

News Release



Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex
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Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex To Consolidate Multiple Visitor Parking Areas at Wertheim Refuge

Visitors to the Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge in Shirley will soon notice a change to how they access refuge trails. With the recent expansion of the trail system to include hiking options on both sides of the Carmans River, the centrally located parking area at the Visitor Center on 340 Smith Road is being designated as the main trailhead access. From this point, visitors can choose to walk either the popular White Oak Trail to the west, the new Black Tupelo Trail to the east, or a short trail spur to two observation platforms overlooking the river. The gravel entrance road traditionally used to access visitor parking at 360 Smith Road will be transitioned to primarily a pedestrian-only link to visitor facilities on the west side of the river, including the Friends of Wertheim Welcome Cabin.

For public safety and long-term maintenance reasons, the gate to the original refuge entrance will remain closed to all but official vehicles as of Tuesday, May 29, 2012. New hours for the Wertheim trails, sunrise to 4:00pm daily, will also take effect. While the old gravel road will continue to be used by refuge vehicles, visitors will be directed to park at the newly designated trailhead access. No parking will be permitted in front of the old entrance gate or along Smith Road to ensure refuge staff and emergency vehicles have unobstructed access. The Welcome Cabin located near the original visitor parking area will continue to be manned by volunteers and serve as an informational waypoint for visitors on weekends and during special events.

The new 3.3 mile Black Tupelo Nature Trail contrasts the wetland character of the White Oak Trail and meanders through pine barren habitat bordering the east side of the Carmans River. This upland trail culminates in a short loop near Indian Landing, an area of the refuge previously only accessible by canoe or kayak. For visitors with limited time to spend, the Wertheim trail system includes two new observation platforms that offer scenic views and quality birding opportunities similar to what visitors have come to love at the old headquarters site. A significant portion of this trail was designed to meet standard accessibility requirements established by the Americans with Disabilities Act, as do the new observation platforms; one at the river's edge directly opposite the Visitor Center and the other near the bridge on the old entrance road.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.