

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Overflow

*National Wildlife
Refuge*





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

Overflow 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 within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

The National Wildlife Refuge System

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

This unique system encompasses over 92 million acres of lands and waters from north of the Arctic Circle in



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Alaska to the subtropical waters of the Florida Keys and beyond to the Caribbean and South Pacific. The lands managed as Overflow National Wildlife Refuge are a part of this system.

Introduction

Located in southeast Arkansas in Ashley County, Overflow National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1980 to protect one of the remaining bottomland hardwood forests considered vital for maintaining mallard, wood duck, and other waterfowl populations in the Mississippi Flyway. This 13,000 acre plus wetland complex consists of seasonally flooded bottomland hardwood forests, impoundments, and croplands. During the winter, a 4,000 acre greentree reservoir is created when the bottomland hardwood forests are allowed to flood. This seasonally flooded area provides a haven for mallards, wood ducks, and other waterfowl species.

A Home for Wildlife

Overflow National Wildlife Refuge is a wetland complex within the watershed of Overflow Creek which flows southerly along the length of the refuge. On the west boundary, there are only about 100 acres of uplands found on a narrow strip along the escarpment that separates the Mississippi Delta from the Coastal Plain. The majority of the refuge is bottomland hardwood forest consisting primarily of willow and overcup oaks. The willow oaks, found here in abundance, produce small acorns that are an excellent source of food for the mallards and wood ducks that make their winter home here.

Other major kinds of trees that grow on the refuge include hickories, elms, and green ash. These woodlands also provide a home and nesting area for nearly 100 different songbirds during the spring and summer months. As in most bottomland hardwood forests, bald cypress and tupelo gum can be seen along streams, channels, and sloughs throughout the refuge.

Throughout the refuge are a number of impoundments, where the water and the plants are managed to benefit wildlife living on the refuge, especially waterfowl. These areas, called moist soil units, are very important in ensuring that there is enough food for

the birds that spend the winter here. These natural foods provide essential nutrients for birds to survive the winter and nest successfully in the spring. These moist soil units, along with the croplands, and bottomland hardwood forests provide a mix of habitats that supports a variety of wildlife throughout the year.

Reforestation

Two centuries ago, the Lower Mississippi River Valley contained over 24 million acres of bottomland hardwood and swamp forests. Today, only about 4 million acres of wetland forest remain, most as islands in a sea of agriculture.

In order to relink some of these fragmented areas and improve habitat, the refuge is reforesting some areas. Many agricultural fields on the refuge are being planted with the hardwood trees that once grew here. This reforestation effort is part of a larger effort taking place throughout the Lower Mississippi River Valley. The variety of native trees planted here at Overflow National Wildlife Refuge will enhance wildlife diversity and habitat.



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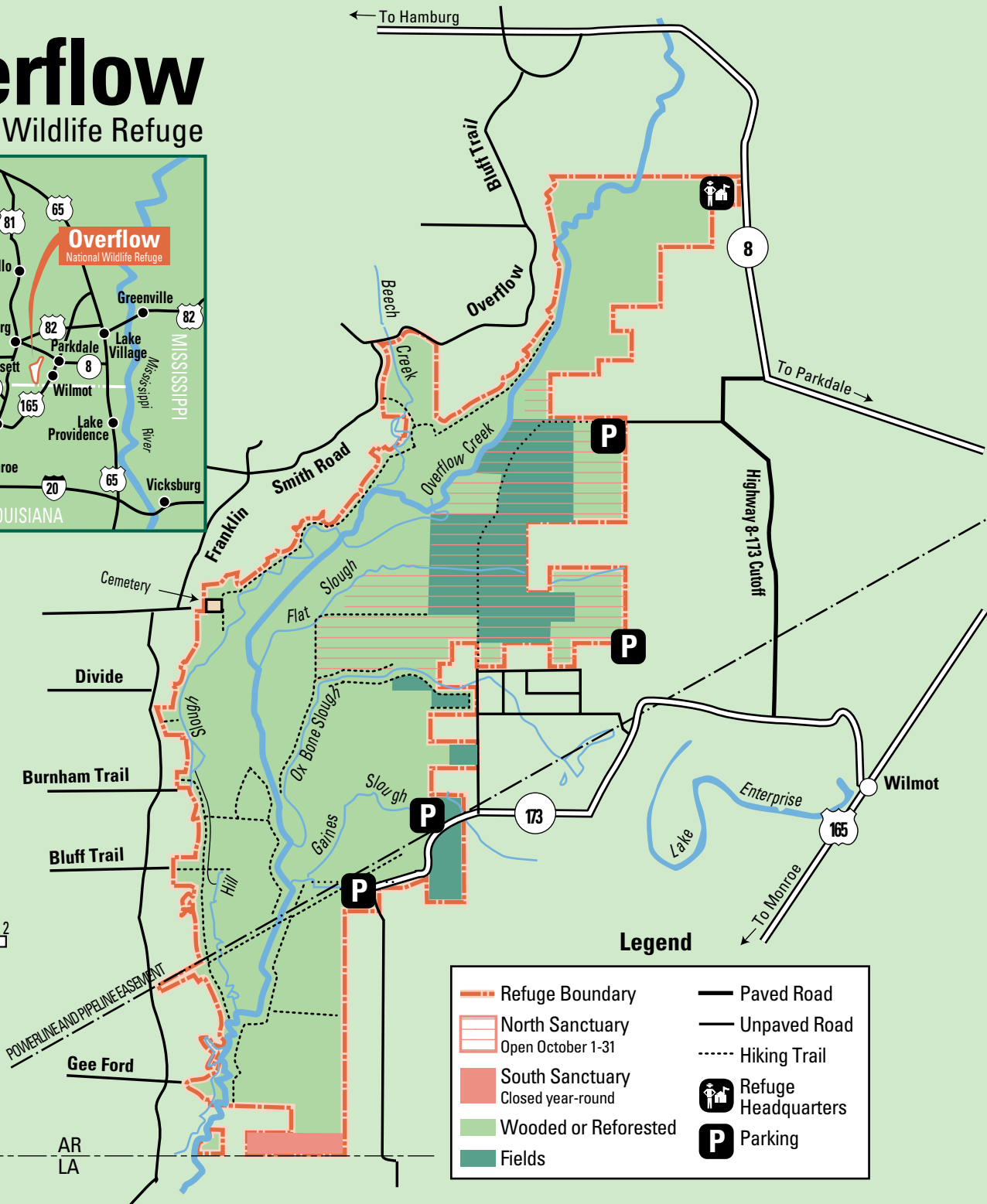
Lake Lewis



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Overflow

National Wildlife Refuge



Legend

- Refuge Boundary
- North Sanctuary
Open October 1-31
- South Sanctuary
Closed year-round
- Wooded or Reforested
- Fields
- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- Hiking Trail
- P Parking
- 🏠 Refuge Headquarters

Who Lives Here?

Most of the wildlife that lives at Overflow National Wildlife Refuge is that found typically in bottomland hardwood forests. One of the more interesting characteristics of the wildlife found here is the ever-changing migratory bird populations. Waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds all travel through the area and use the refuge to rest and feed.

In addition, year round residents include the occasional black bear, white-tailed deer, beaver, squirrels and other small mammals, plus an array of fish, reptiles, and amphibians. Bald eagles can be seen during the winter, spring, and early summer. These majestic birds now nest on the refuge in remote locations.

Up to 100,000 ducks and 5,000 geese can be found on the refuge during the busiest time of the winter, usually in late December or early January. About half of the ducks found on the refuge during the winter months are mallards; but the refuge also provides a home for green- and blue-winged teal, pintails, shovelers, and wood ducks.

Before the ducks arrive, shorebirds migrate through the area in the late summer and early fall. Plovers, sandpipers, greater and lesser yellow leg are just a few birds taking advantage of Overflow National Wildlife Refuge as a resting and feeding area when habitat conditions are favorable. Majestic wood storks with their great “iron heads” can also be seen feeding in refuge waters.

Management activities within the refuge are conducted to enhance habitat productivity, maintain the natural qualities of the area, and provide optimum habitat for wildlife. Carefully timed flooding of the hardwood forest, commonly referred to as green-tree reservoir



Lake Lewis



Lake Lewis



R. J. Bridges



Nick Milam



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Managing Habitat

management, provides excellent habitat for wintering waterfowl.

Water level management in other impoundments, such as moist soil units, stimulates the growth of native wetland plants and an abundance of insects, crustaceans, and mollusks; foods critical to the survival and reproduction of migratory waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds. Within these units, the production of rice and other crops is carried out on a rotational basis to provide additional food and prevent the encroachment of undesirable vegetation.

Forest management practices focus on improving conditions for the variety of wildlife living in the forest. Thinning, regeneration, and timber stand improvement are some of the techniques used to maintain and enhance the timber resource on the refuge. In addition, hardwood trees are being replanted on the marginal agricultural lands that were cleared by the previous owners.

Enjoy Your Visit

Visitors are welcome during daylight hours to Overflow National Wildlife Refuge throughout the year. The refuge headquarters is located off of Arkansas Highway 8 approximately miles east of Hamburg.

A variety of wildlife-dependant outdoor recreation activities are available:

Hunting

The refuge is open for big and small game, and waterfowl hunting. More information is available in the refuge hunt brochure.

Fishing

The refuge is not open for fishing.

Wildlife Observation/ Photography

The refuge roads and levees are open for wildlife observation and photography. All levees are opened to foot traffic unless posted as closed.



Environmental Education

Environmental Education is an important program on the refuge. Groups are welcome and arrangements may be made by contacting the refuge headquarters in advance.

Fires

Fires are prohibited.

Firearms

Firearms are permitted only during refuge hunts.

Collecting

Surface collecting or digging for archeological, historical or Native American artifacts is prohibited. Picking plants and removing non-game animals is not permitted.

Camping

Camping and overnight parking are not permitted.

Pets

Pets on a leash are permitted.

Access

The refuge is accessible by car and foot, but is somewhat limited. Please refer to the map for access points and parking areas.

ATVs

All-terrain vehicles are prohibited except during refuge hunts. Please refer to the hunt brochure for dates and trails.

Equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental disability. For information please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office for Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.



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