

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Welcome to Wilderness

*In the National
Wildlife Refuge System*



Escape from a hectic, noisy world and find solitude in the Selawik Wilderness in Alaska.

PHOTO: BRIAN ANDERSON

Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed...

Wallace Stegner, *American historian, novelist, and environmentalist*



Experience Wilderness in the National Wildlife Refuge System

Wilderness areas are wild, roadless, undeveloped places where you can see wildlife in its natural habitat.

Wilderness is a place for primitive and unconfined recreation. It is a place of solitude and of peace and quiet.

Wilderness is a place where children can connect with nature and learn about the intricate web of life. It is a place where families can create memories with challenging adventures in remote forests, or through more gentle pursuits such as wildlife photography and observation in coastal wetlands.

You can find about 20 million acres of designated wilderness in 63 national wildlife refuges. These lands contribute valuable wetlands, coastal islands, and deserts to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

National wildlife refuges allow visitors to explore wilderness without motor vehicles, motorized equipment, or mechanical transport such as bicycles. Some refuges may limit public use to protect wildlife and its habitat.



AARON DREW

The Chupadera Wilderness in New Mexico is home to ornate box turtles.

Enjoy wildlife photography along a canoe trail in the Okefenokee Wilderness in Georgia.



SALLY GENTRY

NICK KONTONICOLAS



Encounter diverse wildlife, like this young piping plover (a threatened species), in the Brigantine Wilderness in New Jersey.

RAY PATERRA



Management-ignited fires in Cape Romain Wilderness in South Carolina help restore the natural habitat.

The National Wilderness Preservation System

The first European explorers encountered an American continent that presented an almost unbroken wilderness. Within 500 years, it was nearly gone. The drive to conserve remnants of our wilderness legacy stirred the nation to pass the Wilderness Act of 1964, creating the National Wilderness Preservation System. This Wilderness System protects more than 107 million acres.

Only Congress can designate wilderness, but every year local citizens and national conservation groups successfully recommend many additional areas to Congress for designation.

Wilderness Stewardship

In wilderness, the forces of nature are unrestrained by man. But protection does not ensure sanctuary from external threats. In some wilderness, the Refuge System tries to restore natural conditions to benefit wildlife. Prescribed fire and endangered species re-introduction are important tools for restoration. Destruction and fragmentation of wildlife habitat and natural areas due to development, non-native plant and animal species, and global climate change, all threaten the Wilderness System.

Together we can work to preserve our wilderness legacy: natural places of spiritual revitalization that will preserve wildlife, clean air, and clean water forever. We must “secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.” (Wilderness Act of 1964)

Least terns frequent the Brigantine Wilderness in New Jersey during the summer.

NICK KONTONICOLAS



Alligators control their temperature by mouth-gaping in the Okefenokee Wilderness in Georgia.

GRACE GOODCH



DONNA DEWHURS

Moose are common residents in Alaska wilderness and the Red Rock Lakes Wilderness in Montana.



RYAN HAGERTY

Pigments from a diet of small aquatic life give roseate spoonbills in the Ding Darling Wilderness in Florida their striking color.

The Oregon Island Wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for marine and wildlife observation.

DAWN GRAFE



JOHN MAGERA



Discover the secrets of an inviting trail in the Crab Orchard Wilderness in Illinois.

Paddle the Monopoly Marsh of the Mingo Wilderness in Missouri.



VERGIL HARP



Saguaros in the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness in Arizona provide safe havens for Gila woodpeckers and elf owls.

How YOU Can Help Safeguard Wilderness

Practice Leave No Trace

Follow these seven steps as you enjoy the wilderness areas.

www.lnt.org/programs

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors

Join

Get involved by joining a local Refuge Friends group.

www.fws.gov/friends

Volunteer

Check with your local refuge office or register online to volunteer.

fws.gov/volunteers

Plan Your Trip

Visit www.wilderness.net for a map of all federal wilderness locations, history of wilderness, and other information.

Learn More

National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness

www.fws.gov/refuges/whm/wilderness.html



Hike in the untrammelled beauty of the Havasu Wilderness in Arizona.



Help preserve habitat. Volunteers restore native plants in the Pelican Island Wilderness in Florida.

To me, a wilderness is where the flow of wildness is essentially uninterrupted by technology; without wilderness the world is a cage.

David Brower, *Environmentalist and first executive director of the Sierra Club*



National Wildlife Refuge System Designated Wilderness

Sixty-three national wildlife refuges and one fish hatchery have designated wilderness. The Refuge System administers its part of the National Wilderness Preservation System in partnership with the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Forest Service.



The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.



Cover: Water lilies in the Okefenokee Wilderness trail in Georgia.

PHOTO: SHAWN GILLETTE