



*Celebrating a  
Century  
of Conservation!*

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

# America's National Wildlife Refuge System

## *Hunting and Fishing*

The National Wildlife Refuge System is the world's most unique network of lands and waters set aside specifically for conservation of fish, wildlife and plants. President Theodore Roosevelt established the first refuge, 3-acre Pelican Island Bird Reservation in Florida's Indian River Lagoon, in 1903. Roosevelt went on to create 55 more refuges before he left office in 1909; today the refuge system encompasses more than 500 units spread over nearly 94 million acres.

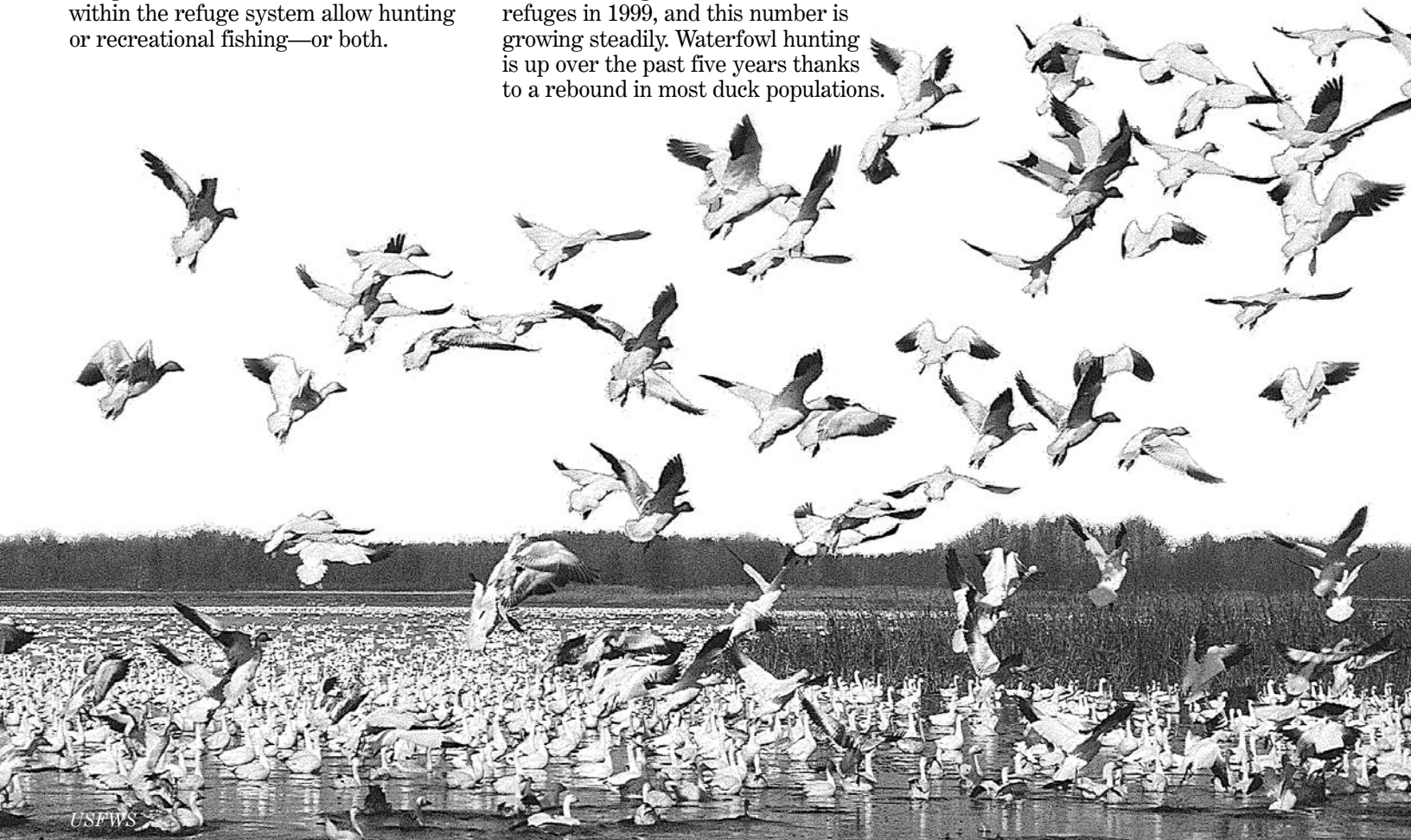
Hunting and fishing are two of six priority public uses of national wildlife refuges. More than half of the units within the refuge system allow hunting or recreational fishing—or both.

### **Hunting**

Since the 19th century, hunters concerned about the future of wildlife have made countless contributions to conserving the nation's wildlife resources. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has long recognized wildlife hunting as a legitimate and traditional recreational activity. In some locations it is an effective wildlife population management tool.

Hunting is currently permitted on nearly 300 refuges and on all of the Service's thousands of waterfowl production areas. There were about 2 million hunting visits to national wildlife refuges in 1999, and this number is growing steadily. Waterfowl hunting is up over the past five years thanks to a rebound in most duck populations.

Hunters have helped buy land for the refuge system for nearly 70 years through their purchase of Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps—also known as Duck Stamps. Waterfowl hunters ages 16 and older are required to purchase a Duck Stamp and affix it to their state license. About 10 percent of Duck Stamps are bought by non-hunters—stamp collectors, art enthusiasts and conservationists.



Since 1934, more than half a billion dollars has been collected from the sale of Duck Stamps. Ninety-eight percent of the money from the sale of Duck Stamps is deposited in the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and used to purchase wetland habitat—some 5 million acres so far—for the National Wildlife Refuge System. An additional \$153 million has been added to the fund from import duties on firearms and ammunition and from entry fees charged at some refuges.

Among outstanding hunting opportunities on national wildlife refuges around the nation:

- Anahuac NWR near Houston, Texas, draws waterfowl hunters to an abundance of mallards, gadwalls, wigeons, northern pintails and other birds. Late fall and early winter bring the flight of up to 80,000 geese and 100,000 ducks.
- Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR Complex attracts big game hunters in search of brown bears.
- Flint Hills NWR near Topeka, Kansas, is a great location for small game and upland bird hunting.

- Bosque del Apache NWR in Socorro, New Mexico, brings sportsmen and women in search of cottontail rabbits and quail. The refuge also features one of the most thrilling wildlife spectacles—the world's largest concentration of greater sandhill cranes.
- Seney NWR, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, is a terrain of pine and hardwood forests, meadow, bog, marsh, and more than 7,000 acres of open water. It is a popular attraction for bear, deer, ruffed grouse, woodcock and snipe hunters.

### Fishing

Many lands and waters managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service allow recreational fishing—including 260 public fishing programs on national wildlife refuges nationwide.

There were about 6 million fishing visits to national wildlife refuges in 1999. While the number of visitors engaged in freshwater fishing is holding steady, saltwater fishing is growing in popularity. Recent surveys indicate that many people engage in fishing in order to experience peace and solitude.

National wildlife refuges can offer a quiet yet “wild” fishing experience.

Among prime fishing experiences on national wildlife refuges:

- Tamarac NWR in Minnesota features some 21 lakes, five of which are open to canoes or small boats. Anglers can reel in northern pike and walleye.
- Bayou Sauvage, near New Orleans, gives urban anglers a spectacular setting for both freshwater and saltwater fishing.
- Another urban refuge, Philadelphia's John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, provides year-round fishing opportunities, and is one of a growing number of refuges with facilities that are disabled accessible.

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