

Hillside

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



photo: USFWS



photo: Randy Breland



photo: Mike Kelly

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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1975.
- Acres: 15,572.
- Majority of refuge lands transferred from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers after completion of the Hillside Floodway/Yazoo Basin Headwater Project.
- Located: thirteen miles north of Yazoo City, Mississippi to the east of Highway 49E.
- Located in Holmes and Yazoo counties, 3 miles south of Morgan Brake NWR.

Natural History

- Situated along the ecotone of the Mississippi alluvial plain and loessal hills in the biologically and culturally unique Delta region of Mississippi.
- Large moist soil management and cooperative farming program attracts in excess of 30,000 ducks annually—as many as 125,000 historically.
- Diverse habitats include bottomland hardwoods, cypress sloughs, early successional reforested areas, croplands, and ponds and streams.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- One person staff administered by Morgan Brake NWR, also responsible for Hillside and various disjunct fee title tracts (FmHA transfer).
- FY 01 budget of \$1.7 million shared by entire Yazoo NWR Complex which includes five national wildlife refuges totaling 77,000 acres, 42 fee title tracts, and conservation easements totaling 12,800 acres.
- Annual visitation: 180,000.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide resting, nesting, and feeding habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds.
- Provide for a diversity of habitat for all resident and non-resident wildlife.
- Protect endangered and threatened species.
- Provide opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation and environmental education.

Management Tools

- Moist soil management.
- Water management.
- Wetland restoration.
- Cooperative farming.
- Reforestation.
- Law enforcement.
- Controlled public hunts for population management.
- Exotic plant and animal control.
- Research and surveys.
- Education/interpretation.
- Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities

- Accessible wildlife hiking trail and other wildlife hiking trails.
- Hunting.
- Fishing.
- Wildlife observation and photography.
- Environmental education and interpretation.

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Calendar of Events

(fishing open year-round in certain areas)

January: waterfowl, archery for deer, squirrel, and rabbit hunting.

February: rabbit and quail hunting.

May: International Migratory Bird Day.

September: dove hunting.

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week, archery for deer, squirrel, rabbit and dove hunting.

November: archery for deer, waterfowl, squirrel and rabbit hunting.

December: muzzleloader for deer, waterfowl, squirrel and rabbit hunting.

Questions and Answers

Why is there only one person stationed at Hillside NWR (which also has responsibility for the management of Morgan Brake and Mathews Brake NWRs)?

Quite possibly the most understaffed group of NWRs in the southeast, only a manager, two technicians, and a maintenance worker manage the three refuges, totaling over 25,000 acres. A staff of six has been identified as meeting minimal public use and habitat needs. The current funding level that subsequently supports the existing staffing level is inadequate to provide for the needs of these refuges.

What is the story behind the massive siltation (especially on the north end) of the refuge?

Created by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and turned over to the NWR system in 1975, the refuge is essentially a 15,000-acre silt collection site nestled between the adjacent hills and a man-made levee. Though designed to last 50 years, the project is quickly approaching its intended silt load at nearly twice the expected rate. This is due in part to excessive deforestation in adjacent hills and the fact that only a portion of the silt collection reservoirs the Corps proposed to create in the hills were ever completed.

How has the massive siltation affected wildlife and its habitat?

The bottomland hardwoods on the northernmost 6,000 acres have been eliminated, and siltation is steadily marching southward. In its wake, waterfowl, deer, squirrel and songbird populations have been drastically reduced.

How much land has the refuge reforested?

To combat siltation problems, help restore the diminishing bottomland hardwood habitat, and to reduce overall forest fragmentation, nearly 1,000 acres have been planted back to trees with acorns or seedlings and an additional 500 acres have been allowed to regenerate naturally.

Although the refuge is entirely open to the public throughout most of the year; why are so many parts inaccessible?

When the Corps of Engineers purchased the land that was to be the refuge, they made the boundary align with the 100-year flood plain rather than nearby roads. What resulted is a management challenge for the refuge with many private landowners owning long strips of land between the only access road and the refuge. The refuge is currently attempting to buy land from willing landowners (sellers) that could improve access.