



National Wildlife Refuge System



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES play an important part in the conservation story of the United States. In combination, they make up the National Wildlife Refuge System — a farflung collection of lands and waters selected for their value to America's wildlife populations, particularly migratory birds and rare mammals. Over 400 refuges totaling 34 million acres are now in the System.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt set aside Pelican Island on the east coast of Florida to protect a nesting colony of pelicans and herons. It was the first National Wildlife Refuge, the beginning of the System. Later, Roosevelt established additional refuges on public lands, the Congress set aside more areas, and succeeding Presidents established a number of refuges by special orders.



"What better way to learn first-hand about ducklings."



"An American avocet protects its nest and eggs on Camas Refuge, Idaho."

In 1929, the Migratory Bird Conservation Act provided authority for the purchase of lands needed for migratory bird refuges. The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 authorized the acquisition of refuge lands for

conservation and protection of all kinds of wildlife. The Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966 provided for refuges to protect vanishing wildlife and gave official designation to the national wildlife refuges as a System.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is still growing. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, administrator of the System, recognizes that secure habitat for many kinds of wildlife is far from adequate. Many more acres of wetlands — marshes, swamps, lakes, and streams throughout the Nation — must be added to the present chain of refuges if water-loving species are to survive as a basic resource. New areas are needed to provide habitat for birds and other mammals in danger of extinction from increasing human pressures of many kinds.

Although national refuges protect many types of wildlife, they play an especially important role in management of the international migratory waterfowl. Three-fourths of all refuges were established originally for these birds. Since 1934, most of the money used to purchase waterfowl refuges has come from the sale of migratory bird hunting stamps.

Within the National Wildlife Refuge System are also numerous Waterfowl Production Areas. These are small pothole marshes in the Prairie States capable of producing large numbers of ducks. Emphasis has been placed since 1962 on the acquisition of these areas, to prevent their imminent destruction by drainage and conversion to non-

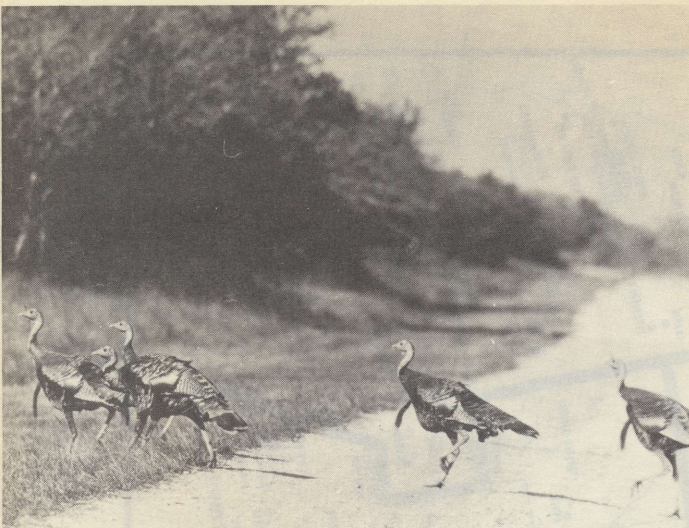
wildlife uses. Nearly 1.5 million acres of these small but valuable wetlands have been purchased and leased.

Many of the early refuges were for migratory birds other than waterfowl. On them are found dense nesting colonies of pelicans, herons, ibises, egrets, and spoonbills, and a large array of sea birds.

A number of refuges are well known for providing habitat for rare and endangered species. Among them, the Aransas Refuge in Texas is the principal winter home of the whooping crane. Red Rock Lakes Refuge in Montana is a center of abundance for the trumpeter swan. The Key Deer Refuge in Florida was established for the smallest deer in our country. The Cabeza Prieta and Kofa Game Refuges in Arizona and the Desert Wildlife Range in Nevada are special havens for desert bighorn sheep. The Hawaiian Islands Refuge is an irreplaceable nesting site for albatrosses and other oceanic birds, and it is the only home of the Laysan duck, Laysan and Nihoa finches, Nihoa millerbird, and Hawaiian monk seal.

National wildlife refuges are popular as places to find large numbers of many kinds of wildlife. Few other sites afford opportunities to see such great, stirring concentrations of waterfowl and other birds. Considering wild geese alone, each of more than 35 refuges can claim gatherings in excess of 50,000 birds. The Klamath Basin refuges in northern California and southwestern Oregon at times will support more than half of all the ducks and geese in the Pacific Flyway.

*"Wild turkeys hurry across a road on
Aransas Refuge, Texas."*



*"Birders watch black brant and snow geese on
Willapa Refuge, Washington."*



Refuges not only harbor birds and mammals, but also provide for species of plants, insects, amphibians, and reptiles that each year become more difficult to find in other places. Many refuges have fine scenic and historical values that are preserved, along with the wildlife.

Our national wildlife refuges often are thought of as self-operating wildlife paradises from the time they are established. More often than not, they have been developed from areas misused in the past by drainage, lumbering, burning, and overgrazing, and needing restoration to become first-class wildlife habitat. This is accomplished mainly with dams, dikes, and fences, and through farming programs to produce special and supplemental wildlife foods. Management may also employ irrigation systems, regulated livestock grazing to provide habitat for more successful wildlife use, soil conservation practices, forestry programs, or rough fish-control — to name a few of the practices carried out.

Many refuges contribute substantially to local economies. By law, local governments share in the revenues from grazing, haying, sale of timber, and other economic uses on refuges necessary for the best management of wildlife habitat. Refuges add to the economic bases of their communities through local expenditures for food, supplies, and lodgings by people visiting the refuges for recreation, through local purchases by the refuges of supplies and contractual services, and through the payrolls of refuge employees.

Nearly 27 million visits are made to national wildlife refuges annually. Visitors are welcome when their activities do not interfere with the primary wildlife management program. Wildlife trails, interpretive centers, and other facilities are provided as funds become available. Fishing is permitted on many refuge waters. Hunting of migratory game birds as well as of resident species of game is allowed on parts of many refuges, in accordance with State and Federal regulations. Such hunting helps to regulate and distribute wildlife and prevents local overuse of food supplies.

About 180 national wildlife refuges have resident staffs. These employees also may be responsible for the management of nearby unstaffed refuges. A typical refuge staff consists of a refuge manager, an assistant, maintenance men and/or equipment operators, and a clerk. The manager and his assistant are formally trained in wildlife management. A college degree in this field, or related studies, is a prerequisite for employment.

A map on the next page of this leaflet gives the name and approximate location of each refuge in the System. Detailed information on any refuge, or on any Wetlands Management District Office may be obtained by writing to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

