

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Tishomingo

*National Wildlife  
Refuge*



*The 16,464-acre Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge is one of more than 500 refuges throughout the United States managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System is the only national system of lands dedicated to conserving our wildlife heritage for people today and for generations yet to come.*

**Welcome:  
Snow Geese  
Destination**

Farm fields at Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge appear suspiciously white during a typical winter day in a land where snow is infrequent. In fact, the Arctic comes to Oklahoma in the form of snow geese. Each fall, long skeins of geese choose this refuge as their destination for a winter's rest before heading north by early March to nest in the tundra.

Snow geese, along with thousands of other waterfowl on the Central Flyway, escape northern freezing temperatures here. They loaf in the safety of the upper Washita arm of Lake Texoma and find nourishing food close by. Ducks tend to disperse to feed in lakes and ponds, while snow geese and Canada geese nibble grains, wing-to-wing in the croplands.

White-tailed deer by the hundreds emerge from the woodlands to join geese in harvesting the crops planted just for wildlife. Deer live here year round, finding safe places to hide in the hickory-oak forests. The same woods shelter colorful songbirds like painted buntings and summer tanagers in spring and summer.

*Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.  
Photo by John and Karen Hollingsworth*







*Sunflowers at Tishomingo NWR. USFWS photo*



*Flooded woodland. USFWS photo*

Whether you're here to view wildlife, fish for crappie or catfish, or to enjoy a little peace and quiet, you'll find Tishomingo NWR a place where it's easy to imagine a past era when great herds of wild animals grazed the prairies and bird flocks darkened the skies. It's appropriate that the refuge is named for a famous Chickasaw Indian chief.

### **Wildlife: Habitat Watch**

Wild turkeys hunt and peck for acorns in Tishomingo NWR's hickory-oak forests. Bald eagles stick close to the large water bodies. Beavers strip willow bark on pond edges. Match wildlife to habitats, then add in season and time-of-day and you'll greatly increase your odds of seeing the wealth of birds and animals on the refuge. Birdwatchers have tallied more than 250 bird species (but not all at once!) for the refuge.

### *Seasonal Swings*

Spring is the best season for songbirds warbling in the woodlands at dawn as they pass through or stop to nest. Up to 30,000 Franklin's and ring-billed gulls sweep through in both spring and autumn.

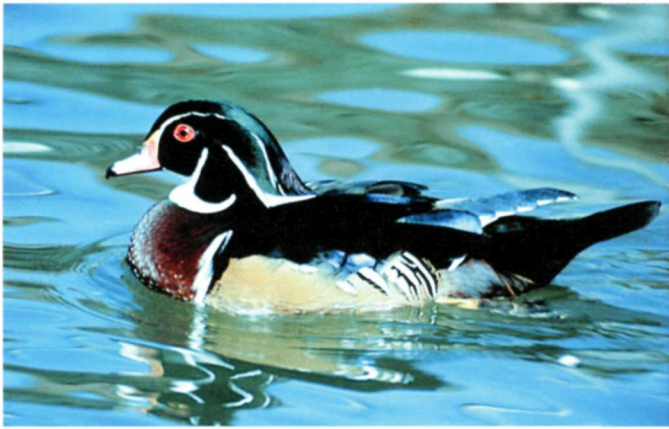
In fall, migrating monarch butterflies cling to the willows by Cumberland Pool. White pelicans lift from the waters like overloaded lift planes, heading on to points farther south after a brief rest here.

In winter, Tishomingo NWR swells with as many as 50,000 ducks and 35,000 geese. Waterfowl numbers peak in December and January.

Summer heat slows wildlife watching, as resident animals stay in the shade or venture out at night. Egrets and herons poise at shore's edge. Catfish idling in the waters lure anglers to the refuge.

### *Cumberland Pool: Abundance Above and Below the Surface*

Cumberland Pool takes up a quarter of the refuge and serves as the focal point for many of the refuge birds, fish, and visitors. Actually part of Lake Texoma, Cumberland Pool is alive with plants and animals invisible to the naked eye and critical to the survival of fish. The crappie, sand bass, channel catfish, flat-headed catfish, and blue catfish so popular with anglers do well here because of all these nutrients.



Wood Duck. Photo by Bill Hutchinson

In winter, mallards, pintails, gadwall, wigeon, scaup, teal, common and hooded mergansers, as well as geese, all flock to Cumberland Pool. Bald eagles fly in from the north to profit from the winter bounty, fishing in the open waters and preying on weak or injured waterfowl.

*Forests:  
Wildlife in  
the Shadows*

As you drive into Tishomingo NWR toward the headquarters, dense hardwood forests line the road. Within the shelter of southern red oak, post oak, blackjack oak, hickory, pecan, mulberry, and American elm trees live white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, armadillos, opossums, and fox squirrels. Cottontails venture from forest to fields, always on the lookout for hungry hawks. From spring through early fall, leaves rustle with the activity of migratory songbirds. Warblers and vireos join year-round residents like red-headed woodpeckers.



Raccoon. Photo by John and Karen Hollingsworth

## Wildlife Watching Tips

Dawn and dusk are the best times to see wildlife.

In warmer climates, little is moving on hot summer afternoons or on windy days.

Observe from the sidelines. Leave “abandoned” young animals alone. A parent is probably close by waiting for you to leave. Don’t offer snacks; your lunch could disrupt wild digestive systems.

Cars make good observation blinds. Drive slowly, stopping to scan places wildlife might hide. Use binoculars or a long lens for a closer look.

Try sitting quietly in one good location. Let wildlife get used to your presence. Many animals that have hidden will reappear once they think you are gone. Walk quietly in designated areas, being aware of sounds and smells. Often you will hear more than you will see.

Teach children quiet observation. Other wildlife watchers will appreciate your consideration.

Look for animal signs. Tracks, scat, feathers, and nests left behind often tell interesting stories.





Other forests sheltering wildlife include wild plum thickets that give way to grasslands. Along the river bottom, you might spot raccoon tracks among the willow, cottonwood, and box elder.

### *Farm Fields: Daily Dining*

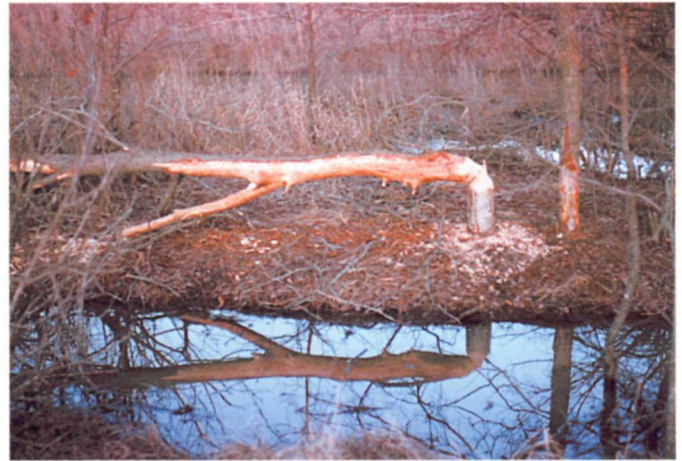
In winter, geese and deer feast on corn, milo, and winter wheat in fields close to the headquarters. The refuge plants 700 to 900 acres of crops left for wildlife to do the picking.

### **History: Wildlife Walks Where Farmers Plowed**

Once, farm fields extended far beyond the refuge wildlife plantings of today. The residents of Washita Farms, also known as Chapman Farms, not only grew crops in the first half of the century here, but also raised hogs and thousands of chickens and turkeys. The farm encompassed a community of 53 residences, a brick school, frame church, silos, and a store, the concrete remnants of which can be seen throughout the refuge.

The federal government purchased the Roxie A. Chapman Estate as part of a much larger impoundment area for the Denison Dam in Texas, which created Lake Texoma. Some of the Washita Farm buildings housed refuge personnel soon after the refuge opened in 1946.

### *East Highway Pond, USFWS photo*



*Remnants of beaver at work, USFWS photo*

Farming dates farther back to the Chickasaw Manual Labor Academy that once flourished where the refuge lies today. The Methodist missionaries worked with the Chickasaw Nation to open a school in 1848, designed to teach boys to write, as well as to grow crops.

### **Things to do at the Refuge**

Tishomingo NWR offers wildlife watching, photography, and hiking throughout most of the refuge from March 1 through September 30 and in limited areas during the rest of the year. From October 1 until March 1, the Wildlife Management Unit closes to all public recreation except limited hunting. Good fishing draws many anglers to Cumberland Pool and the Washita River. Picnickers are welcome and a pavilion is available for group activities.

### *Fishing near Headquarters. Photo by Ralph Bryant*







*Dick's Pond. USFWS photo*

### *Refuge Hours*

The refuge is open during daylight hours, with the exception of a campsite for anglers. Stop in the headquarters Monday through Friday, from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm to pick up leaflets and talk to staff.

### *Craven Nature Trail 1-mile, pond loop*



The best way to delve into the refuge forest habitats is to follow the Craven Nature Trail to Dick's Pond. From a small pier on the pond, you might spot a beaver lodge, herons wading in the marshy areas, or ducks resting. Look for the trailhead along the entrance road, about halfway to headquarters.

*Wildflowers near office. USFWS photo*



*Top: Bald Eagle.  
Right: Armadillo.  
Photos by John  
and Karen  
Hollingsworth*



### *Observation Points: Wildlife and Scenic Views*



Late fall and winter mark the best time to see wildlife from the observation tower that juts up east of Big Sandy Creek and close to headquarters. Here, you can look through a mounted spotting scope to watch flocks of waterfowl and deer herds eating grains. Beyond the fields, look for wading birds along the shoreline and ducks in the lake. Occasionally, you'll see bald eagles perched in dead trees at the field edge. Interpretive signs help identify birds.

Jemison Lookout, near Nida Point, provides a beautiful view of the Cumberland Pool year-round.

### **Special Events**

The refuge offers wildflower and bird walks, historical tours, and geology field trips each spring. Check with the refuge for a current schedule.

*Catch at  
Murray 23,  
USFWS photo*



### *Fishing*



Fishing opportunities abound at Tishomingo NWR. Special regulations are available from refuge headquarters.

### *Boating*



Boating season runs from March 1 through September 30 on refuge lakes, the Wildlife Management Unit, and Washita River (west boundary of refuge). Boaters should watch for floating debris and submerged concrete structures in Cumberland Pool.

### *Hunting*



Hunting for waterfowl, deer, dove, upland game, and turkey are popular activities on the refuge. Stop by headquarters for current regulations.



*Wild Turkey.  
Photo by John  
and Karen  
Hollingsworth*



*East End at Murray 23, USFWS photo*

### **Meeting Your Needs** *Preparing for Your Visit*

Summers are hot and winters mild, but dress warmly for winter wildlife viewing. The winds off the lake can be bitter. The peak times for wildlife viewing are spring for the warbler migration, late fall for waterfowl, and winter for both waterfowl and eagles.

### *Nearby Places to Stay*



You'll find motels at Ardmore and Tishomingo. Camping is available at Blue River State Recreation Area.

### **Help Us Protect The Refuge**

To protect habitat and keep Tishomingo NWR a safe place for wildlife and people, please:

Drive only on designated roads. Night-time vehicle traffic is prohibited, except for night fishing and camping.

Do not carry firearms, bows, and other weapons, except for authorized hunting and fishing in the Wildlife Management Unit.



No ground fires permitted. Campers must bring their own charcoal or propane grill or camp stove. Never leave your fire unattended and be sure that fires are completely extinguished before you leave. During times of fire hazard, fires may be prohibited.

Leave fireworks, loud radios, and other sound equipment at home. Tishomingo NWR should be a quiet place to enjoy nature.

Help us protect wildlife habitat—swimming and water skiing are not allowed on the refuge.

Keep wild things wild—all plants and animals are protected and should not be disturbed or collected (except fish and wildlife legally taken during the refuge hunting and fishing seasons).

Leave only your footprints; take all litter with you.

Would you like to do something to help wildlife? Consider becoming a volunteer for Tishomingo NWR. Volunteers conduct wildlife surveys, take photographs, lead tours, help with library, maintain facilities, compile plant and animal lists, design and construct exhibits, and collect, then transcribe oral histories.

The refuge is looking for committed volunteers who can serve a minimum of 4 hours a week. Staff will provide the necessary training and equipment. All you need to provide are time and enthusiasm! Please contact the refuge for more information.

## **Friends of Tishomingo Refuge**

This local group helps the refuge by providing volunteers, leading refuge tours, and finding funds for important refuge projects. For information on joining the Friends of Tishomingo Refuge, contact the refuge office.

## **Tishomingo NWR Facts**

*Where is it?*

From downtown Tishomingo, follow Highway 78 to the eastern edge of town. Turn south on Refuge Road (watch for sign) at the high school. Follow road 3 miles to headquarters.

*When was it  
established?*

1946.

*How big is it?*

16,464 acres.

*Why is it here?*

To benefit migratory waterfowl in the Central Flyway and help conserve America's wildlife heritage for people today and generations yet to come.



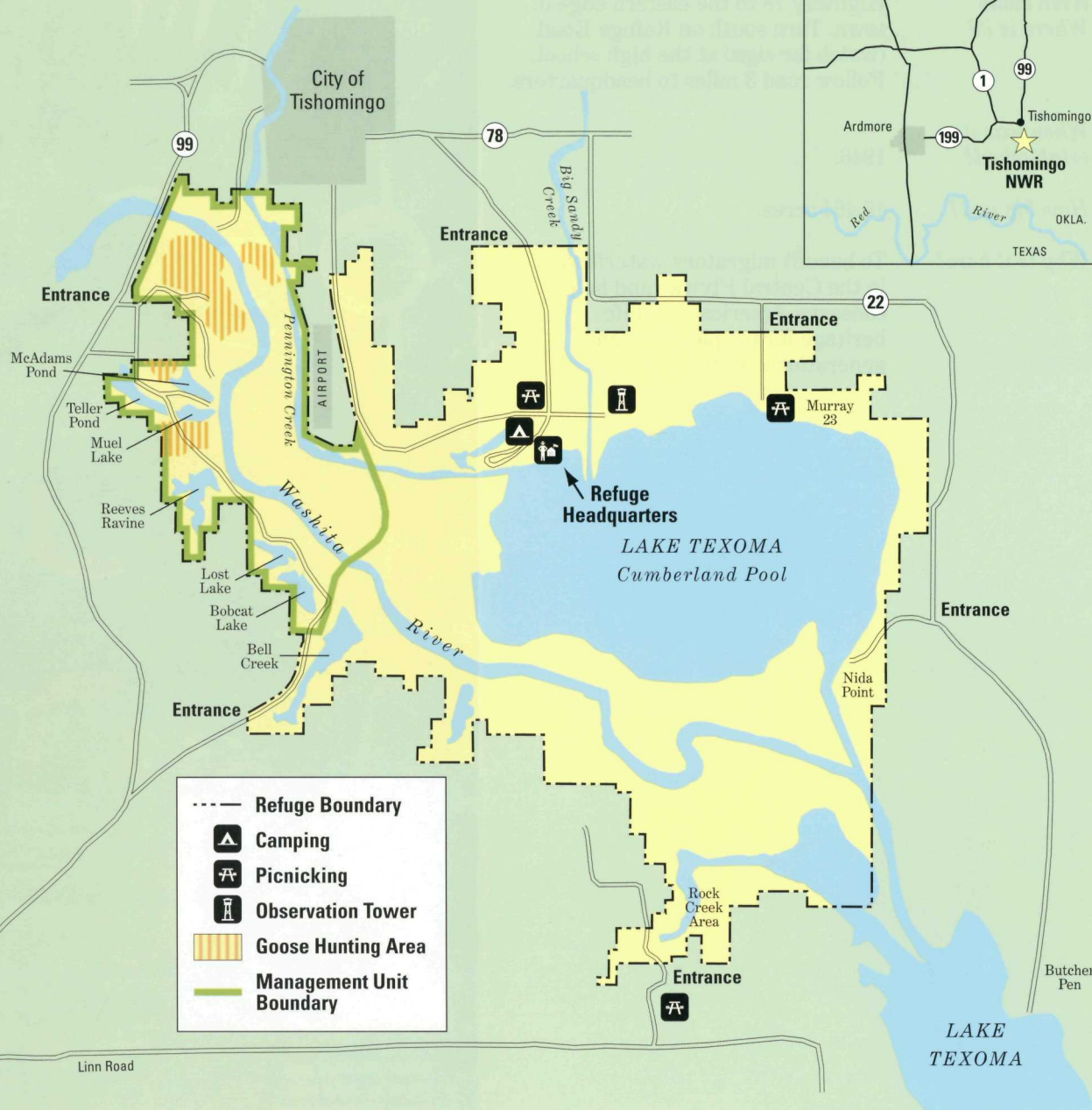
## **Volunteering at the Refuge**



# Tishomingo

## National Wildlife Refuge

### Vicinity Map



- Refuge Boundary
- ▲ Camping
- ⚙ Picnicking
- 🗼 Observation Tower
- ▨ Goose Hunting Area
- Management Unit Boundary

Linn Road

LAKE  
TEXOMA

Butcher  
Pen



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Cover: Mallard pair.  
Photo by John and  
Karen Hollingsworth