

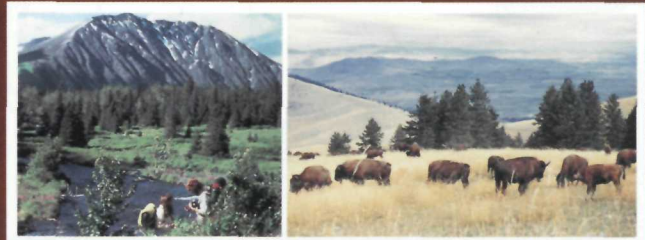


L.D. Mech / FWS



W. H. Sontag / FWS

# THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM



*“What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.”*

Chief Seattle (Suquamish tribe)

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is: *To provide, preserve, restore, and manage a national network of lands and waters sufficient in size, diversity, and location to meet society's needs for areas where the widest possible spectrum of benefits associated with wildlife and wildlands is enhanced and made available.*



Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES— WILD LANDS FOR WILDLIFE

The National Wildlife Refuge System is a unique and diverse network of over 90 million acres of lands and waters in the United States. This System spans the continent from the icy north coast of Alaska to the balmy Florida Keys and beyond—to tropical islands in the Caribbean and Central Pacific.

Over 450 national wildlife refuges are included in the Refuge System. They are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the conservation and enhancement of fish and wildlife and their habitats.

Refuges range in size from Minnesota's tiny Mille Lacs (less than an acre) to Alaska's sprawling Yukon Delta (almost 20 million acres).

Refuges provide habitat—food, water, shelter, and space—for more than 60 endangered species and hundreds of other species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and plants.

The first national wildlife refuge was Florida's Pelican Island. It was established by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 to protect egrets, herons, and other birds that were being killed for feathers used in the fashions of the time.



D. Olson / FWS



D. O'Neal / FWS

Since 1903, increased urbanization, changes in agricultural practices, drought, pollution and drainage and development of marshes and tidal wetlands, continue to take their toll on America's wildlife habitat. Through establishment of national wildlife refuges, a diversity of habitat has been acquired, protected, restored, and managed for the enhancement of wildlife and the continuing benefit of the American people.

As a result of the cooperative efforts of Federal and state agencies, private organizations, and individuals, the Refuge System has become an outstanding example of stewardship by the American people to protect and manage their irreplaceable natural resources.



D. White / FWS



FWS Photo



FWS Photo

## FISH AND WILDLIFE OASES

National wildlife refuges provide virtually every type of habitat needed for the survival of fish and wildlife.

Southern refuges include bayous, flooded bottomland hardwood areas, swamps, and coastal estuaries. They provide important wintering habitat for waterfowl and essential habitat for species such as manatees, green sea turtles, and American alligators.



G. Rathburn / FWS



FWS Photo



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The prairie pothole refuges in the northcentral United States encompass hundreds of thousands of potholes, lakes, and marshes that are vitally important as waterfowl breeding areas. This area, extending well into Canada, can produce a fall flight of over 25 million migratory waterfowl.

Northeastern refuges include wetland, upland, and coastal habitats that are managed to benefit wildlife species. Among the more important species are the black duck, the threatened piping plover, and the endangered bald eagle.

Western refuges are located in deserts, prairies, mountains, and coastal wetlands. Waterfowl, antelope, elk, desert bighorn sheep, sandhill cranes, American bison, marine mammals, and a variety of shorebirds can be found in western refuges.

In Alaska, refuges encompass millions of acres of mountain, tundra, grassland, lake, river, woodland, glacier, and rocky island habitats. The fall flight of migratory waterfowl leaving Alaska numbers over 12 million. More than 40 million seabirds breed on refuge islands in coastal Alaska. And hundreds of thousands of caribou annually wind their way through the vast horizons of Arctic tundra.

Most refuges are located along the major north-south waterfowl migration flyways (Atlantic, Mississippi, Central, Pacific). They provide critical feeding and resting areas during the spring and fall migrations. Other refuges serve as sanctuaries for endangered species such as endangered Lange's Metalmark butterflies, Ash Meadows Blazing Star plants, whooping cranes and red wolves or for other species requiring unique habitat such as desert bighorn sheep and masked bobwhite quail.

Some refuges contain wilderness, areas designated by Congress to protect lands in their natural state. These areas provide important habitat for wilderness dependent species such as the Kodiak brown bear. Refuges also protect significant historical and archeological sites that can be used to study and interpret our Nation's natural and cultural heritage.

Important to wildlife and the Nation is the wetland protection that many refuges provide. Wetlands provide flood control, filter pollutants, and recharge essential groundwater supplies. Some refuges also protect coastal marshes that serve as vital nurseries for fish and crustaceans.



Seney / FWS



FWS Photo



D. Peters / FWS

## MANAGEMENT— A KEY INGREDIENT TO SUCCESS

The National Wildlife Refuge System represents the most comprehensive wildlife resource management program in the world. Refuge management activities ensure that the breeding, feeding, and space needs of a diversity of species are maintained and protected.

Grasslands are managed to benefit numerous wildlife. On many refuges, the periodic and regulated burning, grazing, or harvesting of grassland or marsh vegetation helps grow plants for food and cover for nesting. Sandhill cranes, elk, and the endangered Attwater prairie chicken all benefit from this type of management. In the prairie pothole region and other areas, thousands of acres of land are planted with native grasses to provide nesting cover for waterfowl.

Forest areas may be thinned, planted, harvested, controlled burned, or otherwise managed to benefit wildlife. For example, burning woody undergrowth stimulates the growth of tender shoots that provide food for the endangered Key deer population in Florida.



FWS Photo



B. Ellerts / FWS

Water control is one of the most important management activities on refuges. Hundreds of miles of dikes create shallow marshes for wildlife. Some marshes are drained in the spring to stimulate production of native foods for ducks and geese and then reflooded in the fall to attract these birds.

Not all refuge lands are manipulated. Many areas, including wilderness and research natural areas, are left in a wild or natural state. Florida panthers, green sea turtles, piping plovers, and Kodiak brown bears are among the species that depend on habitat maintained in its natural state.

## REFUGES— FOR PEOPLE TOO

Recreation and education are important functions of the Refuge System. Refuges offer special opportunities for the public to observe, learn about, and enjoy plants and animals in their natural habitats.

Over 50 visitor centers on refuges and numerous on/off site education programs help people understand wildlife, habitat, and the role management plays in the stewardship of America's resources.

A variety of wildlife-oriented recreation is offered in settings away from the hassles of everyday life. These activities include hiking, auto tours, bicycling, photography, wildlife observation, hunting, and fishing.

Recreational activities vary with each refuge and with the seasons. Visitors should check with the refuge manager of each refuge to find out what activities are currently allowed and any special regulations pertaining to those activities.

Additional information on recreational opportunities on refuges is contained in a brochure entitled "National Wildlife Refuges—A Visitor's Guide." This guide is available from any Regional or Washington Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



T. Prusa / FWS



R. J. Bridges / FWS

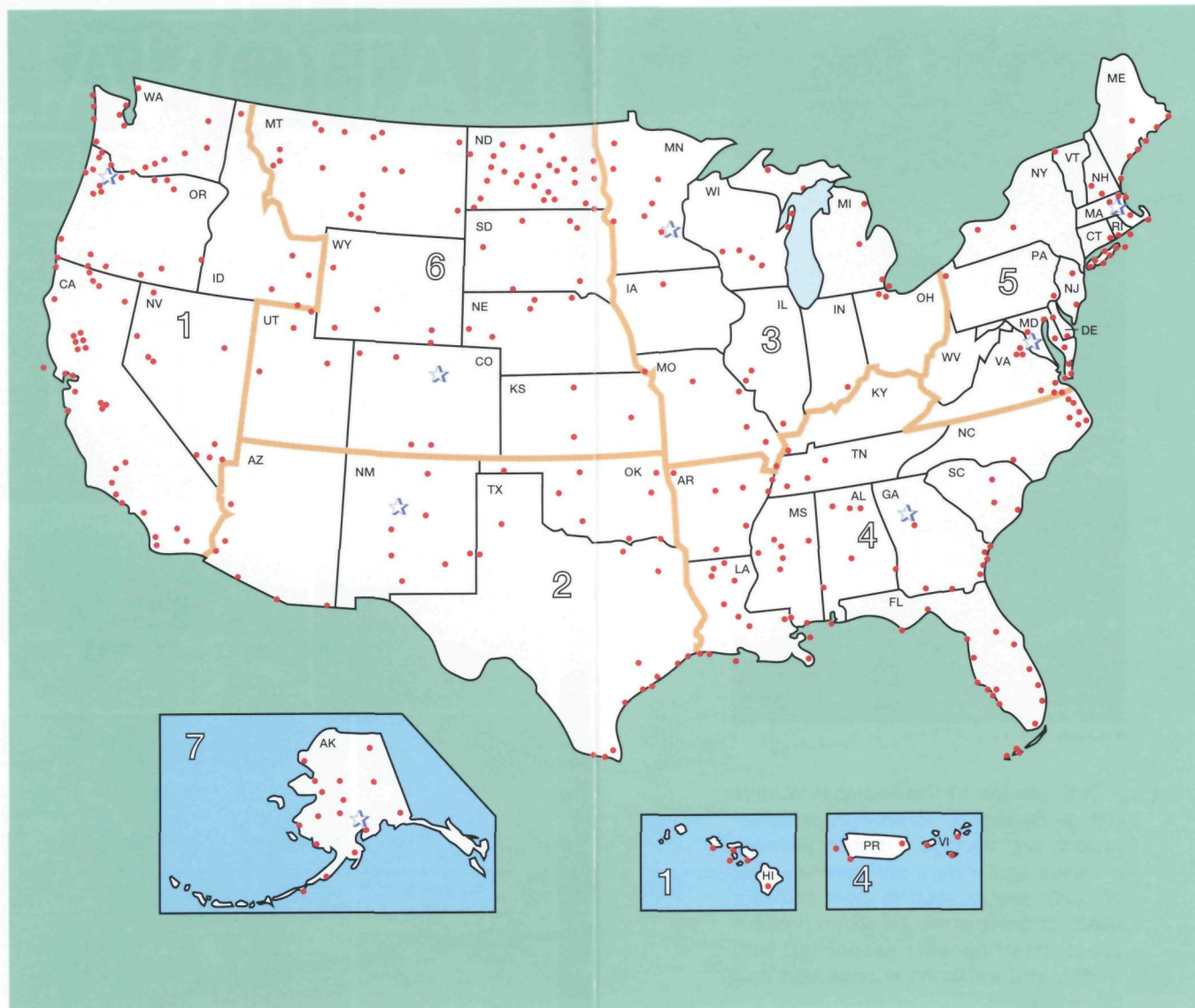


E. Smith / FWS



R. Lowe / FWS

# NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM



### Map Key

- ★ Regional Offices
- Refuges
- Regional Boundaries

For more information about the National Wildlife Refuge System, individual refuges, or to volunteer your services to refuges, please write the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Attn: National Wildlife Refuges) at one of the addresses listed for the Regional Offices or Washington, DC.

## REGIONAL OFFICES

- Region 1** Eastside Federal Complex  
911 11th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97232  
(503) 231-6214  
(CA, ID, HI, NV, OR, WA)
- Region 2** P.O. Box 1306  
Albuquerque, NM 87103  
(505) 766-1829  
(AZ, NM, OK, TX)
- Region 3** Federal Building, Fort Snelling  
Twin Cities, MN 55111  
(612) 725-3507  
(IL, IN, IA, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI)
- Region 4** Richard B. Russell Federal Building  
75 Spring Street, SW  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
(404) 331-0833  
(AR, AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, PR, VI)
- Region 5** One Gateway Center, Suite 700  
Newton Corner, MA 02158  
(617) 965-9222  
(CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VA, VT, WV)
- Region 6** Box 25486, Denver Federal Center  
Denver, CO 80225  
(303) 236-8145  
(CO, KS, MT, NE, ND, SD, UT, WY)
- Region 7** 1011 E. Tudor Road  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
(907) 786-3538  
(AK)
- Washington, D.C.** Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Rm. 670-ARLSQ  
Washington, DC 20240  
(703) 358-1744