

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Buenos Aires

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



Welcome
*Restoring a
sea of grass*

*"The grass was the country as the
water is the sea."*

Willa Cather

Imagine the Altar Valley in the nineteenth century when historical accounts described herds of pronghorn roving the vast, treeless grasslands. Aplomado falcons swooped down on rodents, and masked bobwhite quail calls filled the early morning summer air. Mexican wolves and grizzly bears roamed the grasslands, while black bear and an occasional jaguar crossed the valley between mountain ranges.

As settlements sprang up in the Altar Valley in the 1860s, the delicate balance of the ecosystem changed. Overgrazing left the ground bare, exposing it to torrential summer rains that eroded the soil. With the grass gone and natural fires suppressed, mesquite gained a foothold. The grassland could no longer support

*Baboquivari,
sacred mountain
to the Tohono
O'odham,
towers over the
valley floor.*

Photograph by
David L. Tubbs

masked bobwhite quail or aplomado falcons. Pronghorn, wolves, bear, and jaguar were hunted or trapped out. Lehmann's lovegrass, an African grass, was introduced in the 1970s to help stop erosion, but proved a poor substitute for the diverse native grasses it replaced. An ecosystem without diversity is a bleak landscape for many wild creatures

Today, staff at Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge are working to piece together the ecosystem by restoring habitat, bringing back key species, and protecting others still imperiled. At the refuge you can enjoy a landscape like few others—where sparrows flock in winter, pronghorn play again, and the valley is becoming the sea of grass that greeted early settlers.



Putting the Pieces Together Again

Preventing Extinction

Changes in the ecosystem brought the masked bobwhite quail close to extinction in this area. A priority objective of Buenos Aires NWR is to reestablish a breeding population of this critically endangered bird. When Buenos Aires Ranch went up for sale in 1985, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchased it to preserve habitat for masked bobwhite and other wildlife for future generations. Refuge biologists also work with ranchers in Mexico to restore the grasslands in Sonora, Mexico where the last wild birds are found.

Helping the Habitat

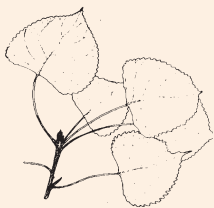
Like piecing together a puzzle, managers are restoring the native grassland. Controlled burning stimulates wildlife food plants and revitalizes the soil. Selective cutting clears the landscape by removing mesquite. Aerating or disking of the soil stimulates plant growth, and planting native bunchgrasses and quail food plants brings back masked bobwhite habitat. Constructing brush piles protects quail from temperature extremes and predators.



Masked bobwhite quail.

Photograph by Wayne Shifflett

Protecting Natural Diversity



Above, illustrations of three common tree species found on the Refuge are Fremont cottonwood, Goodding willow, and Arizona sycamore

Diversity is the keyword when it comes to safeguarding habitat at Buenos Aires NWR. The combination of grasslands, wetlands, cottonwood-lined streambeds and sycamore and live oak mountain canyons together preserve some of the Southwest's rarest habitats for eight threatened or endangered species and many other kinds of native wildlife

Since 1985, the refuge has picked up valuable wetland and riparian lands at Arivaca Creek, Arivaca Cienaga, and Brown Canyon. The depth and breadth of wildlife today ranges from a bird list of nearly 340 species to frequent sightings of pronghorn, mule deer, coyotes and javelina. In addition to the masked bobwhite quail, the refuge protects habitat for other threatened and endangered species like the Pima pineapple cactus, Chiricahua leopard frog, and the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl.



Mule deer are numerous in the grasslands and hilly uplands.

Photograph by Mike Pellegatti

A Sampling of Bird Life

American wigeons and other waterfowl frequent ponds at Arivaca Cienega during migration and in winter.

Photograph by
John Eriksson



The black-throated sparrow is a very handsome bird.

Photograph by
George Jameson



Scaled quail are residents of semidesert grassland. Dark edging on their feathers gives them a scaly appearance.

Photograph by
John Eriksson



At Arivaca Cienega the sora is a secretive rail more often heard than seen.

Photograph by
John Eriksson



A Sampling of Wildlife



Badgers are powerful diggers and can tunnel after rodents with amazing speed.

Photograph by
John Eriksson



Coatis are members of the raccoon family. They forage by day for fruit, insects, and small mammals.

Photograph by
John Eriksson



The javelina, or collared peccary, is found in the Southwest and in Central and South America.

Photograph by
Mike Pellegatti



Yipping choruses of coyotes fill the night air.

Photograph by
Mike Pellegatti

Wildlife Watching Tips

Dawn and dusk are the best times to see wildlife. In warmer climates, little is moving on hot summer afternoons or on windy days.

Observe from the sidelines. Leave “abandoned” young animals alone. A parent is probably close by waiting for you to leave. Don’t offer snacks; your lunch could disrupt wild digestive systems.

Cars make good observation blinds. Drive slowly, stopping to scan places where wildlife might hide.

Use binoculars or a long lens for a closer look.



Try sitting quietly in one good location. Let wildlife get used to your presence. Many animals that have hidden will reappear once they think you are gone. Often you will hear more than you will see.

Teach children quiet observation. Other wildlife watchers will appreciate your consideration.

Look for animal signs. Tracks, scat, feathers, and nests left behind often tell interesting stories.

When is the Best Time to Visit?

Every day . . .



The male vermilion flycatcher is the most colorful flycatcher in North America.

Photograph by
John Eriksson

January: Northern harriers fly in from the north, adding to the number of these resident raptors. Pintails, gadwalls, American wigeons, and other waterfowl gather at the Cienega and other seasonal wetlands. Loggerhead shrikes are plentiful on the grasslands.

February: Great horned owls start courting and nesting. Listen for their hooting near the visitor center. First signs of spring include Mexican elderberries leafing out at Arivaca Creek, meadowlarks singing at the Cienega, and butterflies on mountain tops like El Cerro on Mustang Trail. A few hummingbirds arrive at the visitor center feeders.

March: Female vermilion flycatchers join males at the Cienega. Listen for night calls of common poorwills. Clouds of pink fairy duster wildflowers cover the hills west of Arivaca. At the end of the month, orioles appear at headquarters, gray hawks show up at the Cienega, and zone-tailed hawks start nesting in Brown Canyon.

April: Migrating warblers rest at Arivaca Cienega and the creek. Shorebirds and wading birds visit wetlands near the headquarters. Rattlesnakes are active. Endangered Kearney bluestar blooms in Brown Canyon early in the month. Colorful mesquite bugs with red and black striped legs can be seen sucking sap from twigs. Hummingbirds sip nectar from blooming ocotillo.

May: Pronghorn fawns, born in April and May, frolic on the grasslands. Summer and western tanagers, yellow-breasted chats, and blue grosbeaks set up housekeeping at Arivaca Creek. Hepatic tanagers and sulphur-bellied flycatchers return to Brown Canyon.



Pronghorns disappeared from southern Arizona in the early 1900's. Transplants have reintroduced them to the refuge.

Photograph by
Mike Pellegatti

June: Pronghorn are drawn to water near headquarters during this dry season. Little blue butterflies lap moisture at any wet piece of mud. Prescribed burns attract Swainson's hawks to prey on grasshoppers.

July: Afternoon thunderstorms, lightning displays, and flooding add summer drama, July through August. Spadefoot toads chorus loudly after the first heavy rains. Masked bobwhites call at dawn as their nesting cycle begins.

August: Hummingbird wars are waging at the feeders in Brown Canyon and the visitor center. Gila monsters and coachwhips (big pink snakes) are seen on roads. Calatrops (large orange flowers) blanket burned areas. The grasslands form a lush green carpet.



*Above, acorn woodpecker.
Below, barn owl.*

Photographs by
John Eriksson

September: Migration brings hawks overhead and waders and shorebirds to wet areas. Obvious in late summer are the horse lubbers, huge black grasshoppers with green-veined wings.

October: Fall sunflowers brighten the landscape. Waterfowl start arriving.

November: Native grasses display a variety of seed heads along Pronghorn Drive. Migrating burrowing owls may be seen standing on kangaroo rat mounds or on refuge roads.



December: Coatis are sometimes seen in large groups at Arivaca Creek and Brown Canyon. White-crowned sparrows join a host of other grassland sparrows for the winter.

Things to do at the Refuge

Hours

Headquarters Office Hours:

7:30 am–4:00 pm

Monday through Friday

Visitor Center:

7:30 am–4:00 pm daily

Closed weekends, June–August

Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas,
and New Year's Day

Buenos Aires NWR offers excellent wildlife viewing from refuge roads and on nature trails. Maps showing open roads are available online, at the visitor center, in this brochure, and in the public use and hunting pamphlets. Driving off designated roads or in washes is not allowed. Visitors are asked to close gates behind them.

Trails near Arivaca are open sunrise to sunset. Brown Canyon is open by guided tour only.



The Arivaca Cienega boardwalk trail meanders through hackberry groves and a seasonal marsh.

Photograph by Jim Lauer

To Tucson

286

Brown Canyon
(open by guided tour only)

Jaque Td.
Arch Td.

Arivaca Road

286

Aguirre Lake

Entrance Rd.

Pronghorn

Mormon Lake

Pronghorn

Drive

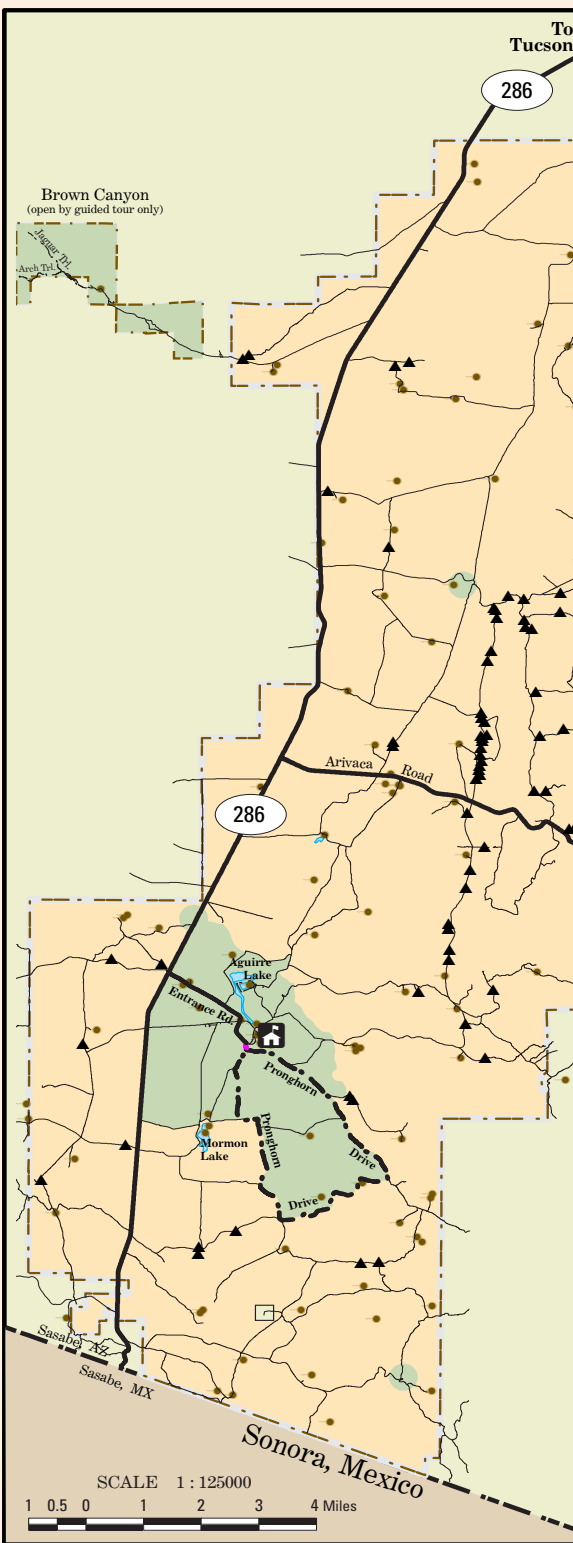
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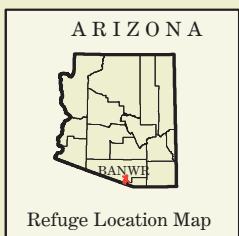
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Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge



Legend	
	BA NWR
	Watchable Wildlife Area (Closed to Hunting)
	Non-refuge Land
	Refuge HQ
	Campsites
	Tanks
	Refuge Boundary
	Major Roads
	Pronghorn Drive
	Dirt Roads
	Trails



*Nature Trails
Near Arivaca*



Arivaca Cienega Trail: Seven springs form this rare desert wetland. A boardwalk gives visitors the chance to glimpse vermilion flycatchers, gray hawks and perhaps the black-bellied whistling duck.

Location: 1/4 mile east of Arivaca. Restrooms are at the parking lot.

Length: 1–1/4 miles.
(1/2 mile to Willow Pond).

Arivaca Creek Trail: Giant cottonwoods and lush vegetation attract songbirds, woodpeckers, owls, and coatis to the stream's banks. A short trail leads to the stream's edge near the 1870s-era home of Eva Wilbur-Cruce, who wrote about growing up here in *A Beautiful Cruel Country*.

Location: 2 miles west of Arivaca.

Length: 1–1/4-mile loop.

Mustang Trail: Departing 1/4 mile downstream from the Arivaca Creek Trailhead, the trail crosses the creek and ascends the hillside— Hikers should wear sturdy shoes, bring water, and be in good condition for steep sections at the top.

Location: 2 miles west of Arivaca.

Length: 5 miles round trip.

*Shady trails at
Arivaca Creek
provide good
birding in spring
and summer.*

Photograph by
Thea Ulen.



Headquarters and Visitor Center



Stop in the visitor center to learn more about the refuge habitats and wildlife in a series of indoor exhibits. Outside, watch the rare masked bobwhite in a viewing pen. A 1/2-mile Ranch Loop Trail interprets ranch history. The entry road features a small pond where waterfowl or shorebirds touch down during migration, and also the chance to see mule deer, especially in morning or late afternoon. Pronghorn also pass through here, as well as on Pronghorn Drive.

Location: Mile 7.5, Highway 286.

Facilities: Restrooms from sunrise to sunset. Exhibits. Brochures.

Pronghorn Drive



Pronghorn Drive's unobstructed grassland views are accessible to 2-wheel drive vehicles and RVs.

Location: Follow signs off the entry road just before reaching headquarters.

Length: 10-mile loop.

Aguirre Lake (seasonal)



Ranch founder Pedro Aguirre diverted a wash in the 1880s to water his fields and stock. Migrating waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds use the seasonal lake today. An interpretive trail encircles the site.

Location: 1 mile north of headquarters.

Length: 1 mile



In the grasslands, look for the distinctive black, white and gray plumage of the loggerhead shrike.

Photograph by
George Jameson

Taking to the Back Country

Visitors looking for more of a challenge might explore some of the 200 miles of dirt roads open to vehicles, horses, and mountain bikes. All motor vehicles must be registered and insured for highway use and be driven by licensed drivers. Be prepared with maps, spare tire, and water for the more remote roads that are not well maintained. Not all roads are passable without high clearance vehicles, and many become impassable after rains. Driving off designated roads or in washes is prohibited.

Camping



Primitive campsites along the dirt roads are each marked with a numbered symbol. Camping stays are limited to 14 days within a 30-day period. Keep campsites small to reduce damage to the area. Pack out all trash; do not bury it. All human waste must be buried immediately.

Fires are permitted only in fire rings at the numbered campsites. Visitors may collect firewood for refuge campfires using only wood that is dead **and** down. Campfires may be prohibited when fire danger exists. Fuel burning (propane) stoves may be used when campfire restrictions are in place.

Camping on the refuge provides scenic views and star-filled night skies.

FWS Photograph



Horseback Riding



Horseback riders are restricted to refuge roads. Groups with four or more horses must possess and carry a refuge permit, provide their own water and weed-free feed, and clean their campsites of horse manure.

Brown Canyon

This sycamore and live oak mountain canyon is a birdwatcher's mecca. The upper trail leads to a natural rock arch. Brown Canyon is open by guided tour only. Call for a schedule or see www.friendsofbanwr.org.

Brown Canyon Road passes through three different land ownerships. Read the signs as you travel west to make sure you don't trespass. To arrive at the state parking lot, you will need a State Land Trust Permit, or be actively hunting with a valid license, and will need to sign in as you travel off U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service property.

Environmental Education Center



Weekend workshops offer the chance to delve into nature topics such as birding, geology, astronomy, photography, plant identification, and more. Call for a schedule. Groups interested in renting the Center for environmental education activities should call 520/823-4251 x116.



The ringtail, a member of the raccoon family, is a nocturnal mammal found in Brown Canyon.

Photograph by Mike Pellegatti

Hunting at the Refuge



Refuge hunting activities are regulated by both the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. See the Refuge hunt brochure for a summary of federal regulations concerning hunting on Buenos Aires NWR.



Photograph by George Andrejko

Arizona state regulations can be found at www.azgfd.com. The refuge makes up about half of units 36A and 36B and a small portion of 36C. All hunters must possess a valid state hunting permit and applicable big game, waterfowl, and archery tags and/or stamps. Hunting is permitted only during daylight hours. *Quail hunting is not permitted.*

No Hunt Zones

Hunting is allowed on approximately 90 percent of the refuge. Hunting is not permitted in high public use areas and near residences. These no hunt zones are identified on the map and are posted on the ground. Hunting is not permitted on refuge lands in Brown Canyon. Some Brown Canyon boundaries are not posted.



Photograph by Steve Hillebrand, FWS

Maps

Obtain maps prior to your visit and plan ahead. U.S. Geological Survey maps covering refuge areas include Las Guijas, Wilbur Canyon, Fresno Wash, Presumido Peak, and Cumero Mountain.



View into Brown Canyon where no hunting is permitted on Refuge lands.
Photograph by Steve Hillebrand, FWS

**For Your Safety:
Plan Ahead and
be Prepared**

Watch for rattlesnakes while walking along trails and cross country.

Prepare for hot summer days. Bring plenty of water and wear a hat and sunscreen.

Use extreme caution with fire. Limit campfires to fire rings at numbered campsites.

Never enter a flooded wash. Dry washes can become fast-moving rivers after rains, and dirt roads become impassable. Expect late afternoon storms in July and August.

Africanized bees are present in southern Arizona. Stay away from active bees.

Backcountry bikers and drivers should carry spare equipment and be prepared to make their own emergency repairs.

All accidents involving injury to wildlife or the public or damage to property must be reported to a refuge official within 24 hours of an incident.



Gila monsters and other reptiles become active after the weather warms. FWS photograph.

**Help Protect
the Refuge**
Collecting

Bring a camera to take home memories. Collecting rocks, plants, insects, and historic or prehistoric objects is not permitted. Prospecting and metal detectors are not allowed.

Vehicle Access



All vehicles (including all-terrain vehicles) must be licensed and insured for highway use. Off-road travel is prohibited, including driving or riding in washes. Speed limit on refuge roads is 25 mph unless otherwise posted. Roads may be impassable after rains. Trails are open sunrise to sunset. Refuge property in Brown Canyon is open by guided tour only. Only pedestrian traffic is permitted on hiking and nature trails.

Pets

Pets must be leashed where signs indicate, and elsewhere they must be under the owner's control. Pets are not permitted in Brown Canyon.

Other Activities

Special Use Permits are required for commercial tour groups, research activities, special events, commercial photography or filming, or any activity not specifically permitted in this brochure.



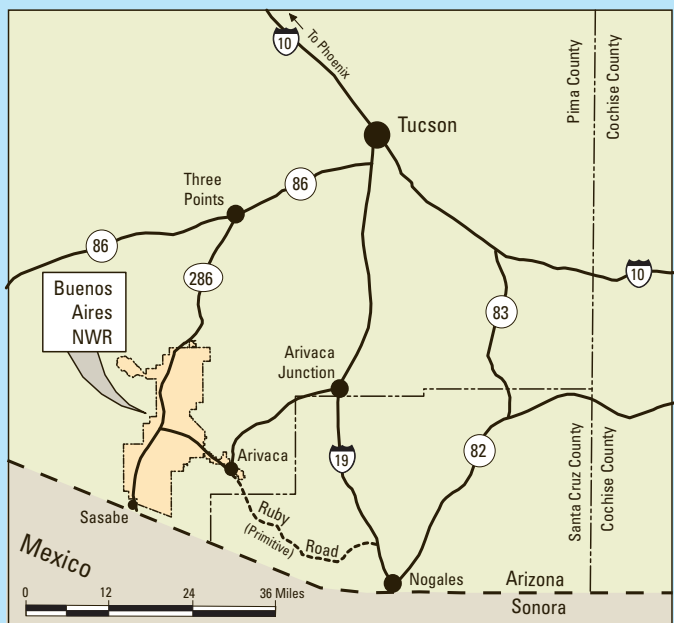
Spring wildflower display at Buenos Aires NWR.
Photograph by Steve Hillebrand

Directions to Refuge Headquarters/Visitor Center

Take Highway 86 (Ajo Way) west from Tucson to Three Points. Turn south on Highway 286. Proceed south for 37 miles to milepost 7.5. Turn east and follow signs to Refuge Headquarters/Visitor Center.

Directions to Trailheads near Arivaca

Take I-19 south from Tucson to the Amado/Arivaca exit. Exit west, turn right at the "T", and then left at the Cow Palace onto Arivaca Road. Proceed west 23 miles to Arivaca. Trails are located east and west of town.



Refuge Headquarters/Visitor Center is located approximately 55 miles southwest of Tucson

Meeting Your Needs



The Headquarters/Visitor Center at refuge headquarters offers rest rooms, drinking water, picnic tables, exhibits, maps, and brochures (also at trailheads).

Picnicking



Picnic tables also are available at the Cienega trailhead (restrooms too), Aguirre Lake, or trailheads near Arivaca. Please help pick up litter.



Primitive camping is permitted at designated refuge campsites. RV sites are located near Amado.

Nearby Services



Lodging is available at guest ranches in Sasabe and Amado. Hotel accommodations are in Green Valley and Tucson.



Arivaca has services including a cafe, groceries, and gas.

Would You Like to Help?

Friends of Buenos Aires

The Friends of Buenos Aires is a nonprofit group established to assist the refuge through conservation, research, and education. Their donated time and fund raising will help the refuge achieve its goals in future years. For information, membership, or donations, see www.friendsofbanwr.org or contact:

Friends of Buenos Aires Refuge
P.O. Box 577
Arivaca, AZ 85601

Refuge Volunteers

Volunteers assist biologists, staff the visitor center, guide tours, present public programs, and maintain trails and facilities. For more information or an application, call 520/823-4251 x116.

Volunteers help with school field trips at Arivaca Cienega. This may include acting as the Blue Goose, symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Photograph by Robert Farrell.



Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 109
Sasabe, Arizona 85633
520/823-4251
520/823-4247 Fax

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/>

For Refuge Information
1 800/344-WILD

Arizona State
Relay System
1 800/367-8939

Pronghorn Bucks
Photograph © Mike
Pellegatti

October 2009

