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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES HOST TO NEARLY SEVEN MILLION VISITORS

"The sign of the flying goose"--the emblem of the National Wildlife Refuges--attracted a record-breaking total of 6,974,447 recreation-seeking visitors in 1955, Acting Secretary of the Interior Clarence A. Davis announced today.

This represents an increase of 1,772,187 visitor-days' use over 1954's record of 5,202,260.

Sport fishing was the lure for 2,677,452 of the refuge visitors. Some type of hunting, including archery, was provided on 63 refuges for 406,219 persons.

Picnicking, swimming, boating, photography, and nature study were the principal categories into which the remaining 3,890,776 visitors were classified.

While public use on most refuges reflected an increase in 1955, drouth conditions during part of the year on areas in the Great Plains States showed some decrease in fishing and other water uses.

The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in southwest Oklahoma and the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois again led the list of individual areas having the greatest amount of public use. In 1955 the Wichita Refuge had 873,297 visitors compared with 852,316 in 1954. Crab Orchard recorded 925,900 visitors in 1955, against 864,300 in the previous year.

The Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge, which is actually a series of 11 units, recorded a total of 1,388,040 persons in 1955. Public use included 805,985 persons for fishing and 114,380 visitor-days of hunting, or nearly one-third of the hunting on all refuges combined. This refuge extends 284 miles from Wabasha, Minn., to Rock Island, Ill., and now includes 214,017 acres in five States.

Public use on the 65,000-acre Kentucky Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge, in western Kentucky, soared from 36,255 to 335,743 in 1955. This Federal refuge, near one of the more popular State parks, attracts a steady throng of tourists and fishermen as the result of State efforts to expand the tourist business. Approximately 802,000 persons used Kentucky Lake facilities for camping and fishing during the past season. A high percentage of the fishing occurred on refuge waters.

Other refuges reporting a marked increase in public use during 1955 were Bowdoin in Montana, Hart Mountain in Oregon, Tule Lake in California, Hagerman in Texas, Salt Plains in Oklahoma, Fort Niobrara in Nebraska, Horicon in Wisconsin, Mingo in Missouri, North Platte in Nebraska, Swan Lake in Missouri, Lacassine in Louisiana, Loxahatchee in Florida, Mattamuskeet in North Carolina, Noxubee in Mississippi, Sanibel and the Florida Islands in Florida, and Parker River in Massachusetts.

As an important part of its over-all program, the Fish and Wildlife Service administers a system of national wildlife refuges in the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. These refuges are managed on a multiple-use basis, insofar as this can be accomplished without defeating the primary objective for which each was established. This has permitted increased public use of refuges for recreational purposes.

In the broadest sense, these refuges make their greatest contribution to the Nation's recreation in the production and protection of wildlife, particularly migratory waterfowl, in order to insure the perpetuation of the sport of wildfowling for several million hunters. The more tangible contributions the refuges make to recreation are the facilities available for fishing, camping, boating, picnicking, photography, nature study, and related uses.

On virtually all refuges, except during periods of waterfowl concentration, fishing is permitted in accordance with State laws and regulations. On a few refuges, which are large enough to accommodate limited hunting, the Service, in cooperation with State Conservation Departments, has permitted public shooting on small portions of the areas.

Recreational facilities have been established, developed, and maintained on numerous refuge areas. On areas which lend themselves to recreational uses without involved development and construction, the facilities are provided by the Service. On others, the recreation facilities are developed and operated either in cooperation with local governmental or civic groups or by commercial concessioners.

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