

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wheeler

National Wildlife Refuge



Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1938 as a wintering area for ducks, geese and other migratory birds.



photo: Tuck Stone

Today the refuge is one of over 500 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



photo: USFWS



This blue goose, designed by Ding Darling, has become a symbol of the Refuge System.

Migrating Waterfowl

This 34,500 acre refuge attracts thousands of wintering waterfowl each year. The refuge hosts 115 species of fish, 74 species of reptiles and amphibians, 47 species of mammals, and 285 different species of songbirds. The refuge also manages and protects habitat for 10 federally listed endangered or threatened species that reside on the refuge.



photo: USFWS

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is comprised of a great diversity of habitat types such as bottomland hardwoods, wetlands, pine uplands, shoreline or riparian woodlands,

agricultural fields, and back water embayments. These habitats provide excellent feeding, loafing and roosting sites for wintering waterfowl, as well as nesting sites for seasonally migrating songbirds.

Waterfowl Food Production

Management techniques on the refuge include:

Approximately 3500 acres of cropland are cultivated by local farmers on a share agreement. During

harvest a portion of the crop is left in the field as a food source for ducks, geese, and other wildlife. Each fall the refuge provides green browse for wintering geese by planting wheat.

Water Control

Water control structures are used in wet areas to change water levels in a controlled manner. This type of management provides food for waterfowl by encouraging the growth of native plants in moist areas.

Providing Habitat

Diversity

Wheeler Refuge's wide variety of habitat types are managed to produce as much quality food and cover as feasibly possible for wildlife.

Banding

Ducks and other birds are banded

each year in an effort to maintain current information on nesting success, harvest numbers, migration routes, and the general condition of populations.



photo: Helen Kittinger



photo: USFWS



photo: David McEwen ©

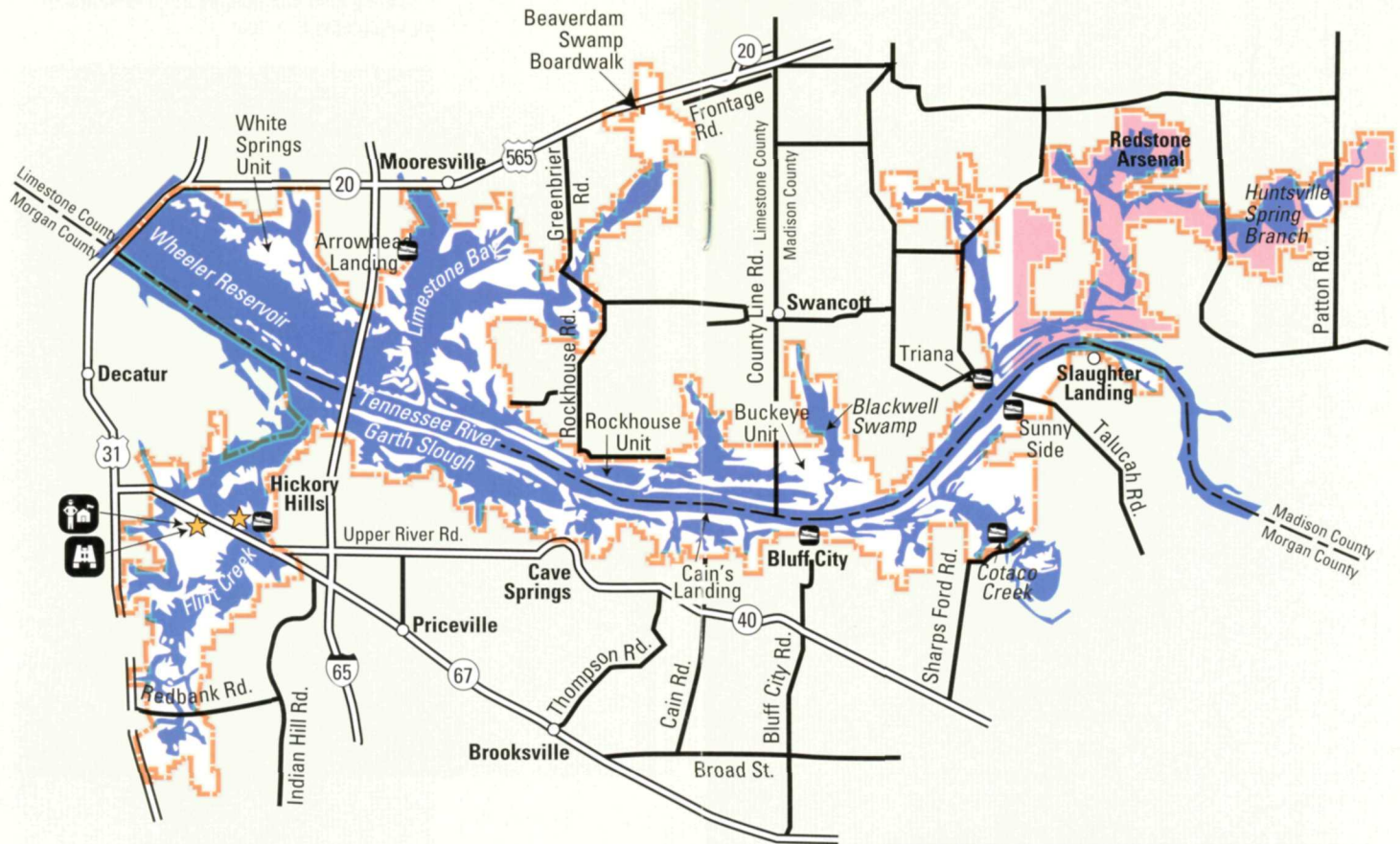


photo: USFWS

Use by the Public

The public is encouraged to visit the refuge and participate in the many activities designed and offered for outdoor enjoyment. Wildlife observation, fishing, hiking, nature study, and hunting of small game and deer are just a few of the opportunities available.

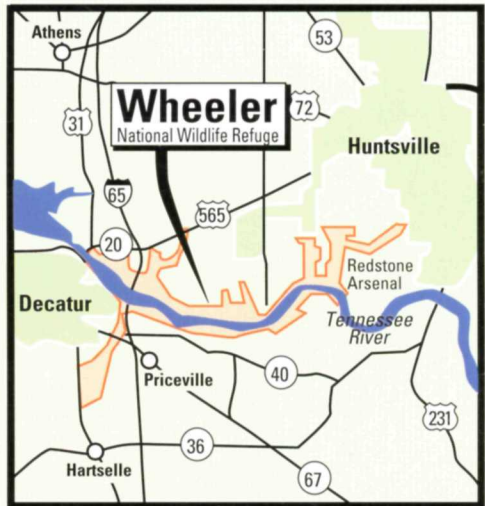
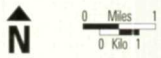
The Visitor Center located on Highway 67, two miles west of I-65, should be the first stop for all visitors planning a trip to the refuge. At the Visitor Center, visitors can obtain information about the refuge, enjoy the exhibits, watch the orientation video, use the observation building and trails, and find out about other interesting activities that might be available.



- Refuge Lands Within Redstone Arsenal
- Highways
- Roads
- Refuge Boundary
- 🏠 Visitor Center
- 🔭 Wildlife Observation
- 🚤 Boating
- ★ Flint Creek Environmental Area & Disabled Persons Fishing Pier

Wheeler

National Wildlife Refuge



*Visitor
Center Hours*

Enjoy Your Visit

October 1-February 28
Daily 10:00 am-5:00 pm

March 1-September 30
Wednesday-Sunday
10:00 am-5:00 pm

*Wildlife
Observation*

Permitted year-round.
An observation building
and platform is
provided for your
enjoyment.

*Fishing
and Hunting*

Open to fishing subject
to State regulations;
managed hunts are held
for small game and
deer. Permit required.

Boating

Permitted. Six
improved boat-
launching ramps
available. Water skiing
restricted and personal
watercraft prohibited.

Bicycles

Permitted on graveled
roads only.

*Horses and
Mule Riding*

Permitted on open
graveled roads. Not
permitted on refuge
hunts.

Vehicles

Only licensed vehicles
permitted. No
unlicensed ATV's.
Access is limited to
graveled roads and a
portion of these are
closed at certain times.

Firearms

Prohibited, except on
managed hunts.

Camping

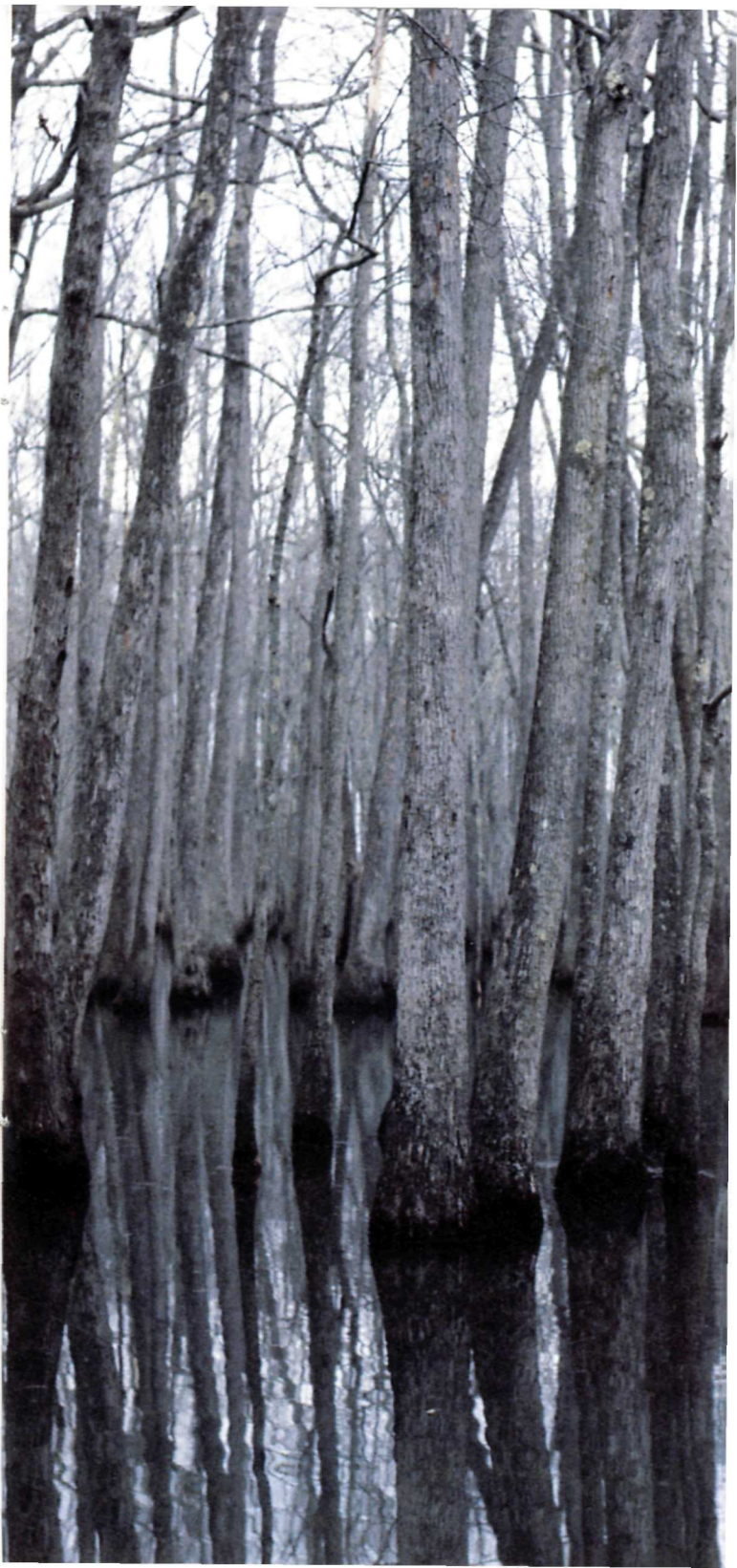
Not permitted.

*Artifact
Collecting*

Surface and subsurface
collecting is prohibited.



photo opposite: Adams





Calendar of Wildlife Events

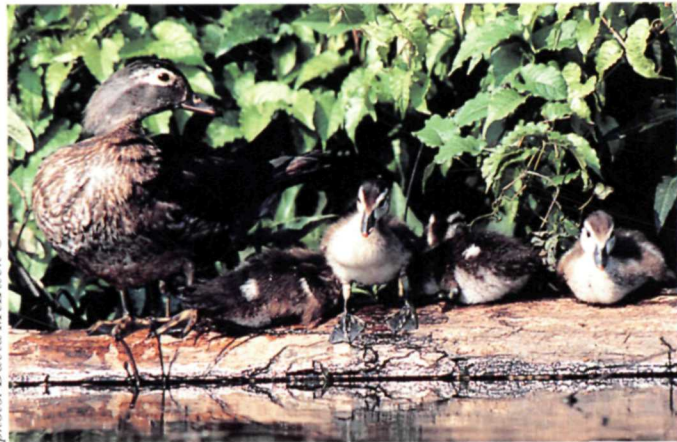
This calendar is meant to serve as a guide to general wildlife events for visitors. Weather and fluctuating water levels may cause variations in these events.

January

Waterfowl numbers are at their peak during the first half of the month. Canada and snow geese are abundant along with many species of ducks; mallards are the most abundant. Waterfowl begin moving north by the end of the month.

February

Waterfowl numbers begin to decline rapidly. Wood duck nesting begins. Depending on the weather, fishing can be good by the end of the month.



March

Waterfowl numbers are low, but a variety of species can still be seen. Blue-winged teal and shorebirds begin migrating. Turtles are present on sunny days. Crappie fishing is at its best.

April

Teal migration is at its peak. Warblers, vireos, and other small passerine birds are migrating. Migrant songbird nesting is in full progress. Wild flowers are at their peak.

May

Broods of wood ducks, mallards, and black ducks appear. Young songbirds and rabbits begin to appear. The last

of the migrant songbirds are moving through the refuge.

June

With migration at an end, only resident birds and mammals are seen. Fishing for bluegill and bass is fairly good.

July

Waterfowl activity is at its lowest ebb for the year. Songbird young are common in the woods and fields.

August

The fall migration of songbirds begins with purple martins bunching for their southward move. Large numbers of swallows move through and some early shorebird migration begins. A few blue-winged teal begin arriving. Fishing for catfish is good.

September

Blue-winged teal migration is at its peak. Shorebirds and large numbers of swallows begin moving through. The first incoming geese arrive during the latter part of the month.

October

Sport fishing is good. Waterfowl continue to arrive with good concentrations present by the end of the month. The mass of southward bound fall songbird migration is at its peak.

November

Although songbird migration is at an end, waterfowl numbers continue to increase. Large numbers of great blue heron can be seen congregating. Red-tailed and marsh hawks, along with other raptors, are common.



December

Waterfowl numbers reach their peak during the latter part of the month. Bald and golden eagles, although not common, may be present.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge
2700 Refuge Headquarters Road
Decatur, AL 35603
205/350-6639

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov/~r4eao>

November 1997

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wheeler

National Wildlife Refuge

