

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is a 35,000 acre refuge on the Tennessee River. The refuge is famous for the huge numbers of ducks, geese and cranes that congregate in the numerous wetlands, backwater areas, and farm fields during the winter. More than 60,000 ducks and geese, 20,000 sandhill cranes, and a small number of whooping cranes have wintered at Wheeler NWR. River otters, beaver, coyotes, white-tailed deer, bald eagles, hawks, owls and alligators may be spotted on the refuge.

Kayaking and canoeing are popular activities on the refuge. Wheeler NWR has 16,000 acres of water offering a multitude of places to paddle. Sloughs, creeks and the Tennessee River offer a variety of paddling experiences. This guide lists some of the most scenic and enjoyable locations.

### Make your experience more enjoyable!

- Use sunscreen.
- Morning and late afternoon/evening are the best times to view wildlife.
- Don't forget insect repellent.
- Pack water, especially in summer.
- Watch for alligators and venomous snakes.
- Silence! A quiet approach will ensure a better wildlife viewing experience.

This is your public land. Treat it like the valuable asset it is!

**Practice Leave No Trace.**

## REFUGE RULES

- Do not litter. Pack it in and pack it out.
- Some areas of the refuge (and refuge waters) are closed to the public during certain times of the year. Respect these closed areas and do not enter. Check with the Wheeler NWR Visitor Center 256-350-6639 if in doubt.
- No overnight camping is allowed. Refuge lands are open to visitors from dawn to dusk.
- Wildlife always has the right-of-way. Give them plenty of space.
- Anglers, hikers, hunters, and birdwatchers frequent the refuge. Respect their activities as they would yours.
- A more comprehensive list of refuge regulations can be found on the refuge website.



Thank you for visiting!

Refuge maps and more information are available at the refuge Visitor Center.

**3121 Visitor Center Road  
Decatur, AL 35603  
(256) 350-6639**

or online at  
[www.fws.gov/wheeler](http://www.fws.gov/wheeler)

[alabamascenicrivertrail.com/rivers](http://alabamascenicrivertrail.com/rivers)

## WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



## CANOE & KAYAK GUIDE





## FLINT CREEK

**Osprey Point 34.5456, -86.9316**  
**Hickory Hills Boat Ramp 34.5593, -86.9322**  
**Flint Creek Access Area 34.4899, -86.9660**

Flint Creek is a slow flowing, meandering stream impacted by the fluctuating water levels of Wheeler Reservoir. Flanking the stream are bald cypress, water oak, river birch, black tupelo, sweet gum, sycamore, and other hardwood trees. Flint Creek in its upper reaches is narrow and shaded and gradually widens into open water as you approach the Highway 67 bridge. Steep banks are present in sections of the stream, while other portions have shallow swampy overbank areas. Flint Creek flows north through Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge and past Decatur's Point Mallard Park to its confluence with the Tennessee River.

Directions to Starting Point: There are three launching points.

1. Osprey Point on State Highway 67 at Flint Creek. Take Priceville Exit 334 from I65 towards Decatur. Osprey Point is 0.7 miles on the left just before the Flint Creek Bridge.
2. Hickory Hills Boat Ramp on Hickory Hills Road. Take Priceville Exit 334 from I65 towards Decatur. Drive 0.7 miles and turn right on Hickory Hills Road. Drive one mile to the boat ramp on the left.
3. Flint Creek Access Area. Take State Highway 31 South 5.1 miles from Highway 67 (Beltline Road) in Decatur. Turn right at Bowles Bridge Road and make an immediate right into the parking lot and boat ramp. Note that this access point is not on refuge property and is managed by the state. This access point allows for a longer point-to-point paddle on Flint Creek through the refuge. You can paddle under the Red Bank Road bridge, past the Dancy Bottoms area and eventually reach the pull out at Osprey Point at Highway 67.



## BLACKWELL SWAMP

**Blackwell Swamp 34.5640, -86.7785**

Blackwell Swamp is a large swamp full of huge cypress trees and beaver lodges. The shoreline is heavily vegetated and offers good resting and feeding habitat for wading birds, beavers and muskrats. Great blue herons, red-tailed hawks, deer, beaver and turtles are common here and this is one of the best places on the refuge to spot alligators. During summer and fall, butterflies tend to congregate in large numbers. Blackwell Swamp is picturesque, ringed by wildflowers and full of lotus and lily-pads floating on tea-colored water. Paddling can be strenuous if you get into some of the lotus-choked areas. The north end of the swamp is full of dead trees that attract large numbers of woodpeckers.

Directions to Starting Point: Take County Line Road (Exit 7) from Interstate 565. Drive south for 5.5 miles. Look for Jolly B Road on the left and follow it for 0.5 miles and you will see a refuge welcome sign as you enter refuge lands. Continue for one mile past the refuge sign to the small gravel parking area and the launch area is on the left.



## CRABTREE SLOUGH

**Crabtree Slough 34.5545, -86.9536**

Crabtree Slough is a popular spot for kayaking. This is a good place to spot bald eagles, ducks and waterfowl. The slough can become clogged with floating vegetation in the summer. *Crabtree Slough is closed to all boat traffic from November 15 through February 28 during the winter waterfowl season. Do not enter during this period.*

Directions to Starting Point: Take Priceville Exit 334 from I65 towards Decatur. The entry point is a small unmarked road on the left, 0.2 miles past the Refuge Visitor Center road. Be careful! Many accidents have occurred on this heavily traveled road. It is recommended that you drive into Decatur, turn around and enter from the eastbound lanes to avoid crossing oncoming traffic.



## ARROWHEAD LANDING

**Arrowhead Landing 34.6018, -86.8920**

Arrowhead Landing Road parallels the western shore of Limestone Bay, a large, shallow bay that connects to the Tennessee River. The bay is often full of thousands of snow geese and American white pelicans in the winter. Limestone Bay is a large open body of water that is popular with local anglers so you may encounter fishing boats during your trip. Paddle the north end of the bay into Limestone Creek, a meandering waterway that narrows and eventually ends near the town of Mooresville. Head south and follow the bay as it narrows and empties into the Tennessee River. You can turn right at the river and follow it downstream along the banks of White Springs Dike. **NOTE: The Tennessee River is large open water that is used by commercial and recreational traffic. Be alert for other watercraft. Winds can cause high waves and dangerous conditions.**

Directions to Starting Point: Take Mooresville Exit 2 from Interstate 565 south to the stop sign. Turn right on old Highway 20 west for 0.6 miles and turn left onto the gravel road at the boat ramp sign. This is off the refuge and you will be on a public gravel road for the first mile or so. Follow the road for 1.6 miles and the road will split. Keep left. Arrowhead Landing parking area and boat ramp will be another 0.4 miles on the left.