



## Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge

### Introduction

Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established in 1961 as a sanctuary for migratory waterfowl. The refuge encompasses over 5,600 acres of bottomland hardwood forests, cypress swamps, grasslands, and croplands.

Wapanocca Lake and the surrounding land is managed to provide high quality habitat for migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and neotropical songbirds. The American Bird Conservancy has recognized the refuge as a continentally Important Bird Area.

### Early History

Wapanocca Lake is an oxbow lake that formed over 5,000 years ago when the Mississippi River changed its course. Native American tribes settled in the area because of the vast resources available, with the primary village of the Pacaha tribe being located along the south side of the lake. Several hundred residents lived in this fortified village and grew corn, beans, and squash in nearby fields. The Pacaha territory extended north from Wapanocca Lake into the Missouri bootheel. This lake was part of a regionally important trading route because it was the only place in northeast Arkansas with water access to both the Mississippi River and the St. Francis River.



Wood duck drake. Photo © Jessica Bolser, USFWS.

### Wapanocca Outing Club

Wapanocca Lake and the surrounding lands were purchased by a group of Memphis waterfowl hunters in 1886, forming the Wapanocca Outing Club. Club member Nash Buckingham, a famous outdoor writer, developed a passion for conservation while hunting at Wapanocca. Nash helped found America's conservation movement by advocating for the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. In 1961, he successfully lobbied Congress to establish Wapanocca NWR. Many of the Wapanocca Outing Club members and their families are buried in Brush Arbor Cemetery, north of the visitor center.

### Habitat and Wildlife

Wapanocca Lake is a 600-acre oxbow lake surrounded by permanently flooded cypress-willow swamp. The lake's water level normally drops two feet during hot, dry summers. This exposes mudflats that migratory shorebirds such as least terns, black-necked stilts, and semipalmated plovers use as foraging habitat to hunt for highly nutritious invertebrates.

Winter rains refill the lake and flood the surrounding bottomland hardwood forests of overcup oak, water hickory, and other tree species. In addition to the bottomland hardwood forests, several smaller impoundments known as moist soil units are located throughout the refuge. Carefully timed flooding of the impoundments stimulates the growth of native wetland plants and invertebrates. This creates additional high-quality foraging and resting areas for wintering waterfowl such as mallards, pintail, and wigeon.

Over 260 species of birds and 22 species of mammals can be seen on the refuge. During the spring, neotropical songbirds such as prothonotary warblers, painted buntings, and common yellowthroats use the refuge for breeding and nesting habitat after migrating from Central and South America.

The forested wetlands also provide excellent nesting habitat for wood ducks, hooded mergansers, and supports large rookeries of wading birds such as great blue herons and great egrets. The forest is filled with mammals such as white-tailed deer, coyotes, rabbits, squirrels, opossums, raccoons, and beavers. Turtles are often seen basking in the sun on logs, and fish such as crappie, bream, and largemouth bass fill the lake and canals.

### Enjoy the Refuge

The public is encouraged to visit the refuge during daylight hours year-round. Hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing opportunities attract many outdoor enthusiasts. Visitors have approximately 12.5 miles of well-maintained gravel roads for auto tours, a 600-acre lake, fishing pier, wildlife observation deck, and a 1.75-mile Cypress Discovery canoe trail. Stop by the visitor center to learn more about the refuge's history, management, and local flora and fauna.

Summers are hot and humid at Wapanocca NWR. Biting insects, venomous snakes, and poison ivy are common, so it is recommended that visitors bring drinking water, snacks, sunscreen, insect repellent, and wear long pants and site-appropriate footwear.

Hunters are required to carry a signed general hunting permit on the refuge at all times. You can pick one up at the refuge's visitor center, from various brochure boxes located throughout the refuge, or download one from our website.

For more information about the refuge or to find our public use regulations, you can call the visitor contact station or visit our website.

### Visitor Contact Station

178 Hammond Avenue  
Turrell, AR 72384

Phone: 870-343-2595

Office Hours: 7:00 am – 3:30 pm, Monday – Friday  
Closed on federal holidays.

### Website

[www.fws.gov/refuge/Wapanocca/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Wapanocca/)  
...or scan the QR code below with your phone.

### Refuge Website

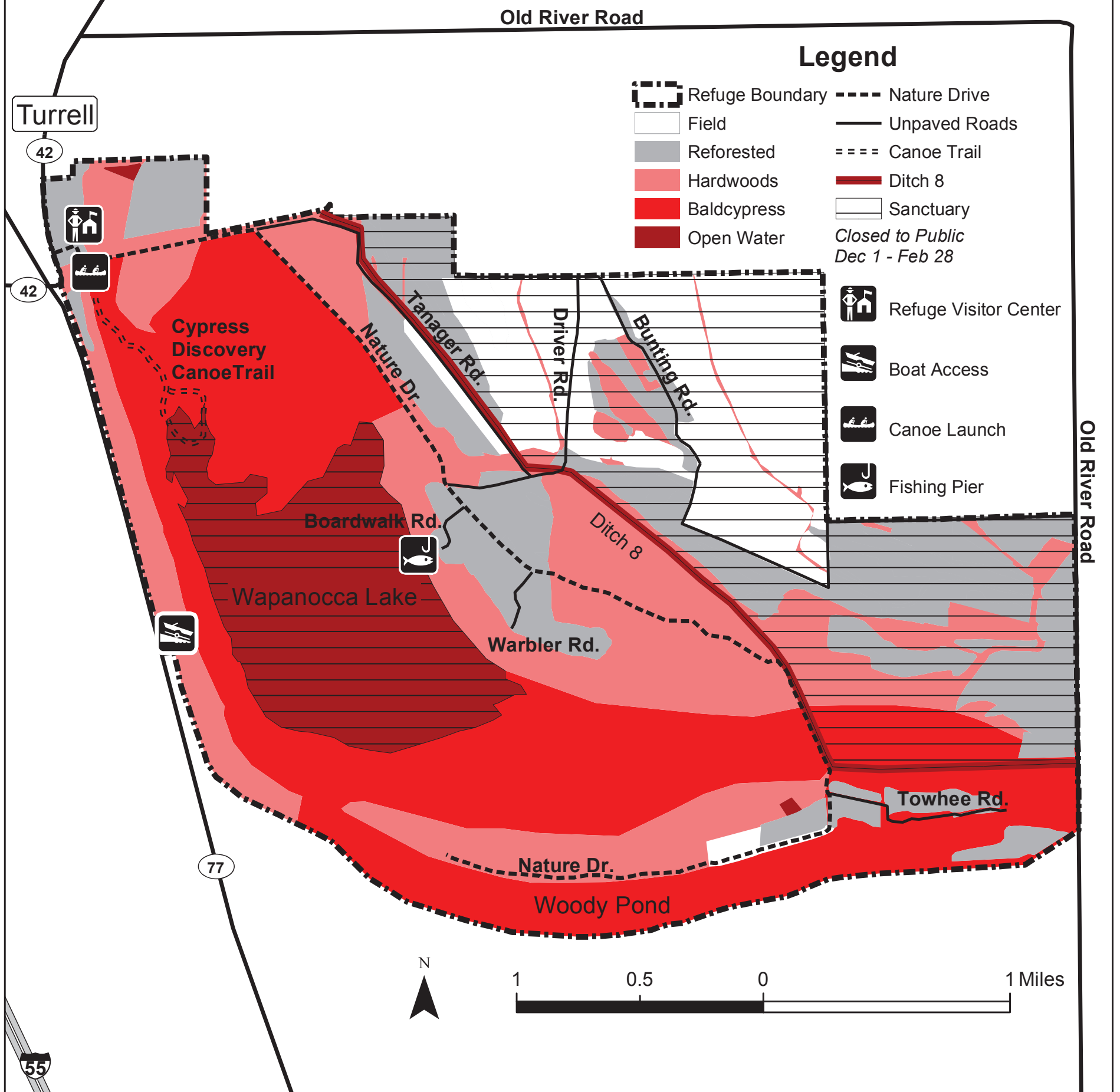


Scan Me!



Baldcypress swamp. Photo © USFWS.

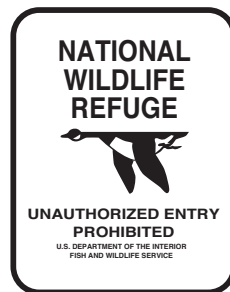
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Millions of people visit national wildlife refuges each year. The impact of human activity, if not regulated, can degrade these wildlands. Signs control recreational activities while protecting natural resources on the refuge. Please respect and obey all refuge signs:

**Refuge boundary sign**  
Public use permitted in accordance with refuge regulations.

Area closed to all public entry and use.



Some areas such as waterfowl sanctuaries are only seasonally closed. Seasonally closed areas have the specific closure dates printed on the face of the sign.



Take pride in your refuge. Don't litter.