

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Tennessee

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, containing over 50,000 acres of water, forests, farmland and grasslands, is located on and around Kentucky Lake in northwest Tennessee. The refuge's three units, Big Sandy, Duck River, and Busseltown, stretch for about 65 miles along the Tennessee River. Established in 1945, the refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an important resting and feeding area for wintering waterfowl. The refuge also provides habitat for numerous resident wildlife species and other migratory birds.

Clayton Ferrell



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

Migratory Birds

Wildlife

The diversity of habitats found on the refuge units provide ample feeding, nesting, and resting areas for 289 bird species, 51 types of mammals, 89 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 142 species of fish. Large populations of white-tailed deer can be found throughout the area, along with smaller animals such as raccoons, squirrels, beavers, rabbits, and turkeys.

Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge is located within the Mississippi Flyway, a major route for migrating waterfowl. The extensive wetland acreage provides a natural food source and protection for over



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200,000 ducks that arrive here each winter. Of the 24 species of ducks using the refuge, mallards are the most common, followed by gadwall, wigeon, American black duck, and blue-winged teal. The beautiful wood duck is found here throughout the year, nesting in natural tree cavities as well as in artificial nest boxes. Thousands of Canada geese and several snow and white-fronted geese utilize the refuge units during the winter.



The refuge harbors a large great blue heron rookery, that once contained over 500 nests. Also nesting on the refuge, are double-crested cormorants. A hotspot for fish diversity, Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge can boast greater fish species diversity than any other inland national wildlife refuge in the country. Some of the more elusive animals found on the refuge are river otters, bobcats, coyotes, and mink. Numerous species of snakes, frogs, turtles, and insects also make the refuge home.



A host of neo-tropical songbirds, birds that winter in the tropics and nest in North America, fill the skies with color and song upon their arrival in spring. Among these are the indigo bunting, common yellowthroat, prothonotary warbler, yellow-billed cuckoo, and summer tanager. Other migrants include several species of shorebirds, raptors, and wading birds. Among the resident species that may be seen throughout the year are Eastern bluebird, American robin, red-winged blackbird, Carolina wren, and American goldfinch.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The American bald eagle has made an impressive comeback and can be found in large numbers on the refuge, with over 94 observed during one winter survey. These magnificent birds have also been found to nest on the refuge. Occasionally, osprey and golden eagles are observed here as well.

Other Wildlife

Several endangered or threatened species may be found on the refuge. Some of these include the bald eagle, least tern, and woodstork. The vast river and stream system within and surrounding the refuge harbors several species of mussels, some of them listed as endangered.



Managing for Wildlife

The primary management objective on the refuge is to provide food and protection for wintering migratory waterfowl. A farming program provides wildlife with foods such as milo, corn, soybeans, and winter wheat. A technique known as moist soil management is used to supplement the farming program. During the spring and summer, water is removed from the shallows of several impoundments to allow for the germination of various natural wetland plants. After these plants have matured and produced an abundance of seeds, the impoundments are flooded in the fall to make this natural habitat available to waterfowl and other marsh birds. This combination of natural foods and planted crops equips the birds with the nutrients needed to survive the winter months and return to spring breeding grounds in good condition. Shorebirds also benefit from this type of management in spring and fall.

Another management focus of the refuge is to improve habitat for forest nesting birds. During the late 1800's and early 1900's vast tracts of forest of this region were clear cut to fuel the industrial revolution. The impacts of this action as well as others, such as the control of wildfires, have greatly influenced the



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present condition of the forest within the region. The end result is a forest that is primarily composed of trees that are the same age, with poorly developed crowns and in a stagnant stage of growth. The impact that this forest condition has had on many bird species is a loss of suitable nesting and foraging habitat. In an effort to restore more natural forest conditions on the refuge, a forest management program has been initiated to carefully alter the forest structure. A very selective harvest technique is used to reduce the overcrowded conditions, thus allowing the remaining trees to grow larger and the vegetation near the forest floor to become denser, resulting in improved habitats for birds and many other species of wildlife.

This refuge has an active wood duck nest box program. Large numbers of “woodies” may be found in refuge wetlands, nesting in artificial nest boxes as well as in natural tree cavities. These beautiful “summer ducks” are banded during late summer in order to gather information about hatching success, survival, and harvest pressure.

Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge staff have been involved in an important songbird monitoring endeavor; the MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) program. During the summer breeding season, monitoring



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stations are set up within forested habitats where songbirds are trapped by means of a fine gauge “mist” net and banded with a small numbered leg band. Data such as age, sex, and condition are taken for each bird captured to determine their status, movement, and productivity. The results of these monitoring efforts, along with actual surveys, help detect population trends in many species of migratory songbirds, a great number of which are declining.

Enjoy Your Visit

Wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting, photography, boating, and canoeing are all popular uses of the refuge. Public use areas are open daily during daylight hours, except as modified by seasonal refuge regulations.

Fishing – About half of the refuge is water; primarily Kentucky Lake, and most of the refuge’s waters are open to fishing year-round. Some areas are closed seasonally to provide sanctuary for waterfowl and eagles. The heron rookery is closed to all entry. In early spring, Kentucky Lake is known for some of the best crappie fishing in the nation. Later in the season, bass and catfish provide sport for many. Fishing brochures detailing regulations are available at the refuge office.



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Hunting – Hunting is permitted for deer, squirrel, raccoon, and turkey. Along with regular hunting seasons, quota hunts are available for deer and raccoon, and are held by means of a drawing/permit system. A separate hunting regulation brochure is available from the refuge office.



Wildlife Observation/Photography – A photo/observation deck is located near the entrance to the Duck River “Bottoms” area. A variety of wildlife can be observed in this area, including waterfowl in the fall and winter, shorebirds and wading birds in spring and fall, and other wildlife throughout the year. An observation deck equipped with a mounted spotting scope is available for viewing a variety of wildlife at the V.L. Childs Overlook, located at the Big Sandy Unit, off of Swamp Creek Road. In many areas, you will find that your vehicle can be the best “blind”. Visitors are encouraged to bring binoculars, cameras, and field guides to more fully enjoy Tennessee’s wildlife.

Group Programs – Special environmental education programs are available for clubs and school groups by contacting the refuge office at least two weeks in advance. Environmental education is stressed, and teachers are encouraged to utilize the refuge for group study, with the refuge interpretive staff providing assistance when needed.

Refuge Regulations

Refuge boundary signs delineate refuge property behind the sign. “Area Closed” signs are erected to minimize disturbance to waterfowl or other wildlife, and for public safety.

Searching for and removal of objects of antiquity is prohibited.



Firearms are prohibited on the refuge except during authorized hunting seasons. Firearms must be unloaded and encased when traveling through the refuge.

Disturbing or feeding wildlife, and collecting plants is strictly prohibited.

Pets on a leash are permitted. Dogs under verbal control are allowed during refuge squirrel and raccoon hunts.

Camping is prohibited.

Open fires are prohibited.

ATV’s are not allowed.

Bicycling is permitted on established roads during normal public use hours.

Use of artificial light (including vehicle lights) to observe wildlife is prohibited.

Boats must be removed from the refuge after each day’s use.

Facilities accessible to the physically challenged are available.

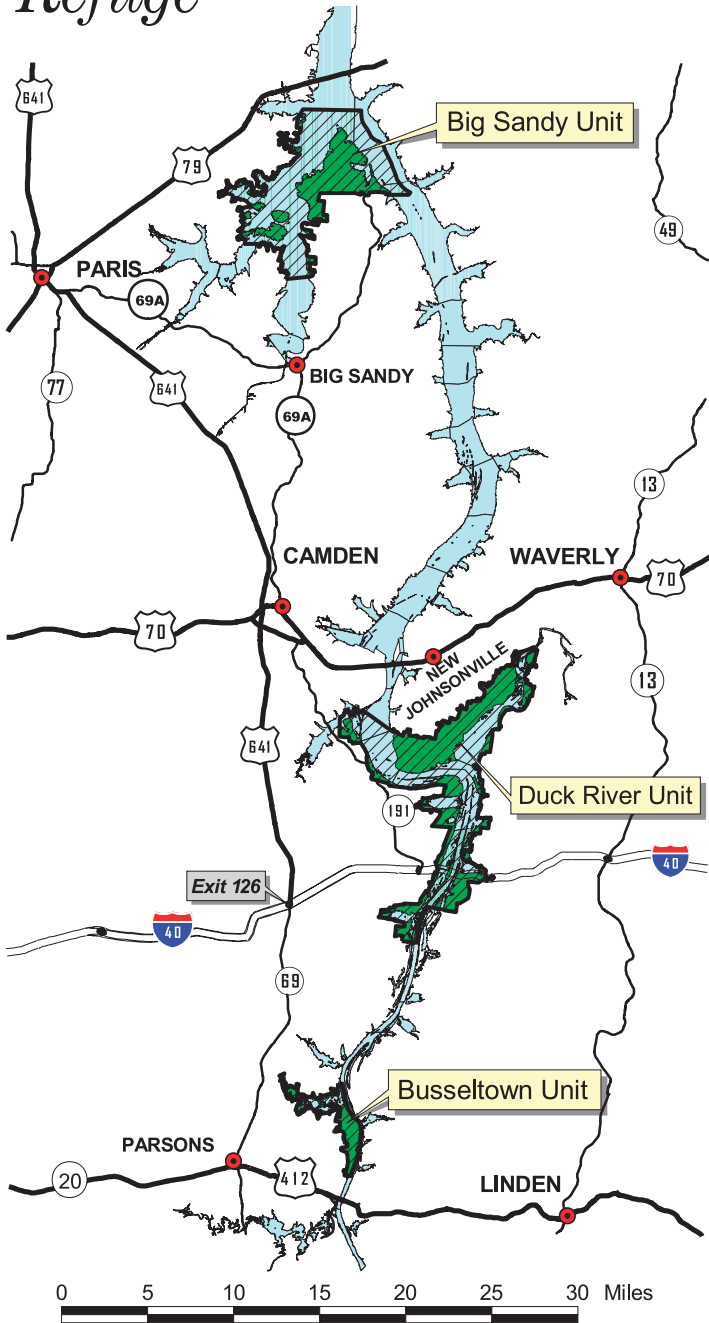
To Get to the Refuge

The refuge headquarters office is located in Paris, Tennessee at 3006 Dinkins Lane just off highway 79 N. The Duck River Unit, the largest of the three units, is located in Humphreys and Benton Counties at the junction of the Duck and Tennessee Rivers. The sub-headquarters of this unit is located 1 1/2 miles southeast of Hustburg, Tennessee. The Big Sandy Unit is located 12 miles north of the town of Big Sandy, and is at the junction of the Big Sandy and Tennessee Rivers. The Busselton Unit is located in Decatur County, along the western bank of the Tennessee River; the entrance to the unit being 5 miles northeast of Parsons, Tennessee.

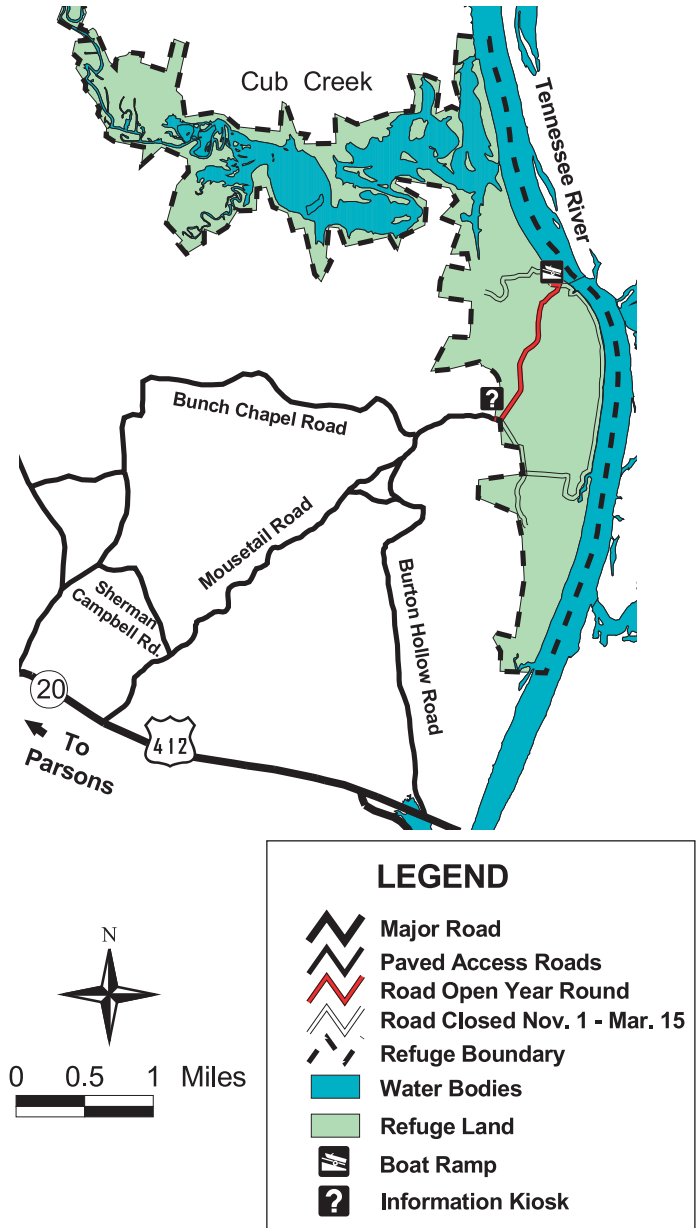


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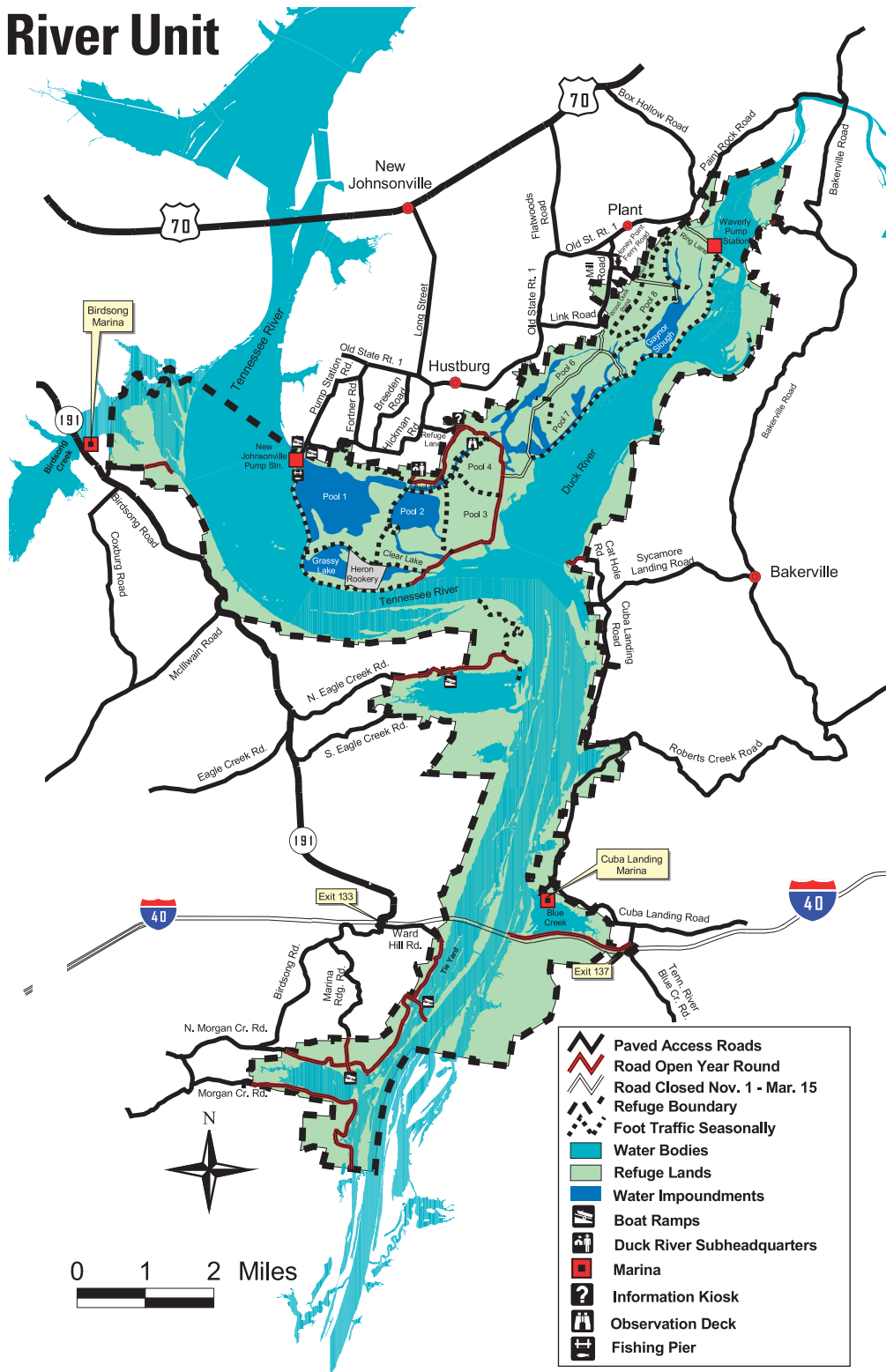
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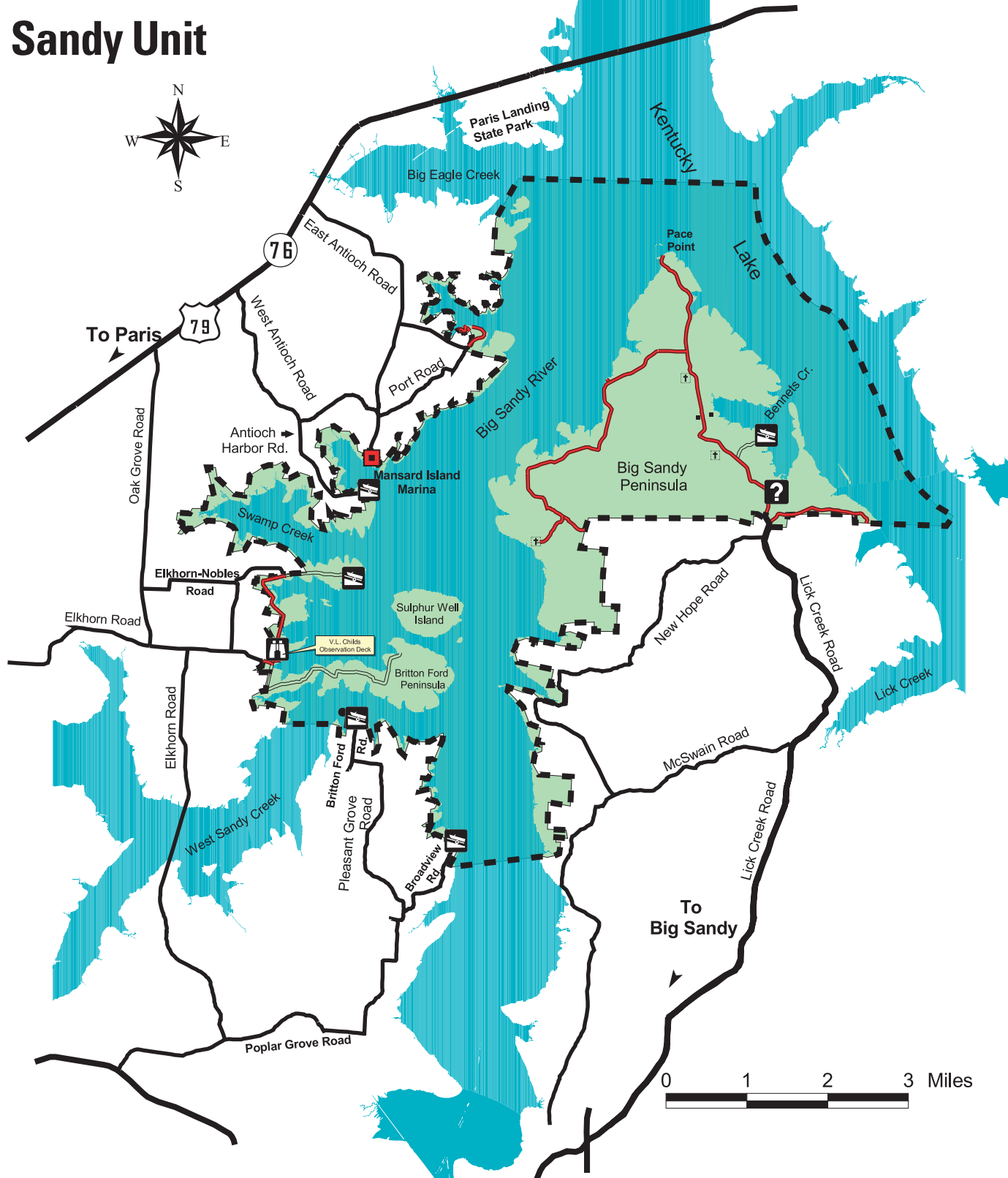
Busseltown Unit



Duck River Unit



Big Sandy Unit



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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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December 2002



CELEBRATING A
CENTURY
of CONSERVATION