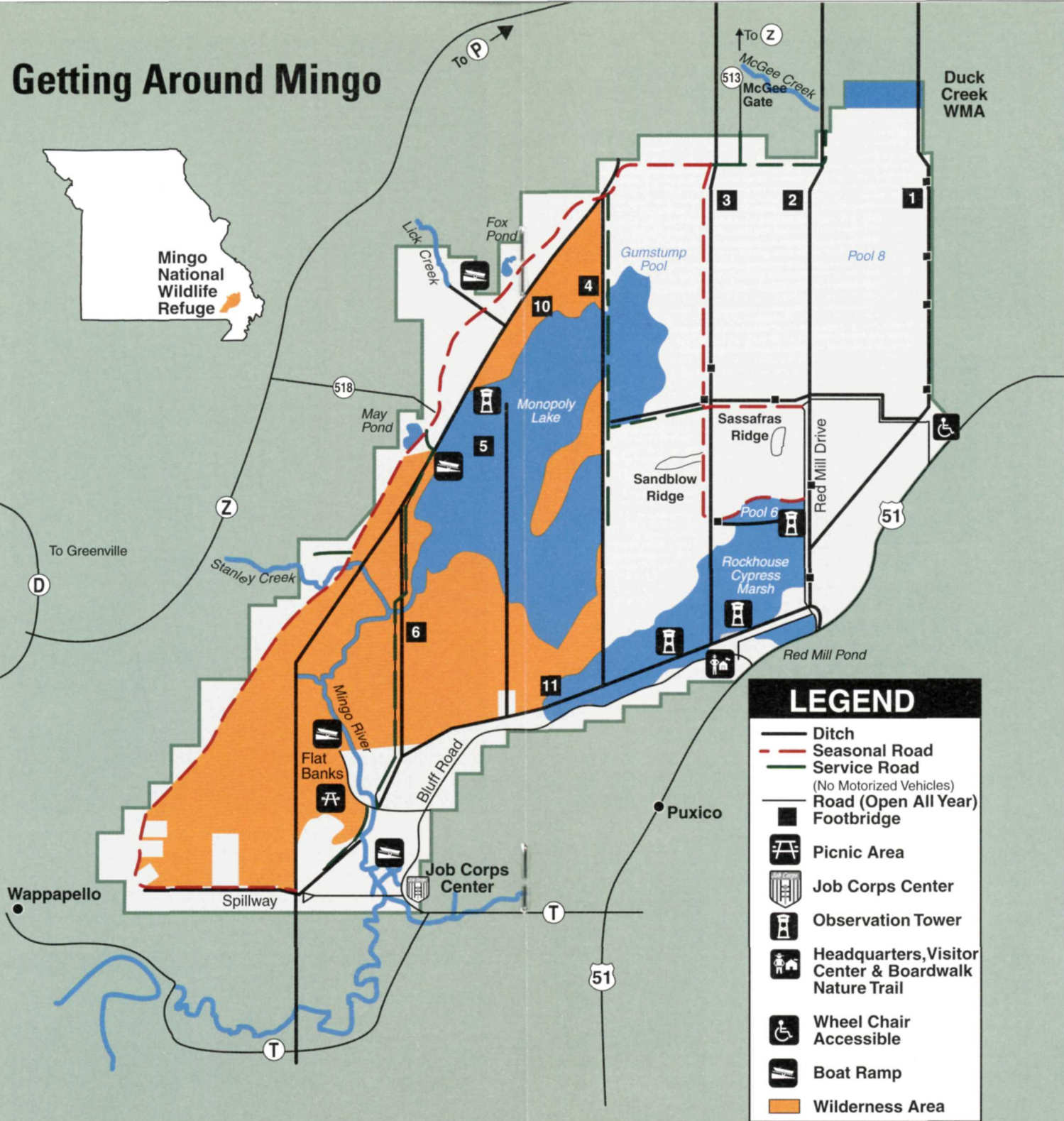
Hen Wood Duck
Dave Menke, USFWS

Red Fox
© Dave Kneir

Red-eared Sliders
© Dave Kneir



Getting Around Mingo



LEGEND

- Ditch
- Seasonal Road
- Service Road
(No Motorized Vehicles)
- Road (Open All Year)
- Footbridge
- Picnic Area
- Job Corps Center
- Observation Tower
- Headquarters, Visitor Center & Boardwalk Nature Trail
- Wheel Chair Accessible
- Boat Ramp
- Wilderness Area

Bald Eagle

Nature's Calendar

Bald eagles nest on Mingo over *Monopoly Marsh*. Numerous pairs of bald eagles spend the winter months on Mingo, and can be readily seen. **(December - February)**

Waterfowl



Mingo is an overwintering refuge for migratory waterfowl. Ducks and geese are abundant during winter months and swans commonly visit the refuge as well. Wood ducks and hooded mergansers commonly nest in the swamp. **(November - March)**

Reptiles and Amphibians

Because of the variety of habitats and the warm, moist climate, reptiles and amphibians are unusually abundant on the refuge. As with all refuge wildlife, reptiles and amphibians are protected and should be appreciated for the interest and variety they add to our enjoyment of the outdoors. *Do not attempt to handle them!* **(April - October)**

Wild Turkey

Turkey are most readily seen during winter and spring months along refuge roads. **(November - April)**

River Otter

Otters live in and catch fish from the complex series of drainage ditches and old stream channels which occur on the refuge. **(All Year)**

Turkey Vulture

Turkey vultures commonly nest in the limestone bluffs and caves of the refuge. **(All Year)**

White-tailed Deer

Mingo supports a herd of 1,000 - 2,000 white-tailed deer. **(All Year)**

Bobcat



Though seldom seen, bobcats are common in the woods of the swamp where rodents and other food sources are plentiful.

*Hooded Merganser (above)
and Bobcat (left)*

© Dave Kneir

Egrets

(April - October)

Songbirds

(September - June)

Shorebirds

(April - May)

Wildflowers

**Plants
April - May**

Bald Cypress/ Water Tupelo

April - October

Redbud

March - April

Lotus

June - July



*Snowy and
Great Egrets*
© Dave Kneir

Wilderness Area

Managing for Habitat

About 8,000 acres of Mingo is designated as a *Wilderness Area*. This area contains some of the most pristine, spectacular scenery within the refuge. Although many people envision wilderness as simply being a roadless area set aside for recreation, wilderness, as defined by the U.S. Congress in the 1964 Wilderness Act, is

"...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."



*Mushroom
Hunting*

© Dave Kneir

Consequently, only primitive recreational activities such as hiking, canoeing, fishing, and mushroom hunting are allowed in the *Wilderness Area*. Motorized vehicles and boat motors are prohibited!



Public Use at Mingo

The refuge is open for hiking, canoeing, fishing, and nature study from March 15 through September 30, from 1 hour before sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset. Limited picnic facilities are also available. During the remainder of the year, visitors should inquire at the refuge visitor center before entering the refuge.

Headquarters & Visitor Center



A visit to the refuge should begin with a tour of the Visitor Center overlooking *Rockhouse Marsh*. Here, you can learn about Mingo's history, geology, and wildlife. The visitor center is located approximately 1-1/2 miles north of Puxico, Missouri on U.S. Highway 51.

Canoeing



The best way to experience the beauty and ecological diversity of Mingo Swamp is to explore the area by canoe. Canoeing on the *Mingo River*, *Stanley Creek*, *Monopoly Marsh*, or on the many miles of ditches within the refuge is an intimate, up-close experience to remember.

Hiking



The *Boardwalk Nature Trail* is a one-mile loop trail through the bottomland hardwood swamp that helps you experience the beauty of Mingo Swamp.



The 1/2-mile *Bluff Trail*, which begins at the Visitor Center and connects with the Boardwalk, provides a fascinating walk when wildflowers are blooming in the spring. It also furnishes an interesting view of the steep limestone bluffs bordering the swamp. *Hartz Pond Trail* begins at the Visitor Center parking lot and leads you to Hartz Pond where fishing and picnic facilities are available.

Photos (from top)
Boardwalk Trail
Canoeing Mingo River
Limestone Bluffs
R. Hansen, USFWS



Environmental Education



Environmental education is an important program at Mingo, and school groups from all over southeast Missouri visit the refuge each year to explore Mingo's vast diversity of resources. Periodic environmental education workshops are conducted by refuge staff, and a teacher's handbook containing several different lesson plans is available upon request. Refuge staff are happy to provide orientation to help make visits to Mingo valuable learning experiences.

Fishing



Fishing for bass, crappie, bluegill, and catfish is a popular activity on the refuge. Special regulations also permit the taking of nongame fish such as carp and buffalo with nets and seines for personal use. Boats with electric motors are allowed, except in the *Wilderness Area*, where all motors are prohibited. Visitors interested in fishing should contact the refuge manager for current regulations.

Hunting



Limited hunting for deer, turkey, waterfowl, and squirrel is permitted. Interested hunters should contact the refuge manager for current regulations.

Photos (at top)
Environmental Education at Mingo
Monica Siler

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Mingo National Wildlife Refuge
24279 State Highway 51
Puxico, Missouri 63960
Phone: 573/222-3589
TTY users can reach Mingo through
Missouri's relay system at:
1-800-735-2966 (TTY)
http://www.fws.gov/r3pao/ming_nwr

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>



Great Blue Heron
© Dave Kneir