

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Cross Creeks

*National Wildlife  
Refuge*





*Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 555 refuges within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's refuge system that stretches from the Arctic Ocean to the subtropical waters of the Caribbean. The 8,862 acres of land managed as Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge are a part of this magnificent system managed especially for wildlife and its habitat as well as for people to enjoy. Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge is located four miles east of Dover, in Stewart County, Tennessee, and is approximately 75 miles northwest of Nashville, Tennessee.*

*Front cover:  
blue-winged  
teal by USFWS/  
Clayton Ferrell*

## **Introduction**

Established on November 9, 1962, Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge lies within the floodplain of the Cumberland River which is now Lake Barkley. When Lake Barkley was constructed the new reservoir flooded a majority of the now closed Kentucky Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge which had been established in 1938. Cross Creeks mission was to replace the loss of waterfowl habitat on both the Kentucky Woodlands Refuge as well as private lands along the river when Lake Barkley was impounded.

The name Cross Creeks originates from the intersection of North Cross Creek and South Cross Creek on the refuge at its midpoint. The refuge



*Waterfowl by USFWS/Richard Hines*

provides needed feeding and resting habitat for migrating waterfowl in the Tennessee-Kentucky portion of the Mississippi flyway.

The refuge's twelve mile long rich bottomlands along the Cumberland River are surrounded by the rolling hills and high rocky bluffs of Tennessee's Western Highland Rim Physiographic Region. Hardwood forests comprised of oak, hickory, sugar maple and ash make up one-third of its acreage with the remaining acres comprised of impounded water, wetlands, fields, and farmland.

## A Look into the Past

Cross Creeks and the surrounding area in Stewart County, Tennessee is rich in history. Archaeological investigations indicate that people inhabited the area 8,000 years ago during the Paleo-Indian/Early Archaic period. These Native Americans who were hunters and gatherers lived along the Cumberland River which they called the “Warioto”.



*Bellwood furnace by USFWS/  
Richard Hines.*

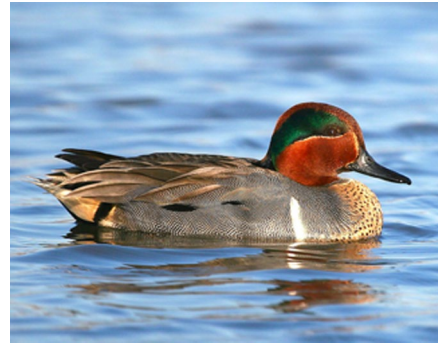
During the 1850's, much of the nation's iron industry was centered in Tennessee and up until 1862; two charcoal iron furnaces were operating on lands that are now within the Refuge. These were the Bellwood and the Rolling Mill Furnaces. Important resources needed in the iron smelting process included limestone that was used as a cleaning agent

while the local forest provided timber that was converted into charcoal for melting ore. These resources along with the numerous iron ore deposits made Stewart County one of the top producers of “pig iron” in the state. The only reminder of this industry is a portion of the massive furnace stack at Bellwood. Both it and the Rolling Mill Furnace were destroyed by Union Naval gun boats moving up the Cumberland River following the fall of Fort Donelson in 1862. The Bellwood Furnace is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Another interesting historical structure on the refuge is the South Cross Creek Bridge. Constructed in 1901 the “Pratt Truss” Bridge is one of the older metal truss bridges remaining not only in the state of Tennessee but in the U.S. This bridge was part of the original highway leading from Dover to Cumberland City.

## Migratory Birds

Cross Creeks provides wintering habitat and protection for large numbers of waterfowl including puddle ducks such as mallard, gadwall, wigeon, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, wood duck, black duck, shoveler, and pintail. The deeper waters of South Cross and Elk Reservoirs provide habitat for diving ducks that include canvasback, ringneck, scaup, ruddy, common merganser, hooded merganser, redhead, bufflehead, and an occasional goldeneye.

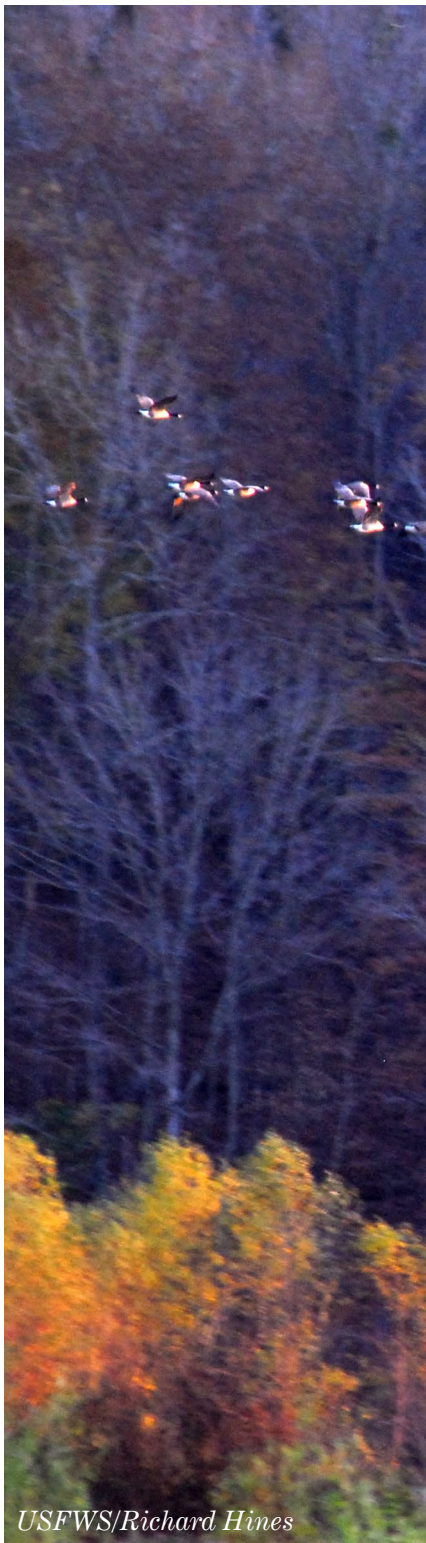


*Green-winged teal by Clayton Ferrell*

## During the Peak

In January duck populations will average 35,000 birds per day and during extremely cold weather these numbers may exceed 90,000 birds, with mallards comprising the highest percentage,

followed by gadwall and ringneck ducks. Cross Creeks has always been an important wintering location for the American black duck and management efforts for this species receives high priority. Historically the refuge has held up to 10% of the total black duck population wintering in the Mississippi flyway.



Canada geese are also important on Cross Creeks Refuge. Management efforts for these birds continue and during extremely severe winter weather, large numbers of Canada geese may reach 15,000 birds. A majority of these birds make up a portion of the Southern James Bay Population whose range extends from the southern coast of James Bay in Canada southward through the eastern portion of the Mississippi Flyway.

In addition to the thousands of migrating and wintering ducks and geese that visit each year, the refuge also serves as a nesting area for wood ducks and a small number of resident Canada geese.

With a variety of habitat, over 251 species of birds have been observed on the refuge. Each spring large numbers of neotropical migratory songbirds either use the refuge as

*USFWS/Richard Hines*



*Prothonotary warbler by USFWS/Richard Hines*

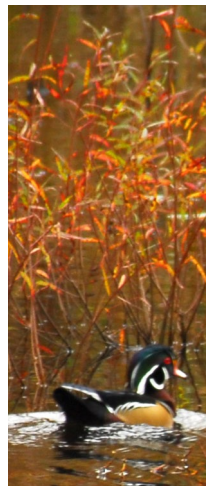
a stopover on their journey to and from wintering areas in central and south America or nest on the refuge during the summer months. Some of these species include prothonotary warblers, summer tanager, common yellow throat, indigo buntings and the Acadian flycatcher. The larger tracts of woodland along South Cross Reservoir are excellent areas to see many of these forest dwelling species. Shorebirds can also be seen moving through the area as they forage for small insect larvae in the low water or on mudflats in refuge impoundments during the early spring and late summer migrations.

### **Endangered/Threatened Wildlife**

Although no longer endangered, the bald eagle remains a favorite for visitors at Cross Creeks. One of Cross Creeks claim to fame happened in 1983 when the first documented and successful bald eagle nest occurred not only in Stewart County but in Tennessee. Since 1983 bald eagles can be seen nesting along numerous stretches of the Cumberland River and the refuge has had up to three active nests per year not to mention other nests on nearby private lands.

### **Other Wildlife**

The diversity of habitats including upland deciduous woodlands, river bottoms, creeks, fields, and shrub enables a host of wildlife species to make Cross Creeks their home. A variety of wading birds, shorebirds, raptors, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and insects may be seen throughout the year. Wild turkeys, great blue herons, and mourning doves are common. White-tailed deer, rabbits, raccoons, opossums, gray and fox squirrels, mink, beaver, muskrat, skunk, groundhogs, and coyote live on the refuge. The illusive bobcat as well as gray and red fox can be seen on occasion.



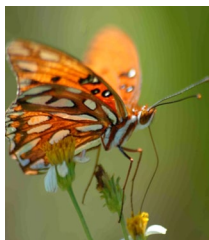
*Wood duck by USFWS/Richard Hines*



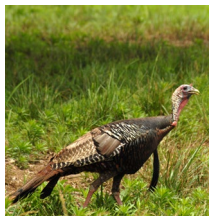
*Amber pennett  
by USFWS/  
Richard Hines*



*Barrred owl by  
USFWS/Richard  
Hines*



*Gulf fritillary by  
USFWS/Richard  
Hines*



*Wild turkey by  
USFWS/Richard  
Hines*

### Managing the Habitat

In order to provide food and resting areas for migrating waterfowl and other wildlife the staff at Cross Creeks work throughout the year manipulating low areas in the impoundments to grow a wide range of native plants using a method called “moist soil management”. This technique is a highly successful method of producing nutritious waterfowl food and plants such as smartweed, millet, sprangletop, and panic grasses provide nutritious waterfowl foods.

Additional foods are grown under cooperative farming agreements that allow farmers to plant approximately 1,200 acres of crops each year that include corn, soybeans, millet, and milo. Each year the refuge receives a portion of the crop which is left unharvested on the fields for wildlife consumption during the winter months.

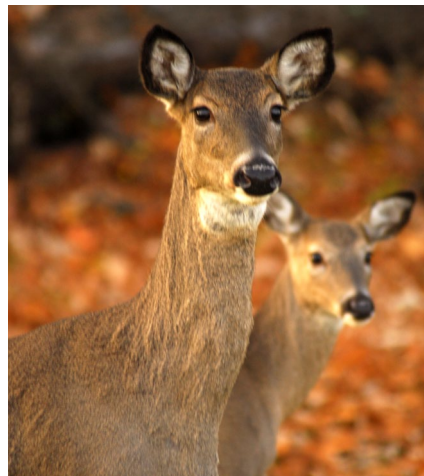
In addition, water levels in the refuge reservoirs and impoundments are controlled to stimulate the growth of natural plant species and an abundance of insects, crustaceans, and mollusks, all of which are highly favored food of migratory waterfowl. Since a substantial portion of the diet of Canada geese depends on green browse refuge staff plant large sections of refuge fields in winter wheat each fall.

### Volunteer Program

The refuge offers individuals or groups an opportunity to volunteer their time and talents to various tasks on the refuge. Some of the jobs which volunteers may be assigned include assisting with wildlife surveys, maintenance projects, and research studies, conducting tours and environmental education programs or assisting with the refuge recycling program. The volunteer program is a way for people to become involved



*Raccoon by USFWS/Richard Hines*



*White-tailed doe and fawn by  
USFWS/Richard Hines*

with the refuge as well as provide a worthwhile contribution to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### Enjoy Your Visit [Headquarters/ Visitor Center](#)

The visitor center is located four miles east of Dover, Tennessee off Highway 49. The center is open 7 am to 3:30 pm, Monday through Friday. The entire refuge is open to the public for daylight use from March 16 through November 14. During the remainder of the year, all Refuge roads are closed to the public to minimize disturbance to wintering

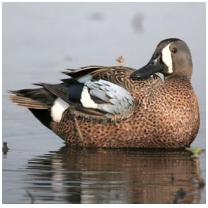
waterfowl. Arrangements for limited group tours or environmental education programs may be made by calling the refuge office.

### [Wildlife Observation/Photography](#)

A 10-mile long gravel road following the Cumberland River on the south side of the refuge provides vehicle access for viewing of wildlife from March 16 - November 14. The one-mile hiking trail, Woodpecker Trail, is open for wildlife observation during this time and there is a photo blind. Refuge species lists are available at the office or visitor center.

### [Fishing](#)

Fishing opportunities can be found on South Cross and Elk reservoirs and along the many miles of shoreline on



*Blue-winged teal by Clayton Ferrell*

Lake Barkley. Popular species include bluegill, crappie, largemouth bass, catfish, and white bass. All fishing is in accordance with (TWRA) Lake Barkley regulations. Contact the refuge for additional information.

### *Hunting*

Hunting is allowed at Cross Creeks with opportunities to hunt squirrels, white-tailed deer or turkey. All hunting occurs in the fall except the spring turkey season. The refuge also provides limited hunting for Canada geese during an early season. Deer hunters may hunt using archery equipment and the refuge hosts two quota gun deer hunts. See refuge hunting brochures for specific information and regulations.

### *Boating*

Boating is allowed year round in Lake Barkley/Cumberland River waters and areas accessible directly from Lake Barkley. Boating is allowed from March 16 - November 15 in the refuge pools and reservoirs.

Additional information can be found in the refuge fishing regulations brochure available at the refuge office. To protect the shoreline, all refuge impoundments are slow/no wake zones.

### *Vehicles*

Automobiles are allowed only on designated roads.



*Waterfowl by USFWS/Richard Hines*

## **Other Refuge Regulations**

- Refuge boundary signs delineate refuge property which is behind the sign. “Area Closed” signs are erected to minimize disturbance to waterfowl or other wildlife or for public safety.
- Firearms and archery equipment are prohibited except during designated hunts.
- Disturbing, feeding or collecting wildlife or plants is strictly prohibited.
- Pets on a leash are permitted.
- Camping is prohibited.
- Open fires are prohibited.
- Surface collecting or digging for archaeological historical and/or Native American artifacts is prohibited.
- ATV’s, UTV’s, and Golf carts are not allowed on any refuge roads or lands.
- Bicycling is permitted on established roads during open periods.
- Horseback riding is allowed on refuge roads open to vehicle traffic.
- Facilities accessible to the physically challenged are available.



*Law enforcement agent checking deer hunter by USFWS/Richard*



*Eastern box turtle by Craig Pelke*



*Youth catching carp by USFWS/Richard Hines*

# U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

## Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge

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