



Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge
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National Wildlife Refuge System
1 800/344-WILD

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CELEBRATING A
CENTURY
of CONSERVATION



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Muleshoe

*National Wildlife
Refuge*





Overview of Upper White Lake at Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge. FWS Photograph

Welcome to Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge

Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge is the oldest national wildlife refuge in Texas. It is one of a chain of refuges in the central flyway. Located on the high plains of west Texas, Muleshoe was established as a wintering area for migratory waterfowl and sandhill cranes. When sufficient water is present, the refuge hosts large numbers of sandhill cranes and a variety of waterfowl.

Short-grass rangeland with scattered mesquite extends over most of the refuge's 5,809 acres. Livestock are rotated among several pastures to keep grasslands in optimum condition for wildlife. Muleshoe has three sink-type lakes that have no outlets, depend entirely on runoff for water, and are periodically dry. The exception is Upper Paul's Lake, which is spring fed. When the lakes are full, 600 acres of water are available for wildlife.





Paul's Lake after rainy season. FWS Photograph

Birds

The outstanding attraction at Muleshoe is the wintering sandhill cranes. They normally begin arriving around the end of September or the beginning of October. During the six month period the cranes are away from their Alaskan and Canadian breeding grounds, the refuge hosts one of the largest concentrations of sandhill cranes at the refuge peaks between December and mid-February, often with thousands of birds present at one time. An all-time peak of 250,000 cranes was witnessed in February 1981.



Paul's Lake entering dry season. FWS Photograph





The cranes roost on the refuge lakes at night, as well as on other large saline lakes in the area. At sunrise they fly to surrounding agricultural land where they search harvested fields for waste grain and invertebrates and graze in the grasslands and wheat fields.

In addition to wintering sandhill cranes, waterfowl are present when sufficient water is available. Migrating waterfowl begin to arrive during August and reach peak numbers by the end of December. During spring and fall migrations, small flocks of snow geese may visit the refuge for a short time. A few Canada geese winter here when water is present.

Most duck species common to the central flyway frequent the refuge lakes during migration. Pintail, green-winged teal, American wigeon, and mallard are the most abundant; ruddy duck, blue-winged teal, canvasback, redhead, lesser scaup, ring-necked duck, and bufflehead occur in lesser numbers. The northern shoveler usually arrives late in March and remains until June. Occasionally a few duck broods are hatched on the refuge.



South Mesa. FWS Photograph





Prairie Falcon
Photograph by Dave Krueper.



There are 320 species on the refuge bird list. The largest variety of birds is seen during the spring and fall migrations. This is especially true of songbirds, shorebirds, and herons.

Mourning dove, scaled quail, common nighthawk, horned lark, curve-billed thrasher, lark sparrow, loggerhead shrike, and northern mockingbird are prominent nesting birds. The wooded area adjacent to the campground provides a good birding site.

Raptors frequenting the refuge during the summer include Swainson's hawk and American kestrel. Various raptor species occur during migration periods including an occasional prairie falcon. Turkey vulture are common during late summer and early fall. Golden eagles may be seen in the fall and winter as well as an occasional bald eagle during January and February. Great horned and burrowing owls nest on the refuge.

Mammals and Reptiles

You should watch for some of the mammals that are common to the area. Prairie dogs may be seen from the observation turnout located along the tour road to Paul's Lake. Prairie rattlesnakes also use the prairie dog dens and are common throughout the refuge. Refuge visitors should use





Bobcat. Photograph by David Krueper

caution regarding rattlesnakes. They normally seek shelter in the shade under rocks and logs and venture out during early morning or late evening hours.

Although primarily night animals, coyote, bobcat, badger, or skunk may sometimes be seen in daylight. Cottontail and jackrabbits are more easily spotted, as well as an occasional porcupine.



Things to do at the Refuge

A picnic area, camping area, and 1-mile nature trail are located near the refuge headquarters. There is also a 1/4-mile nature trail and wildlife viewing platform at Paul's Lake, six miles northeast of the headquarters.



Cholla in bloom. FWS Photograph





Wildlife Watching Tips

Dawn and dusk are the best times to see wildlife.

In warmer climates, little is moving on hot summer afternoons or on windy days.

Observe from the sidelines. Leave "abandoned" young animals alone. A parent is probably close by waiting for you to leave. Don't offer snacks; your lunch could disrupt wild digestive systems and reduce the animal's natural wariness of people.

Cars make good observation blinds. Drive slowly, stopping to scan places wildlife might hide. Use binoculars or a long lens for a closer look.

Try sitting quietly in one good location. Let wildlife get used to your presence. Many animals that have hidden will reappear once they think you are gone. Walk quietly in designated areas, being aware of sounds and smells. Often you will hear more than you will see.

Teach children quiet observation. Other wildlife watchers will appreciate your consideration.

Look for animal signs. Tracks, scat, feathers, and nests left behind often tell interesting stories.





You are welcome to travel the refuge roads during daylight hours. There is a small visitor center in the refuge office that displays some mounted birds and mammals common to the area.

The refuge office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30p.m., and may be reached by traveling west 2 1/4 miles on a gravel road from State Highway 214. You can register in the open lobby and obtain information about the refuge.

**Muleshoe
NWR Facts**

Where is it?

Muleshoe is located 20 miles south of Muleshoe, Texas, on State Highway 214 and about the same distance north of Morton on the same road. Littlefield is 30 miles east of the refuge on State Highways 54 and 37. Motel accommodations are available.



When was it established?

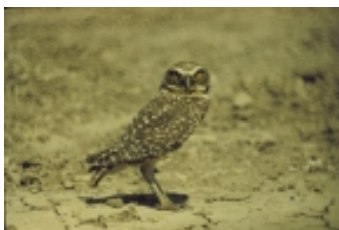
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How big is it?

5,809 acres.

Why is it here?

To provide habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.



Burrowing Owl
Photograph by Dave Krueper





Regulations

Permitted



Photography is permitted. Construction of blinds and travel in closed areas must be authorized by the refuge manager.



Dogs must be kept under control.



Public access by motor vehicles is allowed only on those tour routes shown on the refuge map. Hiking is allowed on all refuge areas except adjacent to the residence and the refuge lake shores, which are posted when closed during periods of high sandhill crane and waterfowl use in the winter months.



The refuge covers a variety of habitats including some rough uneven terrain. Physically disabled persons should consult the refuge manager for suggestions regarding areas that can be visited safely.



Camping is allowed only at the refuge campground and picnic area near the headquarters. Fires are allowed only at designated sites at the campground.



Prohibited



Boating



Swimming



Fishing



Hunting and firearms



Prospecting, removing, or disturbing rocks and minerals.



Removal of objects of antiquity, Indian artifacts, or paleontological artifacts.

