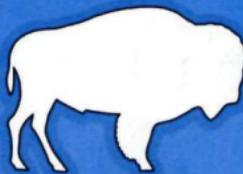


NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM



INTRODUCTION



The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of United States lands and waters managed specifically for wildlife. Units of the System stretch across the continent from the icy north shore of Alaska to the balmy Florida Keys and beyond—to tropical islands in the Caribbean and the South Pacific.

Refuges are vitally important. They provide habitat—food, water, cover and space—for approximately 60 endangered species and hundreds of species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and plants.

Over 400 refuges, encompassing nearly 90 million acres in 49 States and five trust territories, now comprise the System. They range in size from Minnesota's tiny Mille Lacs (less than an acre) to Alaska's sprawling Yukon Delta (almost 20 million acres). Small or large, each refuge provides vital habitat for at least a portion of America's wildlife populations.



Canada geese by Frank R. Martin, USFWS

BORN OF NECESSITY, DEVELOPED WITH CARE



Ironically, ladies' fashions at the turn of the century contributed to the establishment of the first refuges. Herons and egrets were killed in large numbers for their plumes, which were in great demand for ladies' hats. Other man-caused and natural calamities also played a part. Indiscriminate use of wildlife, drought, and the drainage and development of marshes and tidal wetlands seriously threatened many species.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt signed an Executive Order protecting the egrets, herons and other birds on Florida's Pelican Island, making it the first "national" wildlife refuge. This was part of a concerted effort on the part of the American people to actively protect and manage their irreplaceable wildlife resources.

For over 80 years a succession of Federal laws and international treaties have been established to protect wildlife and ensure the acquisition, establishment, and maintenance of secure lands and waters. The very names of the laws reflect their focus—The Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929, The Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act of 1934, The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, The Endangered Species Act of 1973, and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. Like building blocks, each law complemented its forerunners—filling gaps and adding strength as time and circumstances dictated.

THE REFUGE SYSTEM TODAY

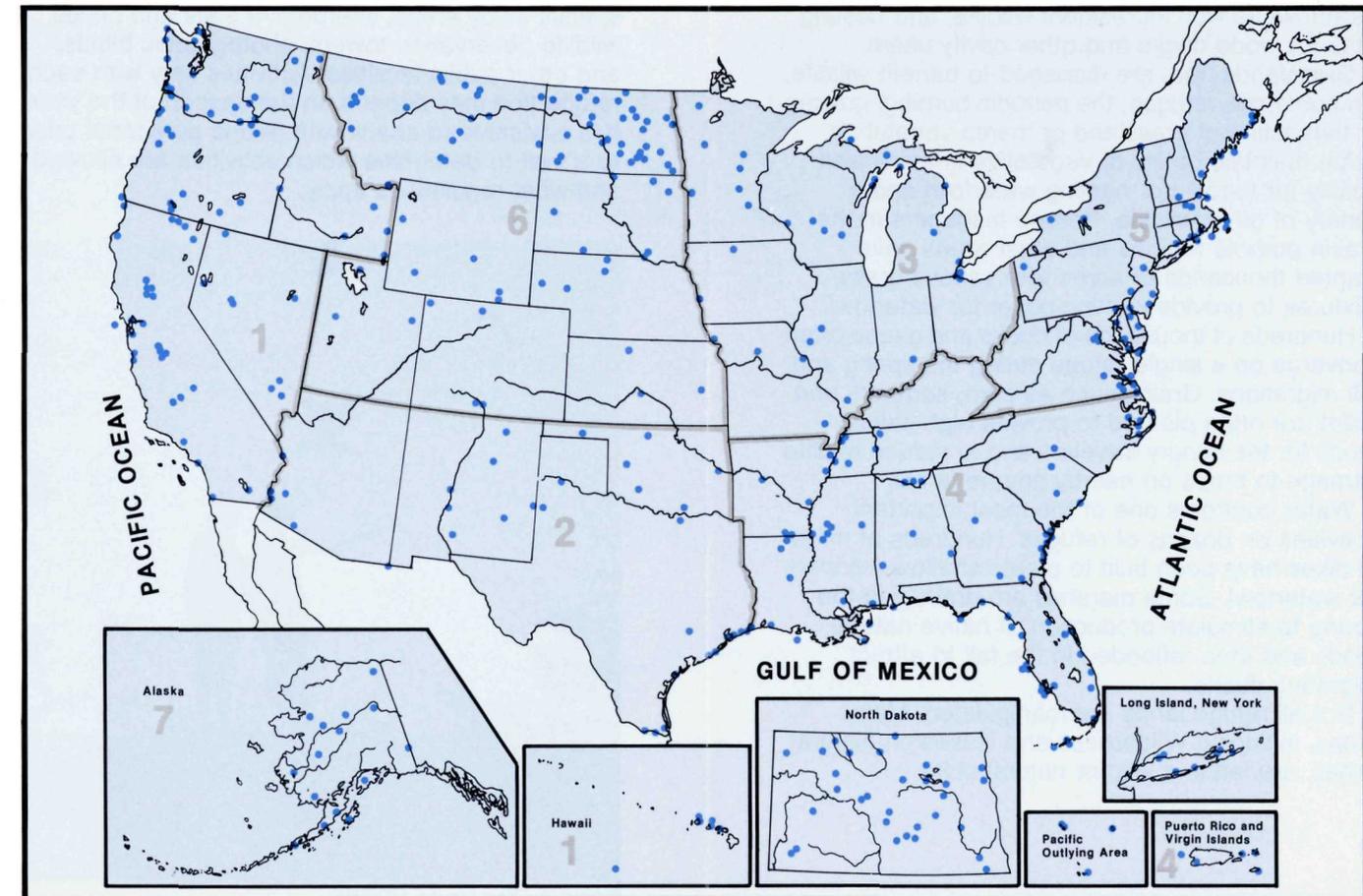


Today, the National Wildlife Refuge System is a unique collection of over 400 diverse areas administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Set amid mountains and deserts, seashores and lakes, forests and grasslands, the character of the refuges is as diverse as the United States itself.

Many refuges are located along the major north-south flyways, providing feeding and resting areas for the great semiannual migrations of ducks, geese and other birds. Other areas serve as sanctuaries for endangered or unusual species. The Aransas Refuge in Texas is the winter home of the whooping crane. The Hawaiian Islands Refuge provides the only habitat for a number of

endangered species including the Hawaiian monk seal and green sea turtle. Red Rock Lakes Refuge in Montana serves as a year-round home of the magnificent trumpeter swan, and Desert National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada is a unique area for desert bighorn sheep.

Archeological artifacts and areas of historical significance located on refuge lands are preserved along with wildlife habitat. DeSoto Refuge in Iowa, for example, maintains an impressive exhibit and collection of items reclaimed from the historic steamship "Bertrand" which sank in the Missouri River in 1865.



MANAGEMENT— A KEY INGREDIENT TO SUCCESS

The National Wildlife Refuge System represents the most comprehensive wildlife resource management program in the world. On many refuges, lands must be managed to increase natural diversity and improve habitat for wildlife.

Forests may be thinned, planted, harvested, burned or otherwise managed to benefit wildlife. At the Key Deer Refuge in Florida, for example, woody undergrowth is burned to stimulate the growth of tender shoots which sustain the endangered Key deer population. At White River Refuge in Arkansas, and at other refuges, selective timber harvest encourages the development of mature oaks and other food-producing trees. These provide food for waterfowl as well as resident wildlife, and nesting sites for wood ducks and other cavity users.

Grasslands, too, are managed to benefit wildlife. On numerous refuges, the periodic burning, grazing or harvesting of grassland or marsh vegetation helps maintain optimum vegetative quantity and quality for feeding or nesting waterfowl and a variety of other wildlife. Refuge managers in the prairie pothole regions and other areas have planted thousands of acres with various grass mixtures to provide nesting cover for waterfowl.

Hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese often converge on a single refuge during the spring and fall migrations. Grains such as corn, sorghum and millet are often planted to provide high caloric foods for the hungry travelers and to reduce wildlife damage to crops on nearby private farms.

Water control is one of the most important activities on dozens of refuges. Hundreds of miles of dikes have been built to create shallow marshes for waterfowl. Some marshes are drained in the spring to stimulate production of native natural foods and then reflooded in the fall to attract migrating ducks.

Not all refuge lands are manipulated. Many areas, including Wilderness and Research Natural Areas, are left in a wild or natural state.

OF VALUE TO EVERYONE



The National Wildlife Refuge System makes direct contributions to the Nation and its people. Refuges protect wetlands that control flooding and regenerate essential groundwater supplies. They also protect coastal marshes that serve as nurseries for commercially important finfish and shellfish.

An estimated 27 million people visit these lands annually. Although Public uses are regulated so they do not interfere with the wildlife purposes of the refuge, many activities are available. Recreational uses may include wildlife observation, photography, hiking, boating, nature study, hunting and fishing. Some refuges provide visitor centers, special study areas, interpretive trails and drives, wildlife observation towers, photographic blinds, and other public facilities. Activities vary with each refuge and may depend on the season of the year. It is advisable to check with refuge personnel prior to a visit to determine which activities are allowed and what regulations apply.



Birders by Ted Heuer, USFWS

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 following addresses:

- Region 1** Lloyd 500 Building, Suite 1692
500 NE Multnomah Street
Portland, Oregon 97232
(CA, ID, HI, NV, OR, WA)
- Region 2** Box 1306
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103
(AZ, NM, OK, TX)
- Region 3** Federal Building, Fort Snelling
Twin Cities, Minnesota 55111
(IL, IN, IA, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI)
- Region 4** 75 Spring Street, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(AR, AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC,
SC, TN, PR)
- Region 5** One Gateway Center, Suite 700
Newton Corner, Massachusetts
02158
(CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY,
PA, VA, VT, WV)
- Region 6** Box 25486, Denver Federal Center
Denver, Colorado 80225
(CO, KS, MT, NE, ND, SD, UT, WY)
- Region 7** 1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
(AK)
- Washington** Department of the Interior
18th and C Streets, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

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