



# National Wildlife Refuge System

## *Recreation*

For boundless opportunities to discover nature in all its splendor, national wildlife refuges are unsurpassed. From all parts of the globe, more than 47 million visitors flock to these natural treasure troves each year.

The National Wildlife Refuge System's extensive trails, auto tour routes, boardwalks, observation decks, hunting and photography blinds, fishing piers and boat launches offer great opportunities to learn and have fun.

### Hunting and Fishing

Hunters are welcome on more than 360 units of the Refuge System, while anglers can fish more than 300 Refuge System units. These sports enthusiasts first sounded the alarm about the dangers facing fish and wildlife, ultimately forming some conservation organizations that helped pass legislation to protect wildlife and establish many national wildlife refuges.

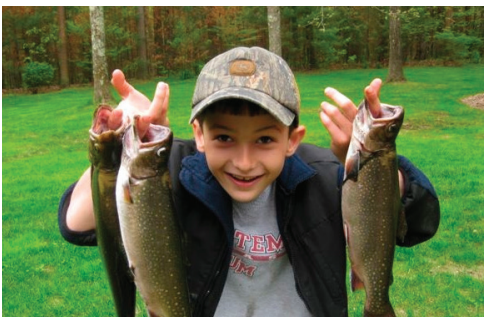


Photo: USFWS

The online *Guide to Hunting on National Wildlife Refuges* (<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/hunting/>) zeroes in on the perfect hunt by species (deer, big game, exotics, waterfowl, turkey, upland or migratory birds, small game), state or specialty (universally accessible or designed for youth). The *Guide to Fishing on National Wildlife Refuges* (<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/fishingguide/>) describes every type of fishing opportunity, from inconnu and

grayling in remote Alaska to snook hovering by mangroves in Florida. The guides also include information on state licenses and the most up-to-date refuge-specific hunting and sport fishing regulations.

### Trails and Auto Routes

Refuges welcome visitors on foot or wheel. Many trails on refuges are nationally designated for their scenery, history or recreational value. Find trails by state or level of difficulty at [www.fws.gov/refuges](http://www.fws.gov/refuges) under Visitors and Trails. Bring a smartphone to J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Florida to link to videos while you are walking the iNature trail or listening to cellphone messages along the auto tour at Upper Mississippi National Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

### Wildlife Observation and Photography

Birdwatchers, wildlife observers and photographers are awed by unbelievable congregations of birds on refuges, numbering in the tens of thousands during peak migration, as well as opportunities to view single dragonflies, nesting plovers and bald eagles, manatees and herds of caribou, or the exotic mating rituals of grebes or prairie chickens. Nature trails, observation decks and photo blinds provide superb vantage points for some of the best wildlife viewing opportunities in the world.

Special events like the Festival of the Cranes at Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico celebrate the best moments to view particular species in all their magnificence. Herds of bison still graze the grasslands at



Photo: USFWS/David Smith



National Bison Range in Montana, Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska and the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma. The Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge in Florida is the sea turtle capital of the western hemisphere. Giant brown bears congregate each summer at Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska when the sockeye salmon are spawning.

### **Environmental Education and Interpretation**

National wildlife refuges offer a full menu of educational activities for school and community groups, families and individuals (See the Special Events calendar under Visitors at [www.fws.gov/refuges](http://www.fws.gov/refuges).) Many refuges have visitor centers with interactive exhibits. Some lend binoculars or backpacks filled with guides and tools to enhance a refuge visit. Others offer cultural and historical sites, often with special programming, like the Chesser Island Homestead Open House at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia or the former African-American maroon communities at Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia.

### **Water Sports**

Whether you navigate on your own or take a guided trip, bring your own boat or rent one, many refuges make wonderful paddling destinations. The Refuge System boasts some 1,000 miles of marked water trails, from the calm waters of Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana to the strenuous 80-mile water route through Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

### **Wilderness**

Wilderness visitors may hunt, fish, and observe and photograph wildlife, when these activities are compatible with the refuge's primary mission of wildlife conservation. Many other types of compatible recreational uses, such as cross-country skiing, canoeing, kayaking, and hiking may also be enjoyed in some wilderness areas. There are 75 wilderness areas on 63 units of the Refuge System in 26 states.

Plan to play at a national wildlife refuge – find one near your home or travel destination at [fws.gov/refuges](http://www.fws.gov/refuges).



Photo: USFWS

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges>

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