

Patuxent Research Refuge
10901 Scarlet Tanager Loop
Laurel, MD 20708-4027
Telephone: 301/497 5580
TDD/301 497 5779
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/patuxent/>

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>

Patuxent Research Refuge is one of over 500 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat and represents the most comprehensive wildlife management program in the world. Units of the system stretch across the United States from northern Alaska to the Florida Keys and include small islands in the Caribbean and South Pacific. The character of the refuges is as diverse as the nation itself.

The Service also manages national fish hatcheries, and provides federal leadership in habitat protection, fish and wildlife research technical assistance, and the conservation and protection of migratory birds, certain marine mammals and threatened and endangered species.



Wood Duck

(Photo by Dave Menke)

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Patuxent Research Refuge



Established in 1936 by executive order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Patuxent Research Refuge is the nation's only National Wildlife Refuge established to support wildlife research. With land surrounding the Patuxent and Little Patuxent Rivers between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, MD, the Refuge has grown from the original 2,670 acres to its present size of 12,750 acres and encompasses land formerly managed by the Departments of Agriculture and

Defense. Throughout decades of change, Patuxent's mission of conserving and protecting the nation's wildlife and habitat through research and wildlife management techniques has remained virtually unchanged.

Introduction

Patuxent Research Refuge supports a wide diversity of wildlife in forest, meadow, and wetland habitats. The land is managed to maintain biological diversity for the protection and benefit of native and migratory species. During the fall and spring migrations, many waterfowl species stop to rest and feed. Over 200 species of birds occur on the refuge. A nesting pair of bald eagles has used the North Tract of the Refuge since 1989.

Increasing forest fragmentation in the area due to urban development has damaged many populations of neotropical migratory birds. The refuge is one of the largest forested areas in the mid-Atlantic region and provides critical breeding habitat and an important nesting area for these species.

Patuxent Research Refuge is divided into three areas: 1) North Tract, which offers hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, trails, and many interpretive programs 2) Central Tract, where the offices and study sites of the many research biologists are located, and 3) South Tract, where the National Wildlife Visitor Center and its trails are located. The National Wildlife Visitor Center and North Tract are the only areas open for visitor activities.

Researchers

(Photo by N. Baldacchino)



Hooded Merganser Drake

(Photo by Tim McCabe)



North Tract

The North Tract of Patuxent Research Refuge includes 8,100 acres that were formerly a military training area. It is located off MD Route 198, just 1.4 miles east of the Baltimore/Washington Parkway. The land was transferred from the Department of Defense to the Refuge in 1991, and it is open for visitor activities that are compatible with research and wildlife management objectives.

The Visitor Contact Station is located at the entrance to the North Tract facility. All visitors must check in and receive an access pass.

The North Tract is open daily except closed for Federal Holidays. Call 301/776 3090 or TDD 410/674 4625 for more information.

North Tract Visitor Contact Station Hours:

8:00 am. – 4:00 pm.

Additional closings and restrictions are in effect during Maryland hunting season. Call 301/776 3090 for more information.

Hunting

The Refuge hunting program is administered by the Meade Natural Heritage Association (a cooperating association). Hunting is permitted only during established Maryland hunting seasons (September – January). Carrying, possessing, or using weapons out of season is prohibited. A valid Maryland state hunting license, verification of completion of a hunter safety course, and a Maryland State Shooters Qualification Card are required. You may listen to a hunting information announcement by calling 301/317 3825. More information is available by calling 301/317 3819 during the hunting season.



Environmental
Education

(Photo by N. Baldacchino)



Hunting

(Photo by N. Baldacchino)



Fishing

(Photo by N. Baldacchino)



Birding

(Photo by N. Baldacchino)

Fishing

Visitors can fish at Lake Allen, New Marsh, Cattail Pond, Rieve's Pond, Bailey Bridge Marsh, and the Little Patuxent River. All regulations, maps, and access passes are available at the Visitor Contact Station. Common species include bluegill, smallmouth and largemouth bass, catfish, black crappie, pickerel, trout, shad, chub, carp, suckers, striped bass, and yellow perch. A Maryland state fishing license is required for those 16 and older.

Trails and Viewing Areas

Approximately 20 miles of roads and trails exist for hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding. There are also many opportunities to observe wildlife. At the North Tract, Baltimore Gas and Electric Company has contributed to the creation of a wetland and wildlife viewing area where visitors may see waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and songbirds in an area that was formerly an artillery testing range.

Staff and volunteers at North Tract offer guided bird and nature walks as well as environmental education programs throughout the year. Announcements of upcoming programs are posted at the Visitor Contact Station, National Wildlife Visitor Center, and in local newspapers. Teachers and youth leaders may arrange for wildlife-related programs by contacting the Visitor Contact Station.

The National Wildlife Visitor Center

(Photo by N. Baldacchino)



South Tract National Wildlife Visitor Center

Located off Powder Mill Road between MD Route 197 and the Baltimore/Washington Parkway in Laurel, the National Wildlife Visitor Center is one of the largest science and environmental education centers operated by the U.S. Department of the Interior. This unique facility seeks to impart to young and old alike an increased knowledge of and appreciation for the earth's vital resources. It highlights the work of those who strive to improve the condition of wildlife and their habitats.

The National Wildlife Visitor Center features interactive exhibits which focus on global environmental issues, migratory bird studies, habitats, endangered species, and the tools and techniques used by scientists. The Visitor Center also offers hiking trails, tram tours, a seasonal fishing program, wildlife management demonstration areas, and an outdoor education site for school classes. A large auditorium and meeting rooms can accommodate scientific conferences, meetings, teacher workshops, lectures, and traveling displays. A bookstore, Wildlife Images, operated by the Friends of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center,

Inc. (a non-profit cooperating association) offers a variety of conservation books and other educational materials. The Visitor Center is open daily from 9:00 am. until 4:30 pm. except closed for Federal Holidays. You may call 301/497 5760 for more information.

Cash Lake

Cash Lake, located off MD Route 197, is open for fishing by permit only. A seasonal fishing program is conducted from mid-June through mid-October. This site has a fully accessible pier and dock. Information and permits are available at the Visitor Center. Anglers must have a valid Maryland fishing license.

Volunteers

Volunteers are an important part of the Refuge. They assist with public use programs, wildlife management activities, environmental education programs, trails maintenance, and clerical assistance. For more information contact the Refuge Volunteer Coordinator.



Volunteer

(Photo by L. Garrett)

Visitor Regulations

Staff at Patuxent Research Refuge strive to maintain the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission to conserve, protect, and enhance wildlife and their habitats. It is the visitor's responsibility to ensure that wildlife has a place to grow and survive for future generations by respecting and obeying Refuge regulations. In all cases, public access, use, or recreational activities not specifically permitted are prohibited. Please inquire at the Visitor Contact Station or Visitor Center to ensure that your activity is permitted. All visitors to Patuxent Research Refuge are expected to comply with local, state, and federal laws and regulations, as well as with the following conditions:

Traveling off roads, off trails, and in closed areas is prohibited. The Refuge speed limit is 25 mph unless posted otherwise.

Pets must be kept on a leash (up to 10 feet) and under control at all times.

Plants and animals (living or dead) may not be disturbed, introduced, or removed — with the exception of legally harvested game and fish.

Traditional park-like activities such as swimming, boating, tubing, rafting, picnicking and sunbathing are not allowed on the Refuge.

Possession of firearms or weapons is prohibited with the exception of hunting in designated areas with a permit.

Please do not litter. Take any trash with you and dispose of it properly.

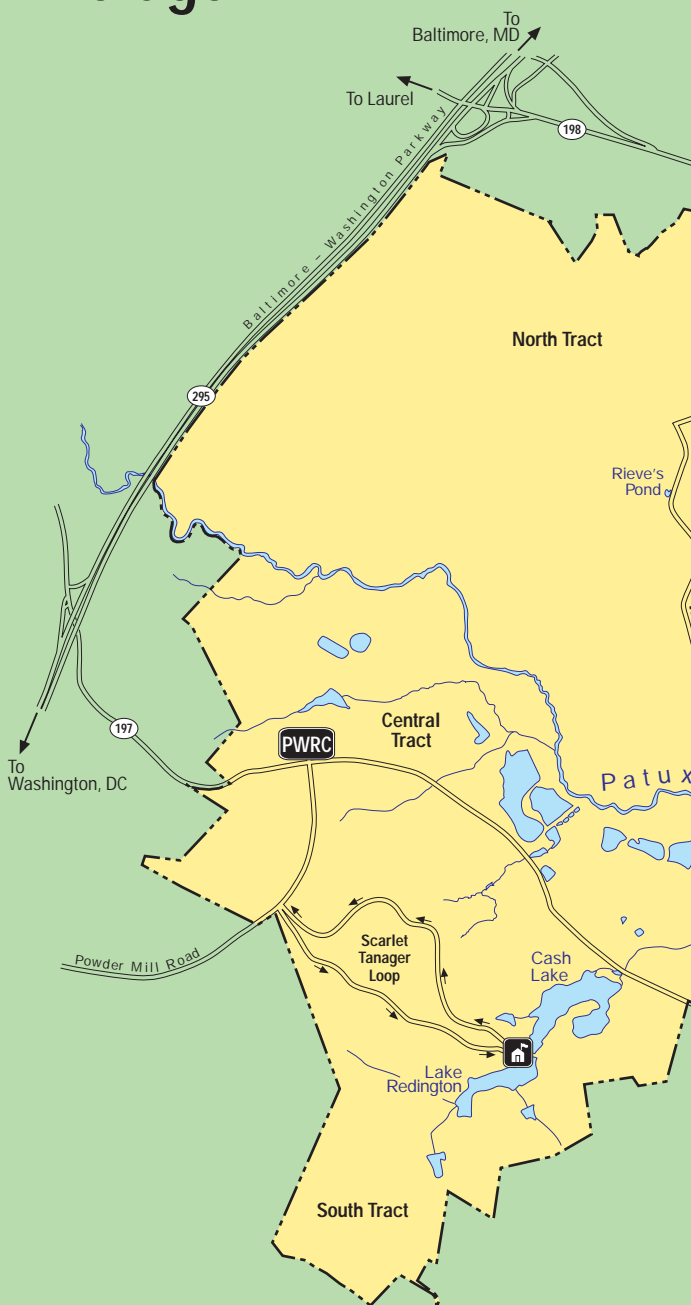
Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

Great blue heron

(Photo by H. Stein)



Patuxent Research Refuge



LEGEND



National Wildlife Visitor Center



Visitor Contact Station



Refuge Boundary



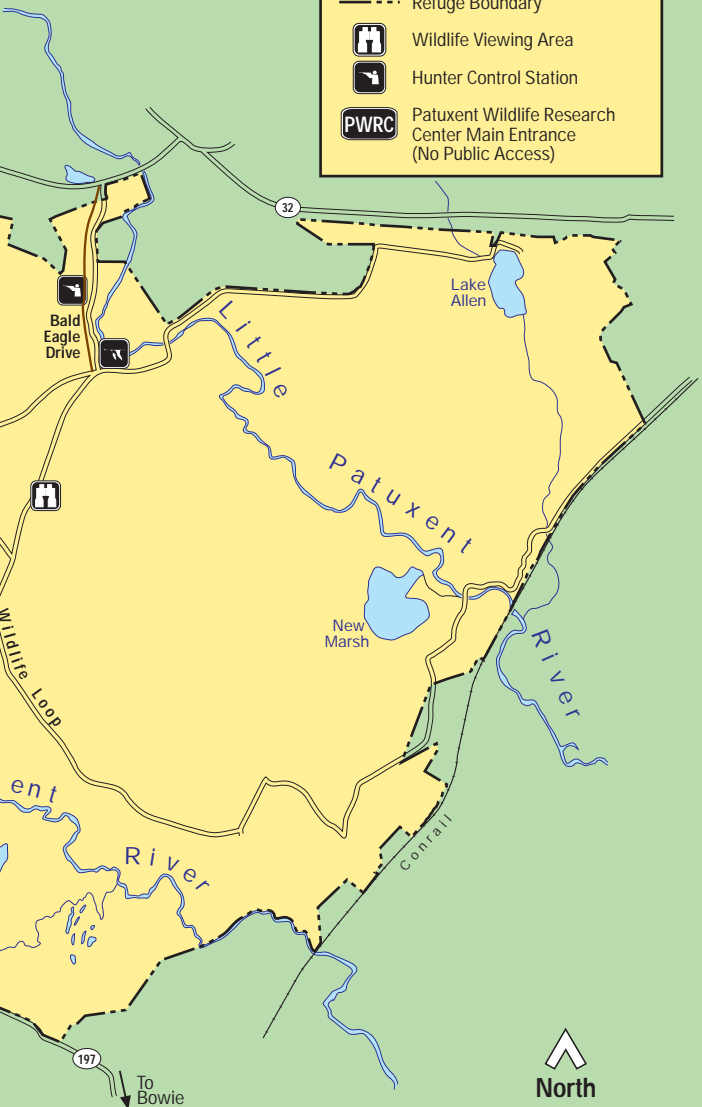
Wildlife Viewing Area



Hunter Control Station



Patuxent Wildlife Research
Center Main Entrance
(No Public Access)



North

