

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

St. Catherine Creek

National Wildlife Refuge



St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge was established in January 1990 to preserve, improve and create habitat for waterfowl. Intensive management programs on the refuge provide excellent winter habitat and resting areas for waterfowl in the Lower Mississippi River Valley. Outdoor enthusiasts find the diverse habitat on the refuge ideal for fishing, hunting, photography, hiking and bird-watching. There are at least 106 species of birds on the refuge.

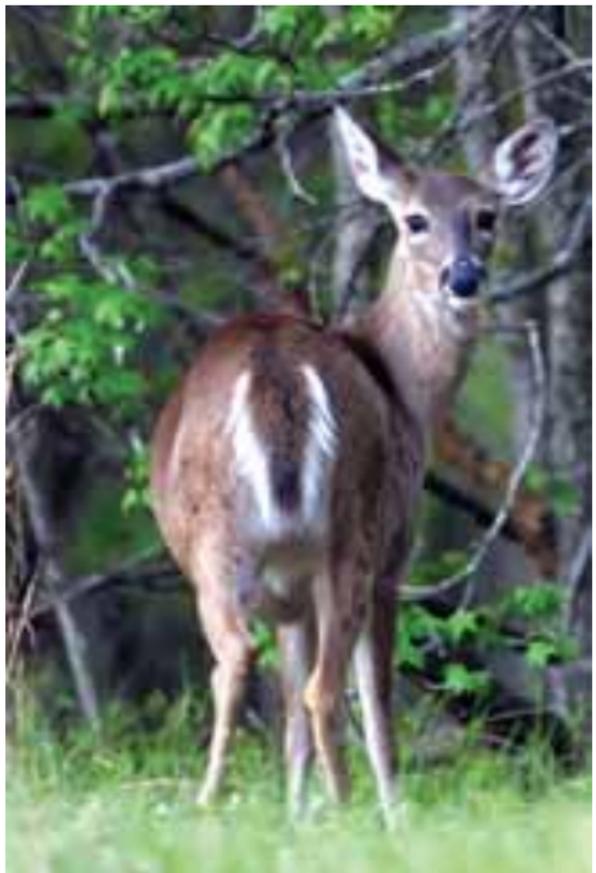


This blue goose, designed by J. N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Encompassing 24,442 acres, with a potential size of 34,256 acres, the refuge is located in Adams County in southwest Mississippi. The headquarters lies 10 miles south of Natchez, Mississippi. The western refuge boundary is formed by the Mississippi River. The eastern boundary meanders along the loessal bluffs and the southern boundary is the Homochitto River. [Loessial bluffs are formed from deposits of silt transported by the wind.]

Habitat

Habitat on the refuge offers a myriad of ecological niches for wildlife. Cypress swamps and hardwood forests vegetated with oak, gum, elm, ash, cottonwood and pine comprise thirty percent of the refuge. Ten percent of the acreage is open water, while the remaining property consists of cleared land and batture land. [Batture land is land created when a river (in this case the Mississippi River) alters its course and/or deposits sediment.]



White-tailed deer

Rains and backwater flooding fill depressions and basins in low areas creating excellent habitat for waterfowl as well as many thousands of shorebirds and wading birds. In fact, in most years, up to seventy percent of the refuge may be flooded by the Mississippi River at some time during winter and spring.

Management Efforts

Reforestation

The Lower Mississippi Valley still abounded with bottomland hardwood forests as late as the early 1960's. The early 1970's saw a sharp increase in demand for soybeans and a booming farm economy which led to massive clear-cutting of bottomland forests for row crop agriculture. The result was a great reduction in critical wildlife habitat and timber resources. In fact, over 80% of the bottomland forests along the Mississippi River have been lost to agricultural interests.



Wood ducks



Kim Kaiser



Kim Kaiser

Top to bottom: barn owl, great egret



Legend

-  Area Closed to ALL Entry
-  Sandbar
-  Refuge Boundary
-  Paved Roads
-  Unpaved Roads
-  ATV Trail
-  Levee
-  Refuge Headquarters
-  Visitor Contact Point
-  Parking Area
-  Boat Ramp
-  Walking Trail
-  Kid's Fishing Area



The refuge has reforested over 11,000 acres of farm land within the alluvial flood plain of the Mississippi River since 1992. Species planted include a variety of native oaks, green ash, persimmon, pecan and southern bald cypress. This reforestation effort has greatly increased habitat diversity for wildlife. In the future, these developing forests will serve as a silt filter for receding flood waters, retarding erosion, improving water quality and recharging aquifers while providing vital habitat for wildlife.

Waterfowl Habitat Improvement

A primary objective of the refuge is to enhance aquatic habitat to provide support for migrating and wintering waterfowl. Waterfowl management also benefits shorebirds, wading birds and other aquatic species. Annual backwater flooding by the Mississippi River provides an opportunity to impound some of the flood water for shorebirds, wading birds and waterfowl.

John & Karen Hollingsworth



Bald eagle



Great horned owl

Kim Kaiser



Great blue heron

Our refuge management strategies include construction of dikes and levees and installation of culverts and water control structures to retain backwater and rain water to create additional habitat in areas that would otherwise become dry. Many of these impoundments are manipulated through moist soil management practices to provide natural forage for waterfowl. Some of the more common moist soil plants include smartweed, millets, sprangletop and rushes.

Management plans include lowering impoundment water levels by increments in spring and summer to provide feeding and resting areas for shorebirds, wading birds and other migrant species.

A portion of the refuge is managed for agricultural crop production through a cooperative farming program. By cooperative agreement, the farmer is required to leave a portion of each crop in the fields to provide food for wildlife. This crop share serves in lieu of cash rent for the farm ground. Wildlife are the beneficiaries at no cost to the refuge. The refuge share crops and crop residues provide high quality forage to accommodate the nutritional and energetic requirements of wintering waterfowl and other species of wildlife.

Blue winged teal





Prothonotary warbler

Enjoy the Refuge

The refuge is open to the public year-round. Available activities include fishing, hunting, bird watching and hiking. A three mile nature trail is located near the headquarters where visitors can enjoy a peaceful opportunity to view wildlife. Fishing is permitted from March 1 through the day before muzzleloader deer season, which begins in November. There are four lakes and a youth only (under 16 years old) fishing pond. Refuge hunting seasons are provided for deer, waterfowl and small game. Fishermen, age 16 and over, and all hunters are required to possess an annual public use permit available at the headquarters for \$12.50. Users under 16 years old or users who are 65 years or older receive their permit at no charge.



Bobcat



Refuge headquarters: open 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday-Friday. Closed on Federal holidays. Permit required for hunting and fishing.

Refuge hours: sunrise to sunset.



Hiking/nature trail available to observe wildlife.



Hunting is permitted for small game and deer in designated areas during designated dates.



Fishing is permitted in four lakes during designated dates.



Firearms and archery tackle prohibited except during designated hunts.



All-terrain vehicles prohibited except on specified trails during designated hunting seasons.



Motor vehicles are restricted to public roads and designated parking areas.



Camping, open fires and overnight parking are prohibited.

Possession of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.

Littering is prohibited.



Pets are prohibited.

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental disability. For more information please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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National Wildlife Refuge
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CELEBRATING A
CENTURY
of CONSERVATION

*Cardinal
Kim Kaiser*