

# Lake Ophelia

## National Wildlife Refuge

photo: USFWS



photo: USFWS



photo: USFWS



photo: USFWS



Mike Chouinard, Jr., Project Leader  
Central Louisiana Refuge Complex  
401 Island Road  
Marksville, LA 71351  
Phone: 318/253 4238  
Fax: 318/253 7139  
E-mail: FW4RWLakeOphelia@fws.gov

### Refuge Facts

- Established: 1988.
- Acres: 17,500.
- Location: Avoyelles Parish, central Louisiana.
- Other lands managed: FmHA conservation easements and fee-title transfers; 21 tracts, 2130 acres.
- Directions to headquarters: follow Louisiana Hwy 1 north from Marksville to Fifth Ward; turn left onto Louisiana Hwy 1194 at caution light; stay on Highway 1194, following signs, to headquarters building.
- Directions to refuge: follow Louisiana Hwy 452 northeast from Marksville, 22 miles to refuge.

### Natural History

- Lake Ophelia NWR was once part of a large contiguous Mississippi River bottomland hardwood forest. During the seventies, much of the area that would become Lake Ophelia NWR was cleared for agriculture.
- Habitat management objectives are centered around restoring hardwood forests and providing a complex of shallow flooded habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds.
- Topography on the refuge is characterized by ridges and swales that create a great diversity of plant and animal communities. The refuge is named for Lake Ophelia, a 350-acre permanently flooded swale.
- Major habitat types found on the refuge include: 8,400 acres bottomland forest, 4,200 acres reforestation, 3,400 acres cropland, 500 acres of managed moist soil wetlands and 1,000 acres of lakes and bayous.

### Financial Effects of Refuge

- Nine-person staff.
- 25,000 visitors annually.
- Lake Ophelia, Grand Cote and Cat Island NWRs are administered under the Central Louisiana Refuges Complex. FY04 \$1,000,000.

### Refuge Objectives

- Provide wintering habitat for migratory birds — particularly waterfowl.
- Provide habitat for threatened and endangered fish and wildlife.
- Restore and protect habitats capable of supporting a high diversity of native fish and wildlife.
- Provide opportunities for compatible fish and wildlife-oriented education and recreation.

### Management Tools

- Water level manipulation.
- Cooperative farming.
- Bottomland hardwood reforestation.
- Mechanical/chemical control of noxious plants.
- Education/interpretation.
- Hunting.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

### Public Use Opportunities

- Refuge is open daylight hours year-round.
- Wildlife observation.
  - Photography.
  - Hunting: small game, deer and waterfowl.
  - Fishing.
  - Walking trails.

### Calendar of Events

**January:** archery deer hunting.

# Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge

**February:** small game hunting with dogs.

**May:** Migratory Bird Day.

**August:** Bowhunter Safety Course.

**September:** Bowhunter Safety Course.

**October:** National Wildlife Refuge Week, small game hunting.

**November:** archery deer hunting, youth gun deer hunting.

**December-January:** Christmas Bird Count, muzzleloader deer hunting, waterfowl, woodcock, and snipe hunting

## Questions and Answers

*Are there hiking trails available on the refuge?*

Yes. The refuge has over 20 miles of hiking and ATV trails. These trails are shown on a refuge brochure map available at the refuge headquarters.

*Do I need a special permit to hunt or fish on the refuge?*

Yes. A hunting, fishing and ATV use permit is required of all hunters and anglers 16 years old and older. Permits sell for \$12.50 and are valid March 1 through February 28. Permits may be purchased at the refuge headquarters or by mail.

*Do you allow camping on the refuge?*

The refuge has no camping facilities and does not allow camping. There are other public and private campgrounds nearby.