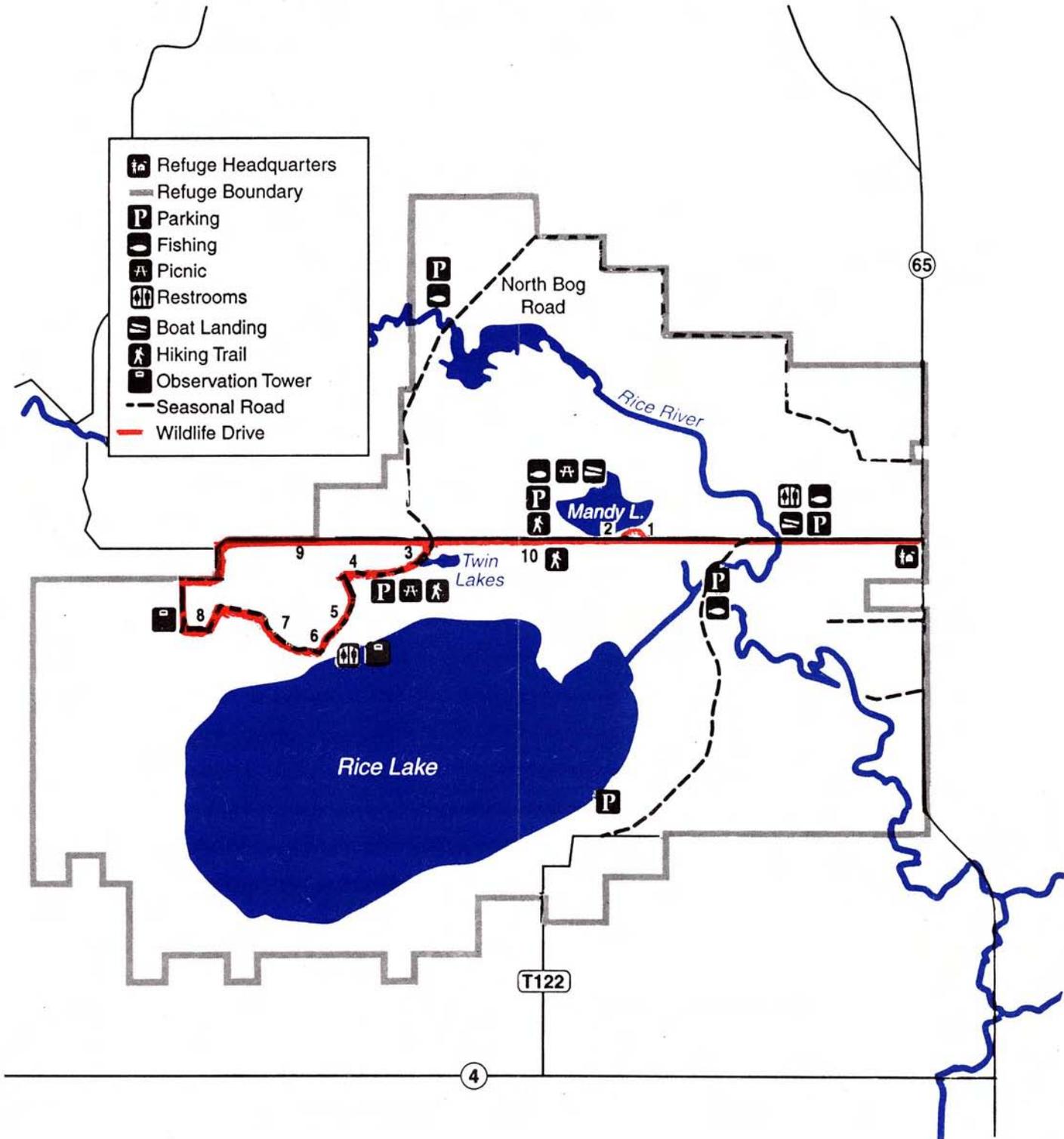


# Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge





## Changing Times Changing Uses

For an eon they have come here to gather what the land provided. We do not know how they named themselves, those first people to follow retreating glaciers to this place. But, they kept coming, and lived here, for generations unnumbered.

More recently, the Dakota and later, the Ojibwa Indians came and lived here. They collected wild rice from the lake, maple syrup from the forest, and the other foods and materials they needed to survive. Later, Europeans and their descendants settled here and cut timber and dug drainage ditches to convert this place to farmland.

Today, Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge is managed for wildlife and for people who come to enjoy these wildlands.

The land retains traces of how people have used it. This 9.5 mile self-guiding tour draws your attention to the changing uses people have put to this area. The tour will take about 45 minutes, longer if you stop to hike or watch for wildlife. Follow the arrows and stop at the numbered posts.

As you travel the auto tour and learn about man's use of the area, you will often see the waterfowl, deer, grouse, bear and other wildlife that continue to be a part of Rice Lake's attraction.



1. As the last glaciers melted 10,000 years ago, they left behind poorly drained soils and basins created by chunks of melting ice. The resulting watery landscape contains a mixture of cedar swamp, tamarack bog and lakes. The ridge you are now on, between Mandy Lake before you and Rice Lake to the south, was one of the few high grounds close to the abundant wild rice crops of the lakes. A 1.5 mile long hiking trail skirts the edge of Mandy Lake, to the North Bog Road, rewarding the hiker with excellent wildlife viewing.

2. Ancient people lived and buried their dead on this ridge. Among these trees are mounds that archaeologists think were built by prehistoric people about 1,300 years ago as a cemetery. Such sites are found from northwestern Wisconsin across central Minnesota to the Red River Valley. This is the largest known concentration of linear mounds in Minnesota and Wisconsin. **All remains of peoples' use of the land on the refuge are fragile and irreplaceable. They are strictly protected by State and Federal laws.**

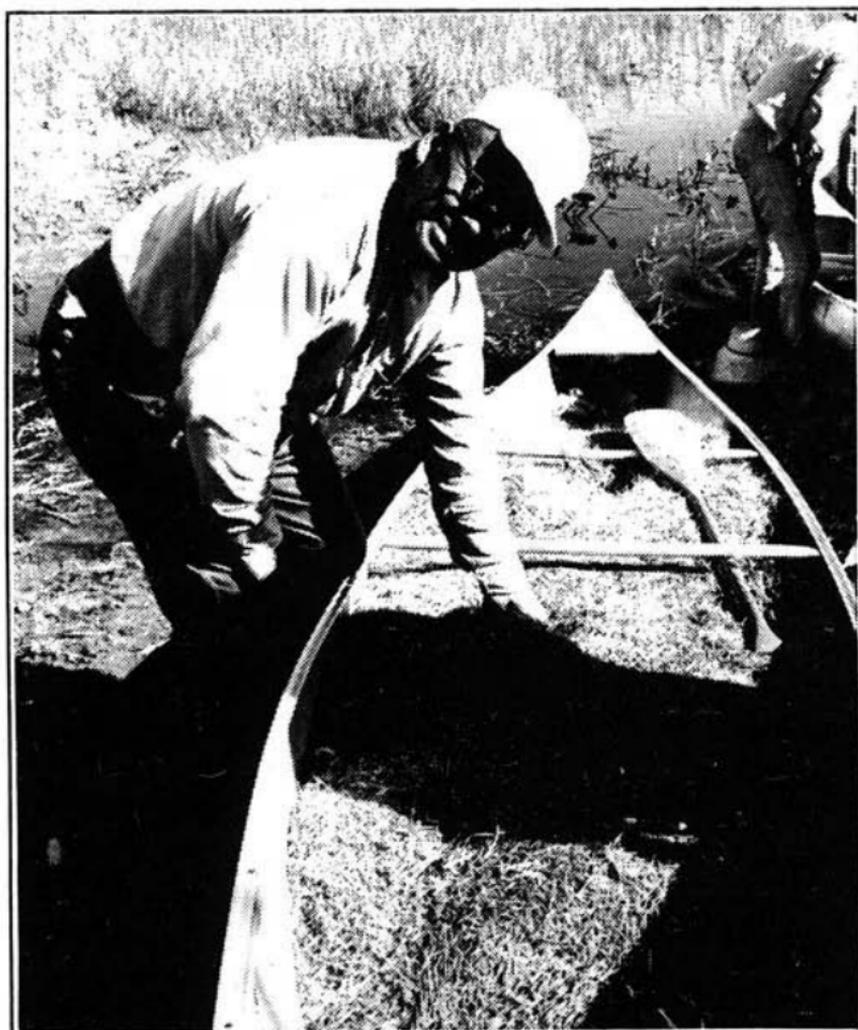
3. Evidence suggests the Eastern Dakota Indians occupied the Rice Lake area 300-400 years ago. Attracted by wild rice and plentiful game, the Dakota probably lived here in temporary hunting and ricing camps. Archaeologists believe their main villages were at Mille Lacs Lake, southwest of here. In Twin Lake, located down the road to your left, an ancient dugout canoe was discovered in 1969. Perhaps, the canoe was used by Indians to gather wild rice and hunt game. A short, scenic hiking trail begins at the east end of the picnic area and makes a short loop on the north side of Twin Lake.

4. The Dakota and Ojibwa people took resources from the land which were renewed each year: maple syrup, wild rice and game. But, in the late 1800's the use of the land changed dramatically. As the railroads extended westward, more European settlers moved into the area. The resources, which for centuries were used for subsistence, became commodities.

5. In 1900, a livestock ranch began operating in and around Rice Lake. Wanting to harvest Rice Lake's marsh hay with machinery, the ranchers made two unsuccessful attempts to drain the lake. The ditch they dug was too small to be effective.

6. For a few weeks in the fall, Indians centered their activities around the harvest of wild rice. They poled their canoes through dense stands of wild rice, bending the stalks over their boats, tapping the stalks with sticks, dislodging the grain into the bottom of the boats. On shore, they parched the rice over a fire, placed the grain in shallow holes in the ground, tramped out the kernels from the husk, and winnowed out the grain. They took the wild rice back to their villages where they stored it in pits for use during winter. A local band of Ojibwa still gather wild rice here each September.

Climb the observation tower for a vista of the 18,000 acre refuge. In the fall, Rice Lake holds concentrations of between 50,000 and 100,000 ring-necked ducks.



7. Loggers harvested the towering white pine and maple from the forests that surround Rice Lake. During the winter, logs were hauled to the lake and unloaded on the ice. A boom was made around the logs and when the ice melted, the log raft was towed to the lake's outlet. Lumbermen drove the logs through Rice Creek and on to the Mississippi River, 20 miles to the northwest.

8. While many of the area's fields were cleared by early European settlers, these were cleared by the refuge staff to provide good habitat for Canada geese and sharp-tailed grouse.

9. A branch of the Soo Line Railroad, known as the Cuyuna and Iron Range, was constructed in 1910. This line carried ore from the iron mines of the nearby Cuyuna Range, and timber from the surrounding area to Lake Superior ports. This line was abandoned in the 1920's and a portion of the rail bed is now used as the main refuge road. You are on it now.

10. President Franklin Roosevelt established the Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge in 1935. To help restore wildlife and to provide employment during the depression, the Federal Government operated a Civilian Conservation Corps camp here in the late 1930's. In the clearing to your right there were 24 camp buildings. While almost nothing is left of the camp's buildings, the product of the corpsmen's work still remains. Through their labor, water control structures were built on Rice River, providing the refuge with a lasting tool for improving wildlife habitat.

Today, the refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, providing habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife species.

The refuge staff hopes that you have enjoyed your tour.