

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Noxubee

National Wildlife Refuge



Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge is located in east-central Mississippi. This 48,000-acre refuge was established in 1940 and contains a diversity of habitats. Noxubee is one of over 500 refuges that make up the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge System. The Blue Goose identifies refuges which are found in all 50 states, covering over 92 million acres. This National treasure, set aside for wildlife, provides enjoyment for over 30 million visitors a year.



Introduction

Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge is located in three counties (Noxubee, Oktibbeha, and Winston) and was created from lands obtained through the 1930's Resettlement Administration.

Before Government ownership, the land area within the Refuge was intensively farmed and over grazed. After years of proper land stewardship, Noxubee is now an excellent example of forest and wildlife management.

This change has caused a return of bountiful wildlife populations and a progression toward restoration of the pine and hardwood forest types that were so devastated in the early 1900's. The Refuge provides needed habitat protection for the extremely valuable, rapidly disappearing bottomland hardwood forest communities.



photo: Johnny Wayne Bradford

Approximately 42,500 acres of the Refuge is comprised of bottomland and upland woodlands. These forest lands are occupied by a variety of game species including quail, deer, and turkey.

The endangered red-cockaded woodpecker relies on the Refuge for its existence in east-central Mississippi. In addition, many neotropical species greatly benefit from the Noxubee forests. Four

*cover photo:
David McEwen*

green-timber reservoirs (GTRs), two major lakes (Bluff Lake-1200 acres and Loakfoma Lake-600 acres), 16 small impoundments, and assorted wetland areas provide important habitat for the wood stork, American alligator, bald eagle and wintering waterfowl.



photo: Rick Kaminski

Over 125,000 visitors annually participate in activities including fishing, hunting, hiking, wildlife photography, wildlife observation, environmental education and research. Noxubee serves as an outdoor classroom for Mississippi State University and other local educational institutions.

Wildlife

Red-cockaded woodpecker management receives considerable attention on the Refuge. This small resident bird is an endangered species due to habitat loss. The woodpecker prefers open, park-like timber stands where it creates nesting cavities in mature pine trees. These cavity trees, which occur in upland areas, are designated by white bands. Artificial colony sites are established by creating man-made nesting cavities in preferred habitat. Forest management practices, such as selective cutting, prescribed burning, and removing encroaching hardwood trees are the primary management tools utilized to maintain and improve conditions for this habitat specific species.



photo: David M. Richardson

Endangered Wildlife



photo: Jim Hall



photo: David M. Richardson

The American alligator also resides at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. Alligators inhabit the wetland portions of the Refuge and are commonly sighted. Although no longer on the Endangered Species List, the alligator is still considered threatened in Mississippi.

During fall and winter, Refuge visitors delight in the antics of the bald eagle. These beautiful birds (our Nation's symbol) are sighted on a regular basis from November through February. The golden eagle is also seen during this period.

The wood stork is commonly sighted during the late summer months when the lakes are drawn down as part of the Refuge's management plan. Hundreds of these endangered (Mississippi listed) birds can be seen in the Refuge's wetlands.

Migratory birds



photo: David M. Richardson



photo: David McEwen

Wildlife changes with the seasons when it comes to migratory birds. Upwards of 15,000 waterfowl, primarily mallards, wood ducks, ring-



photo: David M. Richardson



photo: David McEwen

necked ducks, gadwalls, American widgeon, and green and blue winged teal overwinter on the refuge. As many as 300 migrating Canada geese join Noxubee's resident flock of 600 giant Canada geese each winter.



photo: David M. Richardson

Each year, in the spring, as most of the waterfowl leaves Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge for their northward migration, thousands of neotropical migrant birds begin to arrive here from their wintering grounds in Central and South America. The majority continue north after replenishing their energy reserves, but many, such as the prothonotary warbler, great-crowned flycatcher and scarlet tanager use the Refuge for nesting. Over 254 resident and migrant bird species have been documented on the Refuge.

Other Wildlife

A diversity of habitat encourages a wide variety of wildlife. White-tailed deer, wild turkey, squirrels (both gray and fox), bobwhite quail, wading birds, raccoons, bobcat, opossum,



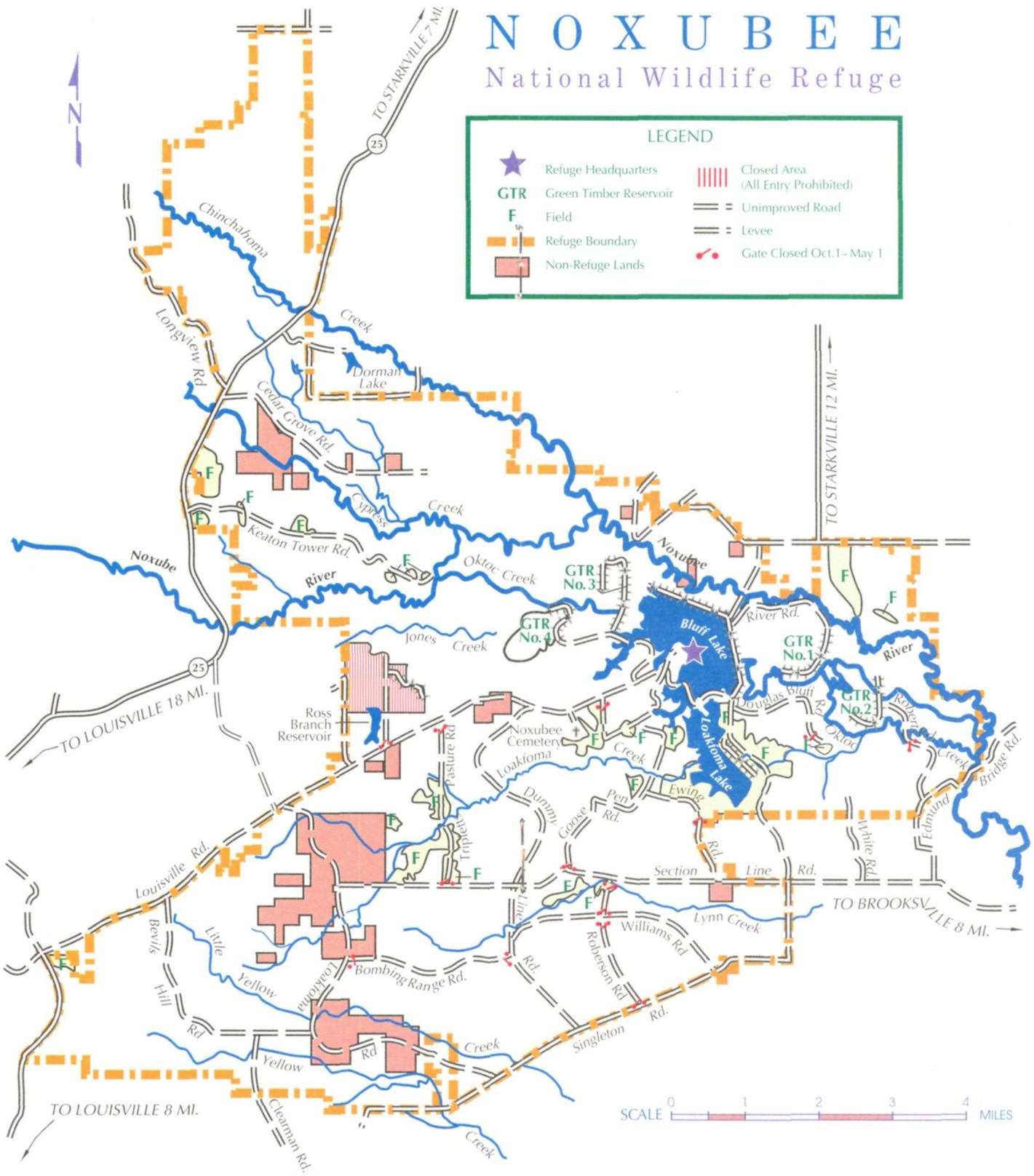
photo: David McEwen



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skunks, coyotes, river otter, mourning dove, fox (both gray and red), and various raptors are among some of the species which Refuge visitors may see on their visit. The wetland and bottomland hardwood forest habitats are home to reclusive amphibians, reptiles, and fish species. Summer months bring out the less desirous insect and reptile species, so the refuge visitor should come prepared during these periods.

Habitat Management

Good forest management is essential to wildlife management. Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge's forests are manipulated to provide a diversity of habitat types which wildlife needs throughout the year. Prescribed use of fire, vegetative regeneration, thinning, and selected harvests are but a few techniques used to improve wildlife habitat.

To enhance the appeal of the Refuge to waterfowl, a series of low levees have been constructed to permit winter flooding of certain hardwood bottomland areas. This practice of periodically flooding woodlands is referred to as "green-timber reservoir management."

Management of water levels in other impoundments, such as moist soil

units, stimulates the growth of native wetland plant species and results in an abundance of seeds, insects, crustaceans, and mollusks, all of which are favored foods of migratory waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds.

In 1993 Noxubee Refuge embarked on a venture to restore a section of the Alabama Black Belt Prairie which occurs on the Refuge. Morgan Hill Overlook Trail winds through this prairie and affords the visitor a unique opportunity to view this disappearing habitat type.

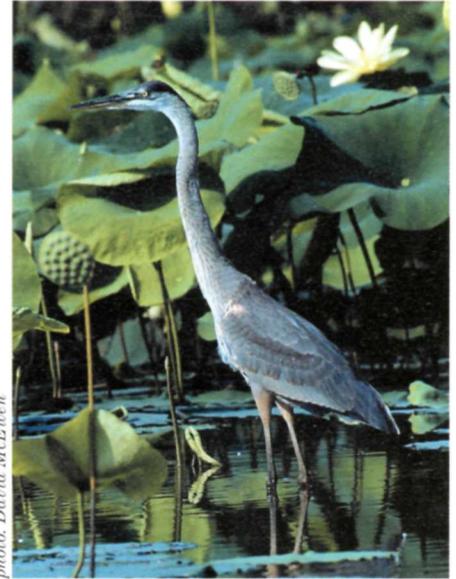


photo: David McEwen

Headquarters/ Refuge Office

Things to know for your visit

The Refuge office/headquarters is located on the banks of Bluff Lake in the center of Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge is located 12 mile south of Starkville, 18 miles west of Brooksville, and 15 miles north of Louisville. Normal business hours for the office are 8:00 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Information and brochures are available at the Refuge office and kiosks at the Woodpecker Trail and Bluff Lake public restrooms.



photo: David McEwen

Wildlife Observation/ Photography

Several award winning photographs have been taken on the Refuge, so make sure you bring your camera. There are three observation platforms found on the Refuge. Goose Overlook sits atop a bluff over Dickerson Arm of Bluff Lake. The viewing area is accessed by a level, 150-foot boardwalk. Morgan Hill Overlook observation platform sits on Morgan Hill and provides perhaps one of the best vistas on the Refuge, viewing all of the 600-acre Loakfoma Lake.



photo: David McEwen

The Bluff Lake Boardwalk travels over a unique wetland and provides excellent views of waterfowl, egrets, and other wading birds. This boardwalk terminates at an observation platform. These platforms are all handicap accessible and are open year-round, daylight hours only.

Environmental Education

Environmental education is an integral part of the Refuge, and all groups are welcome. The refuge staff includes an environmental education specialist. Arrangements for group programs should be made in advance by contacting the Refuge office.

Vehicles and Parking

Visitors may drive on county roads and ungated Refuge roadways shown on the map. Parking is only allowed



photo: Gordon Warrick

in designated parking areas or immediately adjacent to roadways. Vehicles are not permitted off roads or on dikes or trails. Only vehicles registered for highway use are permitted on the Refuge.



photo: David M. Richardson

Trails/ Observation Platforms

Several foot trails provide views of wildlife habitats and access to observation points. Trails are open year round, daylight hours only. Beaver Dam Trail (2 miles), Morgan Hill Overlook Trail (.25 mile), Trail of the Big Trees (4 miles), Wilderness Trail (3.4 miles), Woodpecker Trail (.25 mile), and the Scattertown Trail (1.75 miles).

The Morgan Hill Overlook, Goose Overlook, Bluff Lake Boardwalk, public restrooms and Refuge Headquarters are all wheelchair accessible. Visitors are also encouraged to drive the Refuge roadways.

Hunting

Hunting of certain species is permitted in designated areas. A separate hunting brochure is available showing open areas and regulations. Contact the Refuge office for regulations.

Fishing

Sport fishing is permitted in designated areas during certain

times of the year. A separate fishing brochure is available showing open areas and regulations. Contact the Refuge office for regulations.

Weapons

Weapons may be transported through the Refuge in vehicles if they are unloaded and cased, or dismantled. Legal hunting weapons are permitted in designated hunting areas during hunting seasons.

Pets

Pets are allowed if on a leash or under close control (within 10 yards of the owner).

Prohibited Activities

All activities not listed above are prohibited. Examples of banned activities include removal of animals, plants or items of antiquity without special permits, camping, ATV use, target shooting, fires, swimming, fruit picking, and firewood gathering (without a permit).

Conveniences

Food, gasoline and motels are available in Starkville, Brooksville, and Louisville.

Other Refuge Regulations

Portions of the refuge are closed to public entry during various parts of the year. These areas serve as sanctuaries for wintering waterfowl and are signed as closed and delineated on maps in the refuge hunt brochure. Bluff and Loakfoma lakes are closed to public access November 1 -February 29.



photo: David McEwen

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge
Route #1, Box 142
Brooksville, MS 39739
601/323-5548
<http://www.fws.gov/~r4eao/noxubee.html>

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We invite you to visit our web sites about the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. You can read about our trails and learn about visitor activities.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov/~r4eao>

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