

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Two Rivers

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



*“Birds sing of freedom
as they soar lightly on
the air. So may our
hearts soar, high above
all curbs and care.”*

J. Donald Walters



American White Pelican, Jim Miller



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

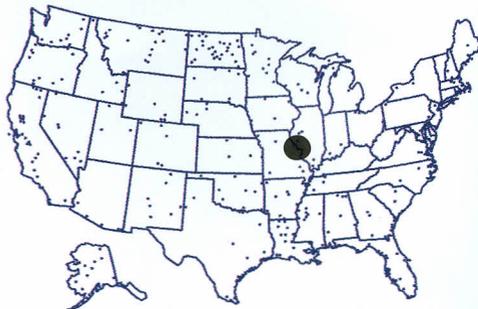
Welcome to Two Rivers NWR!

The National Wildlife Refuge System is one of America's greatest conservation success stories. It is the only national system of lands dedicated to conserving our wildlife heritage for people today and for generations to come. Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge is part of this network of more than 540 refuges scattered throughout the United States and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The 8,500-acre refuge, located near the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois rivers, contains a diverse array of lands, wetlands and open-water habitats. When it was established in 1958 it was known as the Brussels District of Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge. In 2000 it was designated as a separate refuge and given its present name.

Two Rivers is managed as part of the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge Complex, with headquarters in Quincy, Illinois. It consists of five divisions: Batchtown, Calhoun, Gilbert Lake, Portage Islands, and Apple Creek.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Illinois Department of Natural Resources all work as partners to manage public lands north of St. Louis. They include Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge, Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, Pere Marquette State Park and Mississippi River State Fish and Wildlife Area.



Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge is part of a national system of over 540 refuges across the country.



*Blue-eyed Mary on easement,
Jerry Olmsted, USFWS*

A Unique Wildlife Haven

Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge lies in the floodplain between two major waterways: the mighty Mississippi and Illinois rivers. This peninsula environment creates a unique habitat for both resident and migratory wildlife. Refuge lands form a mosaic of habitat types and provide an abundance of resting, feeding and breeding grounds for a diversity of wildlife species.

The Mississippi and Illinois rivers are major migration corridors for millions of birds flying to nesting and wintering grounds. The spring and fall seasons come alive as these birds flock by the thousands to refuge lands as a resting and feeding point along their journey. More than 240 species of birds use Two Rivers as a stopover point along their journey. Visitors can often see magnificent displays of shorebirds, wading birds, waterfowl, waterbirds and raptors. Hundreds of over-wintering eagles draw crowds to the area to witness their eye-catching aerial maneuvers.

Two Rivers offers abundant opportunities to commune with nature and watch wildlife. Throughout the year, refuge visitors witness a spectacular array of wildlife, including eagles, pelicans, otters, deer, fox, coyotes, turtles, frogs, shorebirds, ducks, geese and insects. Special attractions include a pair of resident bald eagles that have nested at the Gilbert Lake Division for years, thousands of pelicans that frequent Swan Lake during the spring and fall migrations, and tens of thousands of snow geese resting on Swan Lake during winter months. Visitors can see busy muskrats and beaver during the early morning hours, and catch a glimpse of a turtle laying her eggs in the afternoon.

*Mid-summer drawdown of
Gilbert Lake, Ron Fisher, USFWS*



Great egrets on moist soil unit, Jerry Olmsted, USFWS

Batchtown Division

The Batchtown Division lies within the Mississippi River floodplain of Calhoun County, Illinois. It includes 2,300 acres of forests, backwater sloughs, lakes, ponds, and shallow managed wetlands. More than half of the division is open to river flood pulses and consists of a network of islands, side channels and backwaters. A large portion, known as Prairie Pond, is separated from the river by a low-elevation dike, making limited water level management possible on 400 to 550 acres during non-flood periods.

This division is bordered by the Batchtown Wildlife Management Area on the south and Red's Landing Wildlife Management Area on the north. Both are managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Fishing is a popular activity at Batchtown during the spring and summer. A boat ramp is available at Prairie Pond. Another, at Gilead, provides access to backwaters of the Mississippi River. The Batchtown Division is managed as a migratory bird sanctuary and is closed to public access in the fall.

Photo at top:
White-tail Buck, Kim LeBlanc



Snow geese on Swan Lake, Steve Tiemann



Canada geese on ice, Russ Engelke, USFWS



Bald eagles, Kim LeBlanc

Calhoun Division

Located within the Illinois River floodplain, the Calhoun Division is located just upstream of the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois rivers in Calhoun County, Illinois. The 4,820-acre division is comprised of 2,400-acre Swan Lake, shallow managed wetlands, agricultural land, bottomland forests, grasslands, backwater sloughs and the refuge headquarters.

Swan Lake is separated from the Illinois River by a low-elevation dike which may be overtopped during high-water events. The ability to control water levels on Swan Lake allows for management of the area for the benefit of wildlife. Refuge staff occasionally conduct "drawdowns" where water is drained from the lake, drying the bottom and encouraging wetland vegetation to grow. Later, the lake is re-flooded to create improved feeding habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds.

At refuge headquarters you can see the thousands of geese and ducks that feed in shallow wetlands and cropfields, and roost on Swan Lake. Bald eagles use this area regularly during winter.

Grassland habitat is also present here. A good example exists near the refuge headquarters. Declines in North American grassland areas and bird populations are due largely to habitat loss and fragmentation. Splitting grasslands into smaller tracts of land creates more "edges" and results in fewer large, open areas for birds to nest in. Biologists believe that predators hunting near these edges are more likely to prey on grassland bird nests, making it more difficult for birds to successfully raise chicks. The refuge maintains areas of grassland for nesting birds, as well as educational and demonstration purposes.



Prescribed burn, Elaine Titus, USFWS

Mowing and prescribed fire are used to maintain quality grassland habitat. Without them, woody plants would overtake the grassland community. Carefully controlled burns also reduce the risk of destructive wildfires.

Wetlands, forests and grassland habitats are managed and enhanced to provide natural habitat and food supplies for wildlife. In order to provide supplemental food for migrating waterfowl, approximately 450 acres are farmed for corn, soybeans, and winter wheat through cooperative agreements with local farmers.

Gilbert Lake Division

Travel the National Scenic Byway (Illinois State Highway 100) to Gilbert Lake, which is adjacent to Pere Marquette State Park in Jersey County, Illinois. This division totals approximately 735 acres, consisting of a 250-acre lake bordered by forest and grassland areas.

A small parking area is located adjacent to a three-mile dike/service road, which parallels the Illinois River. Gilbert Lake is a great place to seek solace and escape the demands of everyday life; bank fishing, bird watching and hiking are allowed. Gilbert Lake is closed each fall to provide a sanctuary for migratory birds.

Duncan Farm, known for an American Indian mound located within its boundaries, has been identified as an important archaeological resource. A population of decurrent false aster, a Federally threatened plant species, is also found here. Management efforts by refuge staff help to protect and preserve this species.

Mallards taking flight, Kim LeBlanc



Pelicans, John Mabery, USFWS



Sandpiper, Kim LeBlanc

Portage Islands Division

This division is comprised of 230 acres, consisting of one large and three small islands in Pool 26 of the Mississippi River. These forested islands lie just northeast of Portage des Sioux, Missouri. Backwater and temporary wetlands on the big island are favored by waterfowl, wading birds, and migratory songbirds.

The Portage Islands Division is accessible only by boat. On summer weekends many visitors come here to fish and observe wildlife. Note: camping and camp fires may destroy wildlife habitat and both are illegal. The Portage Islands are closed in the fall to provide sanctuary for migratory birds.

Apple Creek Division

The Apple Creek Division is comprised of 270 acres of shallow wetlands, bottomland forests and retired agricultural fields. It is located in Greene County just northwest of Carrollton, Illinois, approximately one hour from the refuge headquarters.

This division, established in 1992, differs from other divisions on the refuge in that it may be hunted in accordance with State of Illinois hunting regulations. Big game hunting, migratory bird hunting, upland game hunting and sport fishing are all allowed on the Apple Creek Division. Please refer to the refuge's Public Use Regulations brochure for specific details.



Ken Dalrymple in Prairie Pond wetland management unit, Elisa Royce, USFWS



Bluebells, Jerry Olmsted, USFWS



Michael Dixon conducts environmental education for school groups, Russell Engelke, USFWS





Public Use Opportunities

Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge encourages you to visit, explore and learn about your public lands. Whether fishing or hunting, bird watching or photography, biking or hiking, canoeing or boating, or gathering berries and mushrooms, there are many ways to enjoy refuge lands.

Special group trips are encouraged and guided tours may be arranged by contacting the refuge in advance.

To meet the needs of wildlife, camping, ATV use, fires and trapping are all prohibited on the refuge lands. Pets are welcome, but must be leashed.

Please refer to the refuge's Public Use Regulations brochure for specific details regarding activities permitted on Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge.

With the exception of the Apple Creek Division and a portion of the Calhoun Division, Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge is closed to the public October 15 through December 31 in order to provide a rest area for migrating waterfowl. During the rest of the year, the refuge is open to the public during daylight hours only.



Morel mushroom, Jerry Olmsted, USFWS

Photo at top:
Environmental education at Pere Marquette State Park, Ron Fisher, USFWS

Begin your visit at the refuge headquarters and visitor contact station located near the village of Brussels, Illinois, in Calhoun County. Discover the delights of the National Wildlife Refuge System and find your favorite place to enjoy the outdoors.

From St. Louis, Missouri

Take I-270 east to the MO-367 North exit. Stay on 367 N until you cross the Clark Bridge into Alton, Illinois. Turn left onto Lewis and Clark Blvd and travel to HWY 100. Turn left at the light onto HWY 100. Follow remaining directions from Alton, IL.

From Alton, Illinois

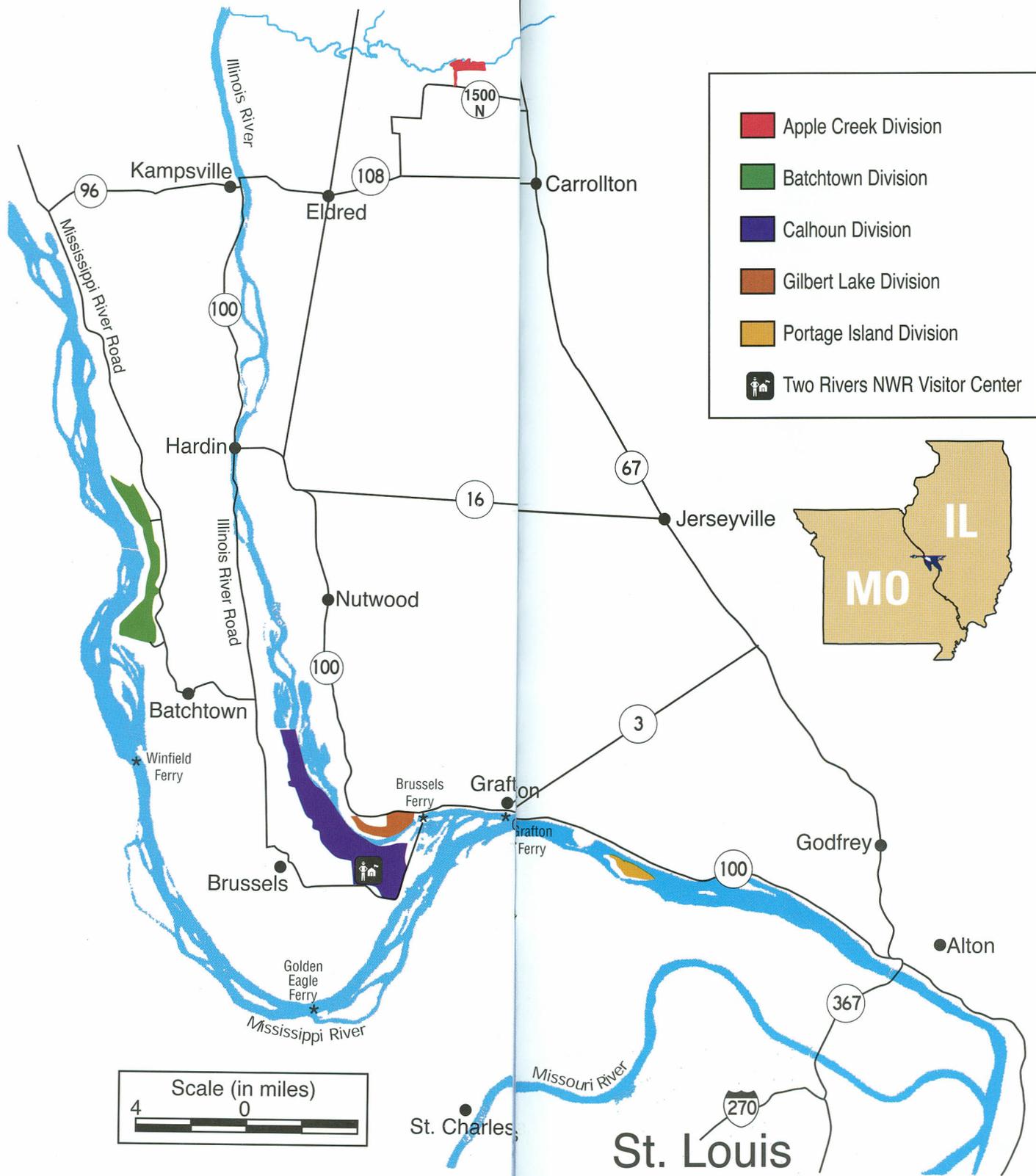
Travel west 17 miles on Highway 100, then cross the Illinois River using the Brussels Ferry. Continue 4 miles, then turn right onto Hagen Road, following signs to the refuge headquarters.

From St. Charles, Missouri

Cross the Mississippi River on the Golden Eagle Ferry. After leaving the ferry, travel two miles on Ferry Road to the intersection with Mississippi River Road, then turn right. This road meanders through rolling hills for 3.4 miles to the intersection with Illinois River Road. Turn right onto Illinois River Road, travel two miles, and turn left onto Hagen Road, following signs to the refuge headquarters.

Brochures, hunting and fishing regulations and species lists are available at the refuge headquarters. Refuge staff and volunteers are available to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable visit. Normal office hours are Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. While the visitor center is occasionally open on weekends, it is recommended visitors call ahead to verify.

Young Great-Horned Owl, Jerry Olmsted, USFWS



**Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge
HCR 82 Box 107
Brussels, IL 62013**

618/883 2524

**TTY users may reach Two Rivers NWR
through the Federal Information
Relay System at 1 800/877 8339**

**<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/TwoRivers>
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>**



Mallard, USFWS