

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Wapanocca

*National Wildlife  
Refuge*





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

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



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### **Introduction**

Located approximately 20 miles northwest of Memphis, Tennessee, Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge was established in January, 1961 as a sanctuary for migratory waterfowl. The refuge is literally an island in a sea of agriculture. Lying only four miles west of the Mississippi River, the 5,485 acre Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge is an important stopover for waterfowl traveling the Mississippi Flyway and for songbirds as they migrate to and from Central and South America.

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## A Look to the Past

At the turn of the century, large flocks of migrating ducks found vast flooded pin oak flats in the Arkansas Delta. Later, this excellent waterfowl habitat was drained, the timber harvested, and the land planted to corn. Still, large flocks of ducks and geese continued to come here, feeding on leftover corn. When corn was replaced by cotton and then other crops, the number of ducks and geese wintering here dwindled.

In the late 1800's Wapanocca Lake and the surrounding lands were purchased by a group of Memphis business, forming the Wapanocca Hunting Club. This area was among the first lands bought in 1961 as the beginning of what today is Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge, and one of the last areas in the Arkansas Delta where large concentrations of waterfowl find a winter home and can be enjoyed by all.



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## A Place to Live

The three different types of habitat found at Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge provide a diverse place to live for a variety of wildlife. These habitats: freshwater impoundment, bottomland hardwood forest, and croplands are divided almost equally throughout the refuge. This varied habitat not only provides for wildlife but also is home to some rare plants.



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The largest colony of water spider orchids in the state of Arkansas can be found on the refuge. Only three colonies of this rare plant are known to exist in the state.

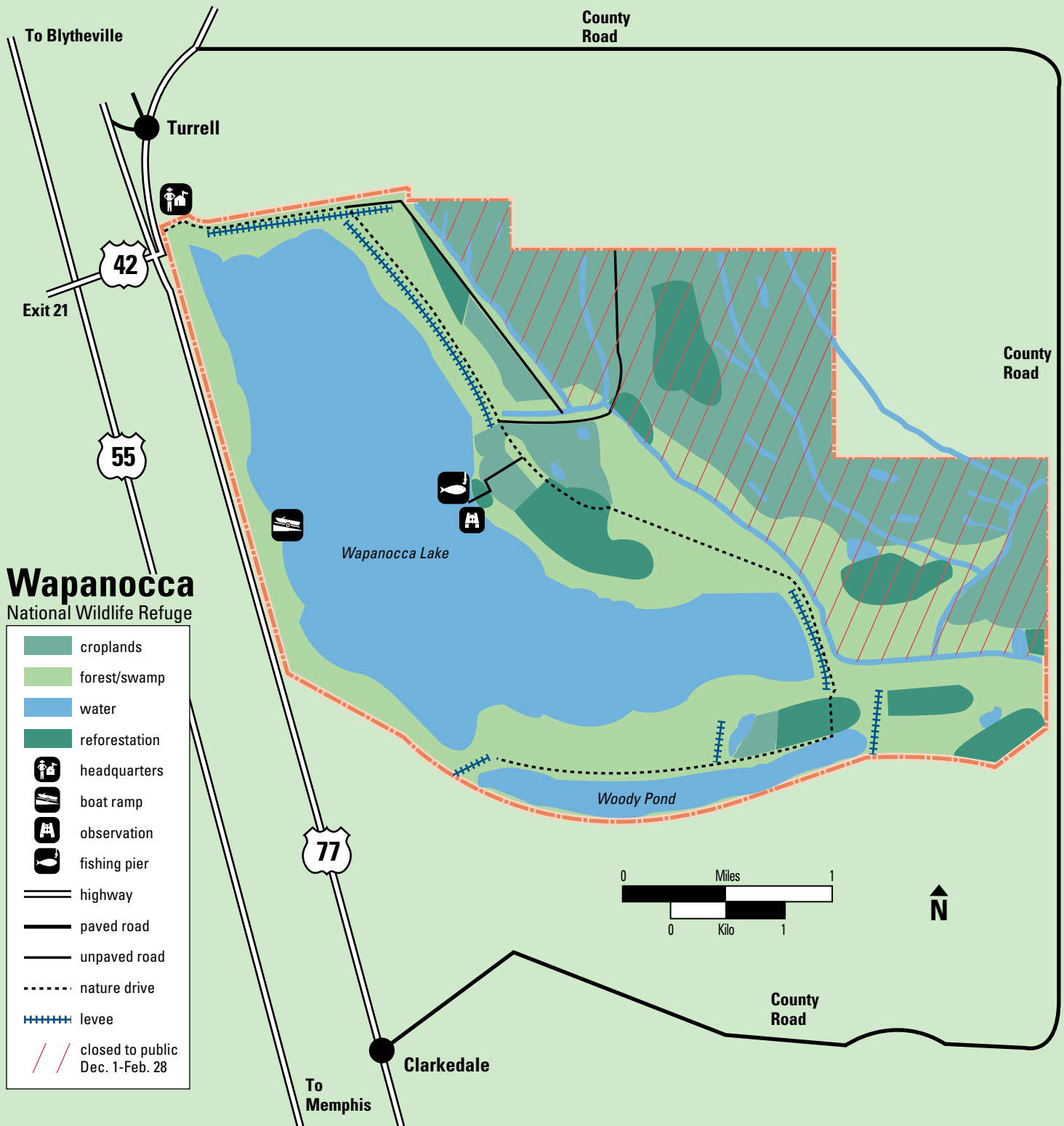
Within the largest freshwater impoundment lies the 600 acre Wapanocca Lake, surrounded by a cypress-willow swamp. The bottomland hardwood forest that fans out from the lake is seasonally flooded, providing excellent wintering waterfowl habitat.

There are also 30 other smaller impoundments or moist soil units located throughout the refuge, primarily interspersed throughout the croplands. These areas are planted with corn, millet, wheat, and other high-energy foods that ducks and geese like to eat. These small areas are flooded in the winter, making it easy for waterfowl to feed.

This combination of woodlands, croplands, swamps, and lakes creates an attractive place to live for both wildlife that lives at Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge year round and for that wildlife that just stays for a short visit.



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## Who Lives Here?

There is quite a variety of wildlife calling Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge home. Since the refuge was originally founded for waterfowl—those constitute most of the animal life found here. Mallards make up almost 75 percent of the ducks using the refuge. Other waterfowl that spend their winters here include: blue- and green-winged teal, gadwall, widgeon, and northern shovelers; along with white-fronted, snow, and Canada geese. Wood ducks are found on the refuge throughout the year; using the area for nesting and rearing their young.

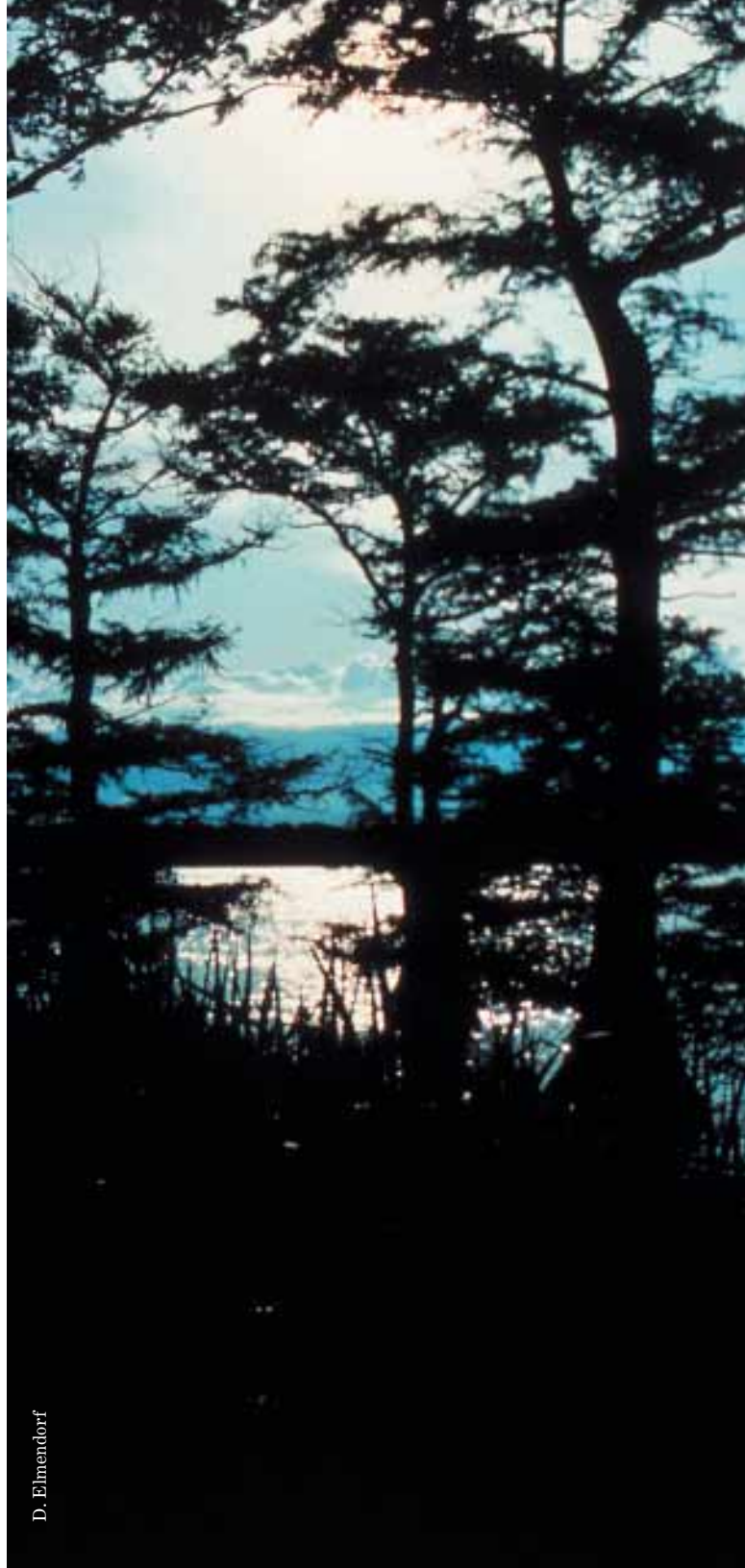
The refuge is also a haven for a variety of other wildlife for either all or part of the year. The spring and fall bring migratory songbirds on their long journey to and from Central and South America. The forests is also filled with mammals both large and small—from squirrels and rabbits to white-tailed deer. Refuge waters teem with wildlife—turtles can often be seen sunning themselves on logs in the canals and fish such as crappie and largemouth bass fill the lake and canals.



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## Enjoy Your Visit

Visitors are welcome during daylight hours to Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge throughout the year. The refuge headquarters/visitor center is located off of Interstate 55, northwest of Memphis, Tennessee. Take the Turrell, Arkansas exit and go east on State Highway 42 and follow the signs.

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

### *Hunting*

The refuge is open for small game hunting. Contact the refuge for additional information.

### *Fishing*

The refuge is open for fishing from March 15 through October 31 during daylight hours. Please consult the refuge fishing brochure for more information.

### *Boating*

A boat ramp is located on the west side of Wapanocca Lake off of State Highway 77.

### *Wildlife Observation/ Photography*

The auto tour route offers excellent wildlife observation, photography and hiking opportunities. An observation platform is located on the east side of Wapanocca Lake.



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### *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.

### *Interpretation*

The refuge visitor center offers exhibits and displays on the history and natural resources of Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge.

### *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 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, boat and foot, but is somewhat limited. The only road access begins at the refuge headquarters/visitor center and winds its way through much of the refuge. Boat access is limited to one boat ramp located off of Highway 77. Due to the area being primarily bottomland hardwood forest and water, foot travel in limited to the road and a few levees.

### *ATVs and Horses*

All-terrain vehicles and horses are prohibited.

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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