

Rydell National Wildlife Refuge
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Rydell

National Wildlife Refuge



Trumpeter Swan, *D. Braud*

Once the domain of homesteaders, Rydell National Wildlife Refuge now supports a diversity of animals—from wood ducks to black bears. Restored prairie, forest and pothole habitats provide a haven for wildlife and people alike.





Fall color,
J. Giese, USFWS

Located in northwestern Minnesota, Rydell National Wildlife Refuge protects approximately 2,200 acres of grassland, wetland, and woodland habitat. Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to benefit migratory birds and resident wildlife species, Rydell also provides a variety of educational and recreational activities for visitors to enjoy.

From Crops to Creatures

The Richard King Mellon Foundation donated land for Rydell National Wildlife Refuge to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1992. Rydell is managed as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a network of federal lands set aside for wildlife. The refuge's purpose is to protect wildlife habitat and diversity, encourage waterfowl and other migratory bird production, and promote environmental education and recreation.

Rydell sits between the flat Red River Valley flood plain and the rolling hardwood forest and lake region of Minnesota. Historically, the area was a small forested island, protected from prairie wildfires by lakes to the south

and west. This “fire shadow” allowed trees to mature. A maple-basswood forest developed, intermingled with oak savanna and open prairie.

At one time, at least 19 farmsteads, many of them log structures, were located on the refuge. Much of the woodland and grassland habitat was cleared for agriculture. Countless prairie potholes were drained. Today, the refuge is a mosaic of natural and restored wetlands, hardwood stands, and restored tallgrass prairie.



Old Log Structure, USFWS



Swans and Cygnet,
J. Giese, USFWS



Red Fox,
J. Giese, USFWS

Rydell's diverse habitats support a variety of wildlife species. Waterfowl, including ducks, geese, and swans, rely on the wetlands and the surrounding grasslands and woodlands for feeding and nesting. Trumpeter swans, on Minnesota's threatened species list, were re-introduced to the area prior to its becoming a refuge and now nest here each year. Bald eagles and osprey hunt on the refuge, and gray wolves are occasionally seen. Resident species include white-tailed deer, black bear, ruffed grouse, barred owl, pileated woodpecker, long-tailed weasel, red fox, river otter, and beaver.



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

A Work in Progress

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the refuge's habitats to support wildlife. Much of this work involves returning wetlands, grasslands, and woodlands to their natural states. Once restored, the habitats are maintained through prescribed burning and mowing.



Staff restore drained wetlands to the prairie potholes that they were. Deeper, existing wetlands support wild rice and celery, and provide food for wildlife. Each summer, young walleye are raised in Clifford Lake for use in stocking lakes on national wildlife refuges and Native American lands in Midwestern states.



The Service has restored most of the farmed areas of the refuge to native prairie to provide nesting habitat for waterfowl and grassland birds. Grasslands are maintained through periodic controlled burns.



Staff and volunteers have planted sugar maple, oak and other hardwood trees to re-establish forest habitat for migratory songbirds and resident wildlife. Hundreds of bluebird and wood duck nesting boxes have been erected to provide these "cavity nesters" with places to raise their young.



Photos (from top)
Prescribed Fire, USFWS
Blue Flag, USFWS
Great Spangled Fritillary butterfly, J. Giese, USFWS
Eastern Bluebird,
B. Angus, USFWS

Photos (right, from top)
Redstart, *Observation Deck*,
Church Lake Trail, *Yellow*
Lady's-slipper, USFWS

Photo (below)
Prairie Pond, J. Giese, USFWS



Rydell's management plan calls for restoring and enhancing habitat to benefit woodland birds, such as the red-eyed vireo, veery and ovenbird, which require large blocks of forest for nesting. Habitat fragmentation caused by human activities has forced them to nest closer to the forest edge, where they are more vulnerable to predation, nest parasitism and competition from other species. As a result, their populations have declined.

The Refuge and You

Wildlife comes first on national wildlife refuges; all human activities must be compatible with the needs of wildlife. Six activities are encouraged when appropriate: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation. Rydell Refuge offers all of these, and more!



The refuge visitor center provides information about refuge wildlife and serves as the starting point for the seven-mile, paved and gravel, trail system. Five trails are open to hiking, bicycling, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Observation blinds and gazebos on the trails offer opportunities to watch and photograph wildlife. Transportation for people with disabilities is available by prior arrangement.



Golden Pond Trail



The Golden Pond Trail (about 1.5 miles) travels past hardwood forest and restored prairie, along a wetland, through a willow swale, and past Swan Lake. It provides excellent bird watching in the spring and fall. Yellow and showy lady's slippers grow near Swan Lake in the spring.



*Sundew
Bog Boardwalk*



The Sundew Bog Boardwalk is located off of the Golden Pond Trail. The boardwalk takes you into Sundew Bog, a boggy area that supports regionally rare plants such as the insect-eating round-leafed sundew. Visitors can touch sphagnum moss and tamarac trees.

*Round
Lake Trail*



The Round Lake Trail (just over 1 mile) winds through the refuge's largest wooded area and past a site managed for ruffed grouse. It continues by a wetland popular with wood ducks, alongside Round Lake, and past several native prairie restoration sites and a small patch of native prairie.

Rice Lake Trail



The Rice Lake Trail (.5 mile) skirts a wetland that fills with wild rice in late summer and waterfowl during the fall migration.

*Church
Lake Trail*



The Church Lake Trail (just over 1 mile) winds along a large wetland and marsh and through a hardwood forest dominated by ironwood trees. These small trees have uncommonly durable wood, often used for tool handles, fence posts, and tent stakes.

*Tamarac
Lake Trail*



The Tamarac Lake Trail (about 2.25 miles) circles its namesake and passes many tallgrass prairie restorations that sport native wildflowers from spring to fall. It continues by a clearing managed for ruffed grouse and white-tailed deer and an ironwood stand. A universally accessible fishing pier provides opportunities to cast a line. A spur trail leads to a log home-stead once occupied by a family of five.

Photos (from top)

Chokecherry, USFWS

Ruffed Grouse, J. Giese, USFWS

Flowering Wild Rice, D. Heffernan, USFWS

Red-necked Grebe, J. Giese, USFWS

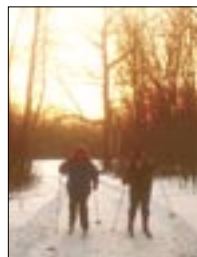
Vervain, USFWS



Interpretive programs about the refuge's wildlife and management are scheduled throughout the year. Local schools participate in environmental education programs and help restore wildlife habitat. Contact the refuge for the current visitor center and interpretive program schedules.



The refuge allows white-tailed deer hunting during special hunts. The refuge conducts youth firearm hunts, and through partnerships with non-profit organizations, people with disabilities can participate in deer hunts hosted at the refuge in mid-October. Anglers can fish for northern pike, walleye, bass and panfish from an accessible pier on Tamarac Lake during a limited open season. Please contact the refuge for more information on hunting and fishing opportunities and season dates.



Much of the work on the refuge is accomplished by a dedicated group of volunteers. Opportunities are available in the biological, public use, maintenance, and administrative programs. The Friends of Rydell Refuge Association sponsors interpretive programs and open houses, maintains cross-country ski and snowshoe trails, and provides trail transportation for people with disabilities. Contact the refuge office to learn how you can help!



Photos (from top)
*Environmental
Education*, J&K
Hollingsworth
White-tailed Deer,
J. Jave, USFWS
*Cross-Country
Skiing*, USFWS

Your cooperation is appreciated

- Refuge trails are open from one half hour before sunrise to sunset each day, except during scheduled deer hunts.
- Public use is restricted to marked trails.
- Off-road vehicles, open fires, camping, overnight parking, and horseback riding are not allowed on the refuge.
- Dogs must be leashed at all times.
- Firearms are prohibited, except during special deer hunts.

Winter



Rydell Through the Seasons

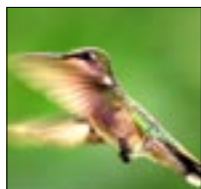
From December to February, the refuge's many resident species, including white-tailed deer, red fox, ruffed grouse, barred owl, white-breasted nuthatch, and downy woodpecker, can be seen from the visitor center and trails.

Spring



Spring migration is in full swing in April and May, with up to 100 species seen in a day from the refuge's trails. Snow geese, tundra swans, northern pintails, and prairie falcons are passing through. Trumpeter swans, wood ducks, red-tailed hawks, Eastern bluebirds, yellow warblers, and red-winged blackbirds are returning to nest.

Summer



The refuge is full of wildlife families from June to July. Songbird and raptor nests are located along the trails. Mallard, wood duck, hooded merganser, Canada goose, and trumpeter swan broods are visible on the wetlands. White-tailed deer fawns appear in the prairie.

Fall



The southward migration of waterfowl and songbirds occurs in September and October, with thousands of waterfowl gathering on the refuge's wetlands and lakes. Resident wildlife, such as black bear, ruffed grouse, and white-tailed deer, are feeding heavily to store fat for the winter.



Photos (from top)

White-tailed Deer, USFWS; *Red-winged Blackbird*,

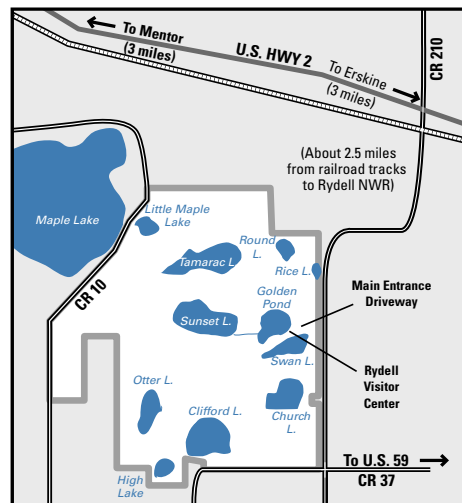
©S. Cummings; *Hummingbird*, J. Giese, USFWS; *Canvasbacks*, USFWS;

Waterfowl Migration, R. Lloyd, USFWS



Finding the Refuge

From the north, take U.S. HWY 2 to Polk CR 210. Travel south on Polk CR 210 approximately 2.5 miles to the refuge entrance. From the south, take U.S. HWY 59 to Polk CR 41. Turn west on Polk CR 41 and follow the signs approximately nine miles to the refuge entrance.



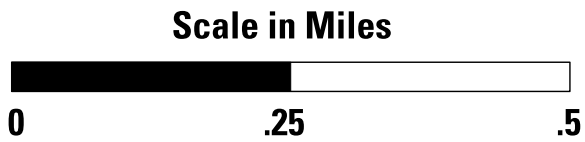
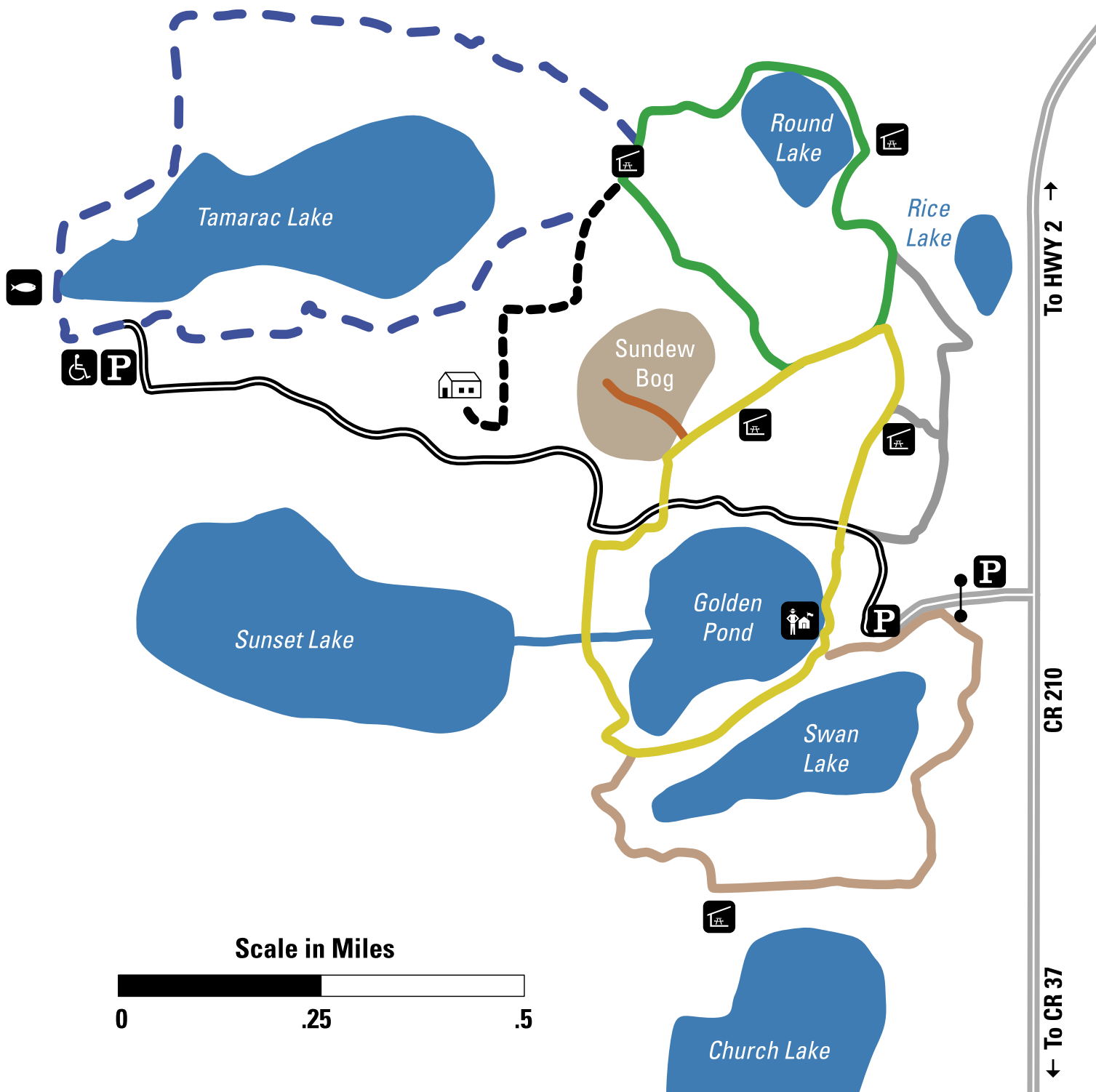
Refuge Facilities

- Headquarters/Visitor Center
- Parking
- Fishing Pier
- Shelter
- Log Structure Interpretive Site
- Roadway (No Pedestrian Traffic)
- Pier Road (Vehicles Only, By Permission)
- Gate

Trails

- Tamarac Lake (2.25 miles)
- Round Lake (1 mile)
- Rice Lake (.5 mile)
- Golden Pond (1.5 miles)
- Church Lake (1 mile)
- Sundew Bog Boardwalk
- Paved trails.
- Unpaved trails.

Exploring Rydell Refuge



To HWY 2 →

CR 210

← To CR 37

