

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

White River

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



White River National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 500 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, the restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats with the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.



photo: S. Maslowski



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

The National Wildlife Refuge System
Unmatched anywhere in the world, the National Wildlife Refuge System is an extensive network of lands and waters protected and managed especially for wildlife and its habitat and for people to enjoy.

This unique system encompasses over 92 million acres of lands and waters from north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska to the subtropical waters of the Florida Keys and beyond to the Caribbean and South Pacific. The lands managed as the White River National Wildlife Refuge are a part of this system.



photo: USFWS

Introduction
Established in 1935, White River National Wildlife Refuge lies in the floodplain of the White River near where it meets the mighty Mississippi River. Long and narrow, three to ten miles wide and almost 90 miles long, White River National Wildlife Refuge is one of the largest

remaining bottomland hardwood forests in the Mississippi River Valley. The refuge's fertile forests and three hundred lakes are interlaced with streams, sloughs, and bayous. The result is a haven for a myriad of native wildlife and migratory birds.

History

The area which is now White River National Wildlife Refuge has a long and colorful history. Fernando DeSoto landed near what is today St. Charles. At that time it was an Indian village and later became a trading post as goods moved up and down the White River to the Mississippi River. Not until the late 1800s and early 1900s did the population grow. Settlers began to live along and on the river. Timber harvest, commercial hunting, fishing, trapping and digging freshwater mussels for their shells were the primary means to make a living, resulting in significant reductions in native wildlife and their habitats. People working and living along this portion of the White River continued in this manner until the refuge was established.



photo: T. McCabe



photo: USFWS

Migratory Waterfowl

Established primarily to protect habitat for mallard ducks and Canada geese, White River National Wildlife Refuge has long been known to provide wintering waterfowl habitat. Arriving in early autumn and usually peaking in late

December, mallards along with gadwalls, American widgeon, and greenwing teal find their way along that highway in the sky—the Mississippi Flyway. During some years, up to 350,000 birds will winter in these flooded bottomland forests. Along with all these ducks, up to 10,000 Canada geese will also winter

here. The sites can be spectacular, especially at sunrise and sunset, with the daily exodus to feed and return to roost.

Migratory Songbirds

Approximately two-thirds of the bird species found in Arkansas can be seen at White River National Wildlife Refuge. Many of these are neotropical migratory songbirds that use the refuge as a stopping point on their journey to and from central and south America. Among these small travelers are Acadian flycatcher, prothonotary warblers, yellow-billed cuckoos and blue-gray gnatcatchers. All but the blue-gray gnatcatcher nest on the refuge. The refuge's bottomland forest is a wonderful place for some of these birds to nest and raise their young during the spring and summer months. Some of

the songbirds that are year-round refuge residents are the tufted titmouse, northern cardinal and Carolina wren. Because of places like White River National Wildlife Refuge, the music of the songbirds has not faded.



photo: USFWS

Endangered and Threatened Species

Although no longer on the endangered species list, the majestic southern bald eagle does nest on the refuge. When eagles were seen nesting here in 1982, it was the first place they had nested in Arkansas in almost 30 years! The number of nests has increased to at least four active nests each producing one or two eaglets every year. White River National Wildlife Refuge is located on the northern edge of the American alligator's range. No longer on the endangered species list, this ancient

reptile is still on the threatened list in Arkansas. Although there numbers may not be great, they can be found throughout the refuge's wetland and oxbow lakes and are known to nest here also. The largest native population of black bear in the Mississippi River Valley is found on and around White River National Wildlife Refuge. This remnant population has recovered from a low of about 30 at the beginning of the twentieth century to about 500 at the beginning of the twenty-first century.



photo: USFWS



photo: N. Milam

Other Wildlife

White River National Wildlife Refuge is also home to a wide variety of upland game, small mammals, and other birds. The more abundant animals found on the refuge include raccoons,

mink and river otters. The refuge also is home to a large population of white-tailed deer and eastern wild turkeys. During most of the year, graceful long-legged wading birds such as great blue herons and egrets can be seen feeding in the shallow waters along lake and stream beds. Although not overly abundant, this inland refuge does provide a resting and feeding area in the spring and fall for a variety of shorebirds such as least and pectoral sandpipers and killdeer, which nest here.

In addition, these wet areas are also home to many of the refuge's smaller and more elusive creatures including a vast array of frogs and turtles. The hot, humid summer months can bring out a wide assortment of insects including ticks and chiggers which can make for an unpleasant visit for the unprepared.

photo: Forest Service



Managing the Habitat

Good, effective forest management is the key to quality wildlife habitat on the refuge. Forest management practices such as the selective harvesting of some trees allows for more openings on the forest floor which, in turn, encourages the growth of shrubs and other small plants that are beneficial to wildlife.

photo: USFWS



The White River itself has its own version of water management, especially during the winter months. Every year the White River floods about 75% of the refuge during the winter months. Most of the land that is flooded are bottomland hardwood forests, creating one of the largest greentree reservoirs in the world, an excellent place for wintering

waterfowl to feed and roost. During the spring months these flooded areas are a nursery for millions of fish and other aquatic creatures.

Enjoy Your Visit

The refuge headquarters is located in DeWitt about 15 miles west of the refuge. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 4:30 pm. Information regarding the refuge, activities, regulations, bird list and current conditions are available.



photo: USFWS

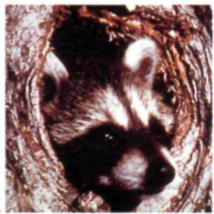


photo: USFWS

In addition to forest management practices, refuge staff also manages water levels in the wetland areas located throughout White River National Wildlife Refuge. Managing the water levels throughout the year stimulates the growth of wetland plants. Wetlands and their plants provide an excellent home for crustaceans, insects and mollusks all year long. During the winter months these same plants provide an abundant food source for wintering waterfowl.

Access

There are a number of roads and trails located throughout the refuge. Most are opened March through November, though that can vary depending on water levels. Parts of the refuge are closed to all entry December 1 through February of each year to provide a sanctuary area for wintering waterfowl.

Hunting

The refuge is open for hunting of white-tailed deer, turkey, small game and waterfowl in designated areas. Consult the refuge hunting brochure for additional information.



Fishing

Fishing is permitted year round in the North Unit and from March 1 through November 30 in the South Unit. All fishing is in accordance with state regulations. Popular species are bluegill, crappie, largemouth bass, and catfish. Contact the refuge for additional information.

Wildlife Observation/ Photography

There is a large variety of wildlife to be observed on the refuge. Vehicles are allowed on designated roads only. Foot traffic is also permitted year round on road and trails, except for closed areas.

Environmental Education

Environmental education is an important program on the refuge. Groups are welcomed and arrangements can be made by contacting the refuge office in advance.

Fires

Fires are permitted only in designated camping areas and must be attended. Only downed wood may be used for fires.

Camping

Camping is permitted in designated primitive camping areas located throughout the refuge. Camping is permitted only when participating in another wildlife recreation activity such as hunting, fishing or wildlife observation.

All-terrain Vehicles

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) with a tire pressure of no more than 5 p.s.i. are permitted on designated trails only located throughout the refuge. ATVs can only be used when

participating in another wildlife recreation activity such as hunting, fishing or wildlife observation.

Firearms

Firearms and archery tackle are permitted only during refuge hunting seasons. See refuge hunt

brochure for more information.

Collecting

Surface collecting or digging for archeological, historical or Native American artifacts is prohibited.

Pets

Pets on a leash are permitted.

Other

Disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace (including the operation of generators in campgrounds past 10:00 pm) is prohibited. Also feeding wildlife or collecting plants is prohibited.



photo: USFWS

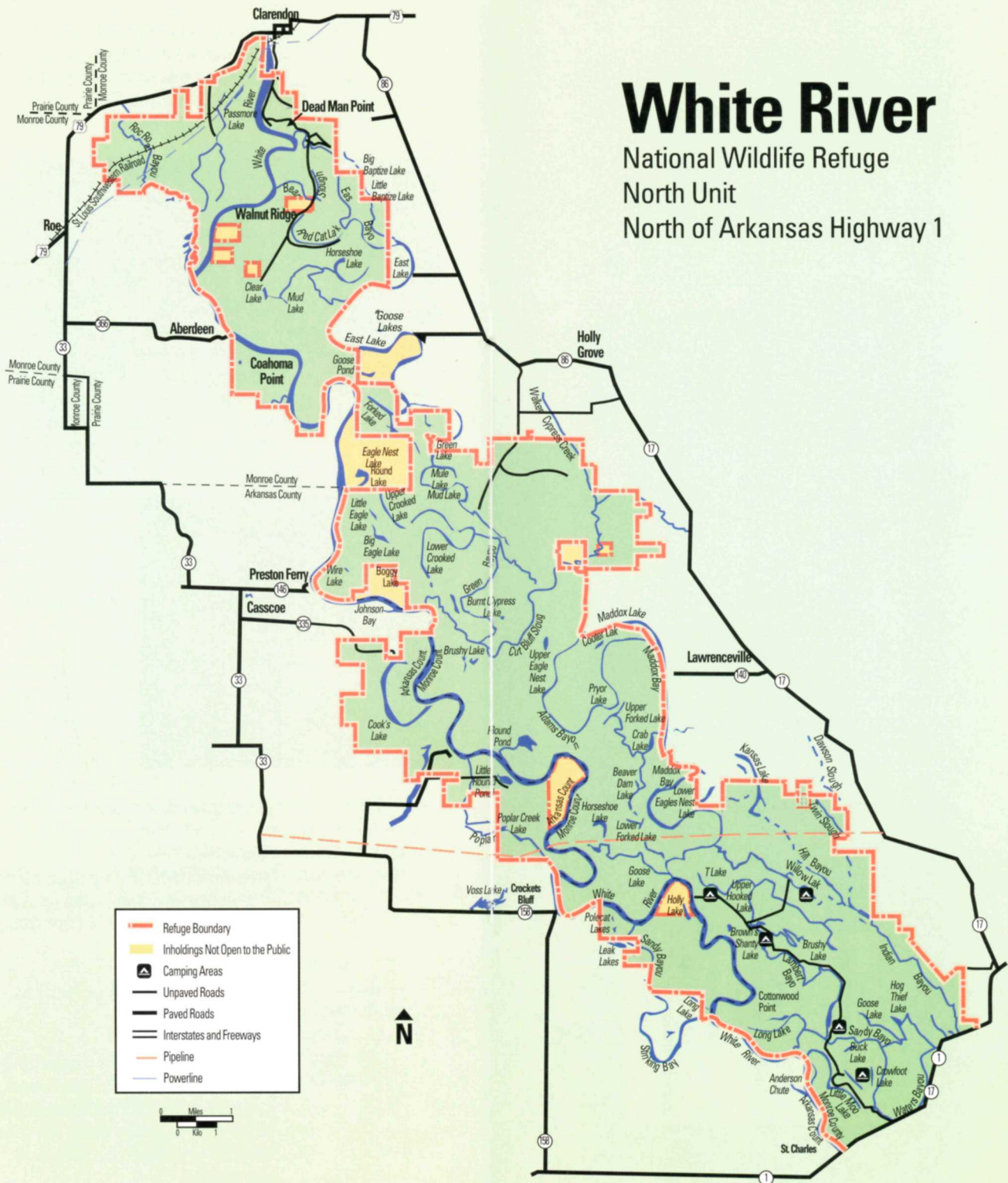
photo: USFWS

White River

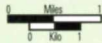
National Wildlife Refuge

North Unit

North of Arkansas Highway 1



- Refuge Boundary
- Inholdings Not Open to the Public
- Camping Areas
- Unpaved Roads
- Paved Roads
- Interstates and Freeways
- Pipeline
- Powerline



White River

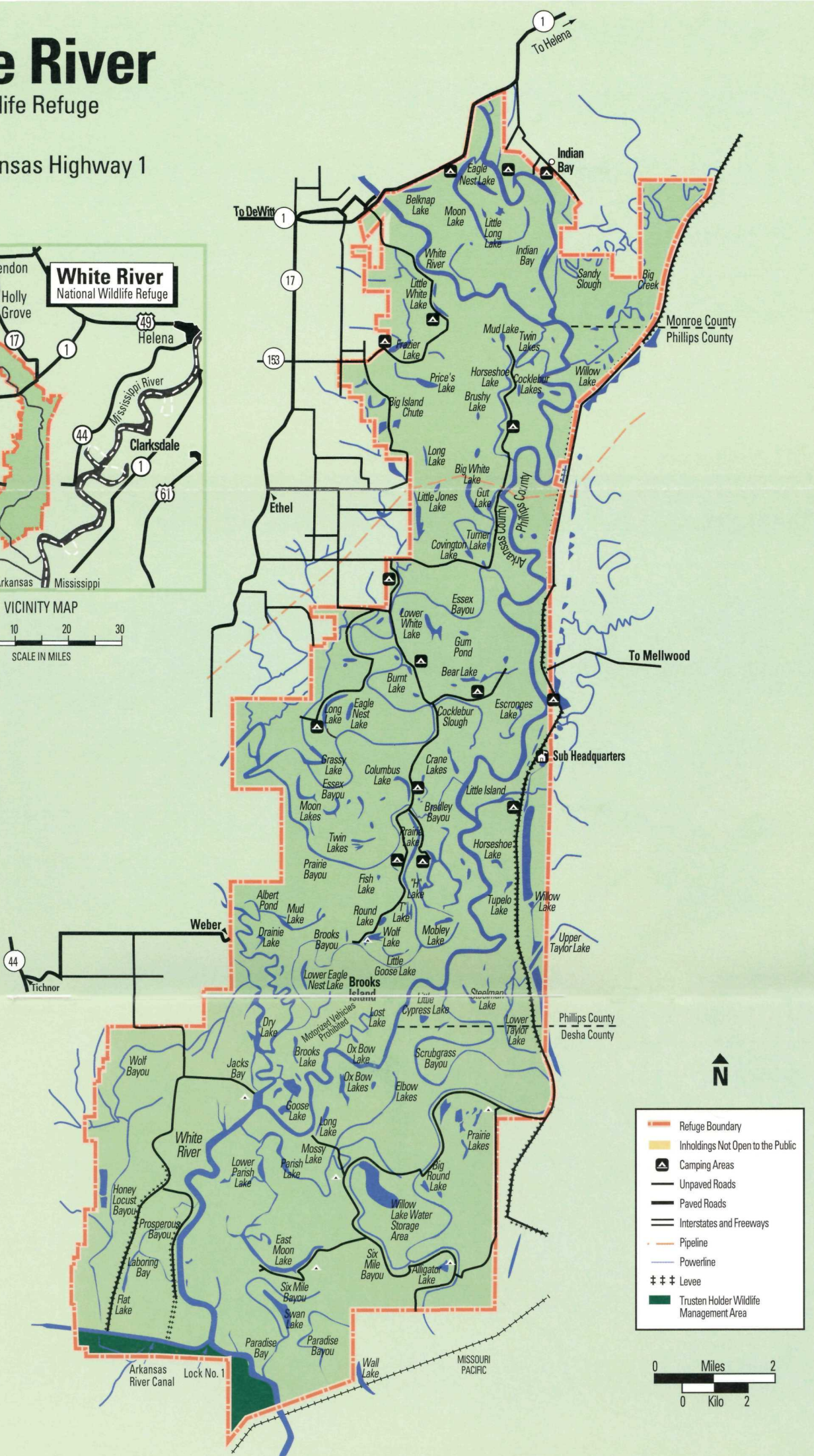
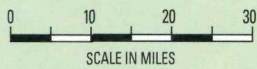
National Wildlife Refuge

South Unit

South of Arkansas Highway 1



VICINITY MAP



- Refuge Boundary
- Inholdings Not Open to the Public
- Camping Areas
- Unpaved Roads
- Paved Roads
- Interstates and Freeways
- Pipeline
- Powerline
- Levee
- Trustee Holder Wildlife Management Area



White River National Wildlife Refuge
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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