

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Pond Creek

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



Introduction

Established in 1994 under the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act Pond Creek National Wildlife Refuge protects and preserves one of the last remaining bottomland hardwood tracts in the Red River Basin. The refuge, located in southwest Arkansas along the Texas/Oklahoma border encompasses approximately 30,500 acres.



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

Pond Creek Refuge was originally named Cossatot National Wildlife Refuge in 1994, but the name was changed in 1997 to retain the area's local name—"Pond Creek Bottoms." The "bottoms" provide needed habitat protection for the extremely valuable, yet rapidly disappearing wetland hardwood forest community that is a haven for a myriad of native wildlife and migratory birds.

Pond Creek Refuge is one of four refuges managed as part of the Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge complex. Felsenthal Refuge, located in southeast Arkansas, is home to the world's largest green-tree reservoir consisting of 15,000 acres. Overflow Refuge, located to the east in the Mississippi River Delta, is a wetland complex consisting of seasonally flooded bottomland hardwood forests, managed impoundments and croplands. Oakwood Refuge, which also lies within the Delta, consists of managed impoundments and recently reforested farmland.



Nick Milam

Who Lives Here?



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Migratory Waterfowl

Pond Creek Refuge's habitat diversity results in a wide variety of wildlife living on and using the refuge. Wildlife includes many species typically found in bottomland hardwood forests. White-tailed deer and small mammals such as squirrels and raccoons can be seen throughout the refuge. The refuge is also home to wintering waterfowl, migratory songbirds and a number of resident bird species that use the area year-round. In fact, a preliminary refuge bird list identifies over 150 different species that utilize the area with roughly 75 species nesting in the area.

Geographically positioned in an area where the Central and Mississippi flyways overlap, Pond Creek Refuge provides outstanding habitat for waterfowl. The forested wetlands of the refuge are used by migrating and wintering waterfowl during the fall, winter and spring. Mallards, gadwall, American wigeon and wood ducks are among the over 15 species of waterfowl that traditionally use the seasonally flooded wetland habitats of the refuge. Other species seen less often include northern shoveler, blue and green-winged teal.



Tim McCabe



USFWS

Migratory Songbirds

The hardwood dominated forested wetlands of Pond Creek Refuge provide outstanding habitat for an abundance of birdlife, particularly, neotropical migratory songbirds. Neotropical birds use the refuge as a rest stop during fall and spring migration to replenish energy reserves for the long journey to and from wintering areas in Central and South America. This habitat is also used for breeding and nesting during the spring and summer for many of these species. The Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, Carolina wren, prothonotary warbler, northern cardinal, swainson's warbler, summer tanager, Kentucky warbler, and white-throated sparrow are among the over 20 species of migrants that nest here.

Endangered and Threatened Species

Although no longer listed an endangered species, the American alligator still remains threatened in Arkansas. Pond Creek Refuge is on the northern edge of the alligator's range. This ancient reptile makes its home in the lakes, sloughs and streams of the refuge.

The bald eagle, also once endangered is now considered a threatened species. Pond Creek Refuge is the home to wintering bald eagles. You may witness these majestic birds as they follow waterfowl migrating to their winter home.



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Other Wildlife



The lakes, streams, sloughs and bottomlands that comprise the refuge provide a variety of wildlife a place to call home. Some refuge inhabitants include cottontail and swamp rabbits, beaver, river otter, coyote, red and gray fox, and wild turkeys. One may even be able to catch a glimpse of the secretive bobcat.

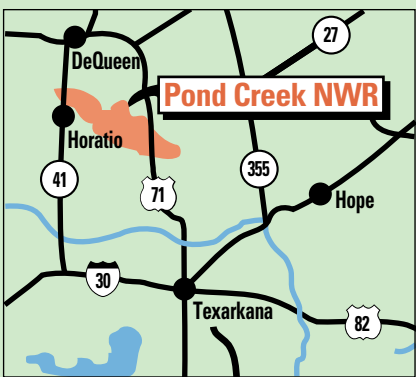
Graceful long-legged wading birds such as herons and egrets can be seen feeding along the waters edge of the many cypress lined sloughs that meander throughout the area. There are heron/egret colonial nesting sites (rookies) on Pond Creek Refuge. The rookies are of significant importance to future generations of these beautiful birds.



Pond Creek

National Wildlife Refuge

- - - Refuge boundary
- Paved Roads
- Improved Roads
- Unimproved Roads
- - -** Pipeline
-  Camping Area (primitive camping only)
-  Private Land
- +++++** Railroad





This forested bottomland hardwood habitat also hosts a wide array of reptiles and amphibians. Common species that one may see are the common snapping turtle, western cottonmouth, green treefrog, and smallmouth salamander.

Unfortunately, Pond Creek National Wildlife Refuge does have some inhabitants that can make a visit rather unpleasant if unprepared—mosquitoes, ticks, and chiggers.

When visiting one may like to bring bug repellent.

A Home for Wildlife

Conservation and proper management of the wetland and bottomland hardwood forest habitats found at Pond Creek Refuge are crucial. The refuge, dominated by forest, has small areas of open water and marsh, shrub swamps, and beaver ponds which support an assortment of plant and animal life. Conservation of the area's natural diversity, and restoration of habitats altered prior to refuge ownership are the primary management objectives of the refuge.

Reforestation

The area which is known today as Pond Creek National Wildlife Refuge once was a landscape dominated by bottomland hardwood species such as water, willow, overcup and Nuttall



Karen Beshears



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oak; pecan; shellbark; and bitternut hickory. The previous forest industry landowner converted approximately 6,000 acres of this pristine landscape into monoculture loblolly pine plantations for commercial forest management. The result of this conversion was loss of prime wildlife habitat that supported important wildlife species indigenous to bottomland hardwoods such as neotropical songbirds.

Current refuge management strategies call for converting these pine plantations to hardwoods. It will take from 20 to 30 years or more for trees being planted today to restore the mature bottomland hardwood forests to their former resource values as a home for wildlife. There are many benefits to restoration efforts such as enhancing wildlife diversity as well as restoring area hydrology.

Enjoy the Refuge

You may visit the refuge year round. Pond Creek National Wildlife Refuge has a wondrous array of fishing, hunting, and wildlife observation opportunities available. Refuge brochure boxes are located near most refuge entrances.

Access

Refuge access is limited to improved gravel roads. Few facilities for the visiting public have been developed at the present time. The use of all-terrain vehicles (ATV's) are permitted in designated areas for wildlife related activities. Foot traffic is permitted throughout the refuge.

Wildlife Observation/ Photography

There are roads and trails open throughout the refuge. Stay on trails to avoid disturbing wildlife.

Hiking

Unimproved roads and ATV trails serve as popular pathways for hiking and wildlife observation which are permitted on most of the refuge throughout the year.



Nick Milam

Environmental Education

Environmental education is an important program on the refuge. Groups are welcomed and arrangements can be made by contacting the refuge office in advance.

Hunting

The refuge is open to hunting waterfowl, white-tailed deer and small game during designated seasons only. A permit is required for these activities. Contact the refuge headquarters for additional information and current hunt regulations.

Fishing

The refuge is open to fishing throughout the year. A myriad of small oxbow lakes, streams, and rivers provide excellent fishing opportunities. The most sought after species include bass, crappie, blue gill, and catfish. Many of the oxbow lakes along with the Little and Cossatot Rivers have primitive boat launches that provide limited access. The southeastern portion of the refuge joins Millwood Lake, a 29,000 acre Corps of Engineers lake that also provides excellent fishing opportunities. One improved boat launch and parking area is located off Highway 71 and provides access to the Little River.

Fires

Permitted only in designated camping areas and must be attended. Only downed wood may be used for firewood.

Camping

Camping is permitted only in designated camping areas and in conjunction with on-refuge programs related to wildlife oriented activities.

All-terrain Vehicles

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) with a tire pressure of no more than 5 p.s.i. are permitted on designated trails and during designated seasons only. ATVs can only be used when participating in another wildlife recreation activity such as hunting, fishing or wildlife observation.

Firearms

Firearms and archery tackle are only permitted during refuge hunting seasons. See refuge hunt brochure for more information.

Pets

Pets on a leash are permitted.

Other Refuge Regulations

Disturbing, feeding or collecting wildlife or plants is prohibited.

Searching for or removing any object of antiquity including arrowheads and pottery shards is prohibited.

Cutting firewood or trimming any vegetation is prohibited.

Consumption or use of alcoholic beverages while hunting or in plain view is prohibited.



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Diane Borden-Billiot

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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