

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Quivira

*National Wildlife  
Refuge*

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge  
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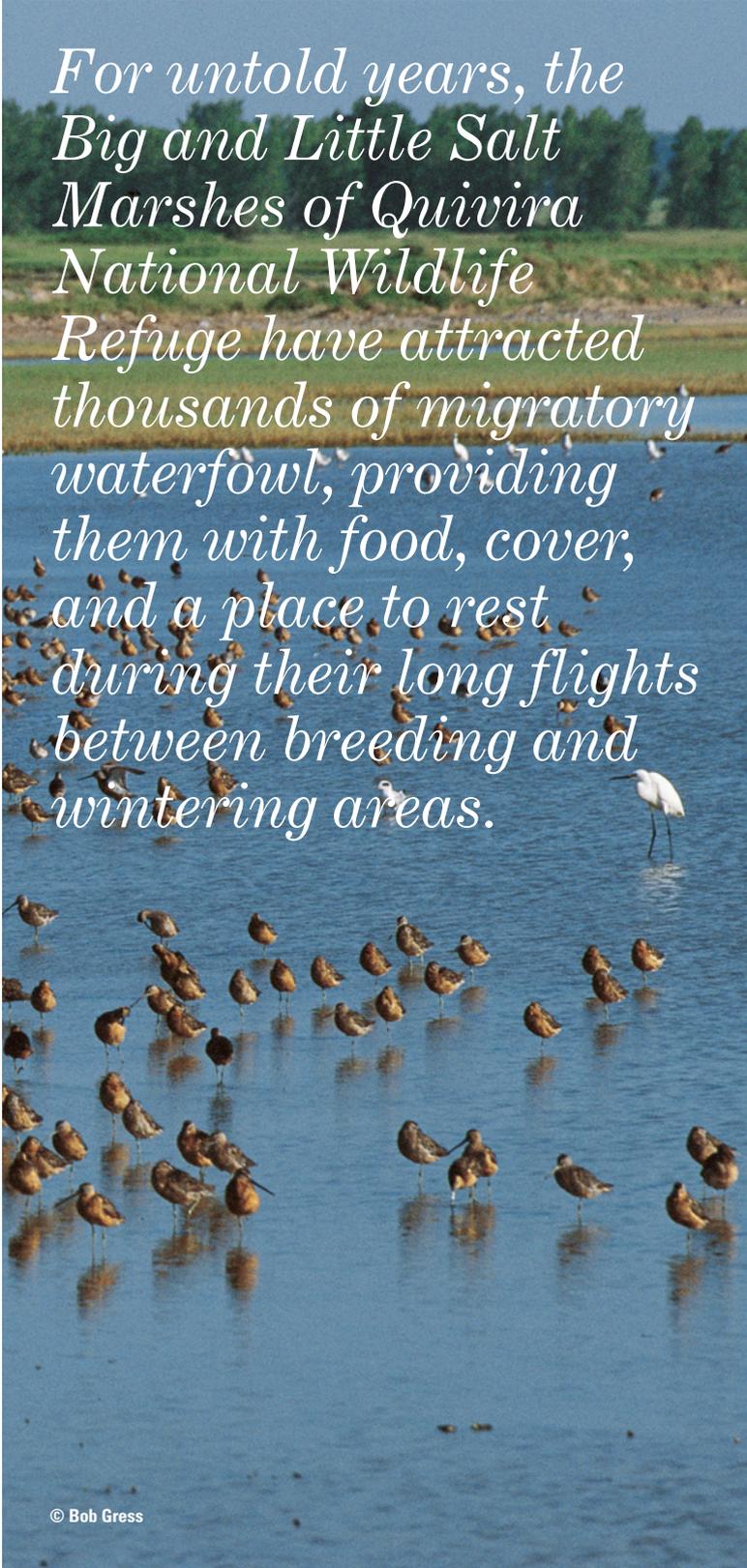
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
<http://www.fws.gov>

For Refuge Information  
1 800 / 344 WILD

May 2008



Long-billed Dowitcher  
© Bob Gress



*For untold years, the Big and Little Salt Marshes of Quivira National Wildlife Refuge have attracted thousands of migratory waterfowl, providing them with food, cover, and a place to rest during their long flights between breeding and wintering areas.*

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### About the Refuge



*This goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.*

### *A Place Known for Wildlife*

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) located in south-central Kansas, lies in an area where the eastern and western prairies meet and blend. In 1955, the Migratory Bird Commission approved the purchase of land to create the Refuge, thus providing food, water, and nesting areas for migratory waterfowl in this area of Kansas. Quivira NWR is one of over 545 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System – a network of lands set aside and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service specifically for wildlife. The Refuge System is a living heritage, conserving wildlife and habitat for people today and for generations to come.

The name "Quivira" comes from a Native American tribe living in the area when the Spanish explorer, Coronado, visited in 1541. In quest of gold, treasures, and the fabled "Seven Cities of Cibola," he found instead fertile grasslands, abundant wildlife, and small agricultural villages. The Native Americans, and later, the early settlers, hunted waterfowl in these marshes. Shortly after the turn of the century, commercial hunting provided wagon loads of waterfowl to Kansas City restaurants and other eastern cities.

With the decline of commercial hunting came the establishment of hunting clubs. The lands bought up by these clubs helped preserve valuable waterfowl habitat from further development. Moreover, these hunting clubs worked to improve the habitat to attract migrating birds. Canals and water control structures were later added, providing the entire area with a more dependable water supply. Today, these marshlands remain a major stopover for thousands of migrating birds.

## Wildlife Throughout the Seasons

Located where the relatively lush vegetation of the east blends into the more arid grasslands of the west, Quivira NWR supports numerous and varied plant communities. This variety of plant communities attracts birds common to both eastern and western North America. Over 300 bird species have been observed on the Refuge.

### *Fall Flights*

Thousands of Canada geese, ducks, and other migratory birds, such as sandhill cranes and shorebirds, pass through the Refuge from September to December. The shallow west edge of the Big Salt Marsh is a favorite roosting area for the sandhill cranes. Endangered whooping cranes may make a brief visit as they move along their migration routes from mid-October through November. This is the best time to view these rare visitors. The whooping cranes may make a return visit in mid-March through mid-April on their way north to nesting areas.

*Sandhill cranes  
silhouetted at  
sunset.*



© Bob Gress

### *Winter and Spring Visitors*

Bald and golden eagles winter on the Refuge from November until March. Over 800,000 ducks and geese visit the Refuge until severe weather drives them southward to winter along the Gulf Coast and in Mexico. During March and April, the Refuge becomes a staging area once again for ducks, geese, shorebirds, American white pelicans, gulls, and other migrants en route to traditional nesting grounds in the prairie potholes of the north-central United States and Canada.

*American white  
pelicans in the  
marsh.*



© Bob Gress

### *Summer Residents*

Summer residents include Swainson's hawks and Mississippi kites, while northern harriers, American kestrels, and red-tailed hawks are common throughout the year. Ring-necked pheasants and bobwhite quail are often seen in the Refuge grasslands and grain fields. Look for wild turkey along the edge of tree groves and shelter belts where they often seek food and cover.



*Wild turkey (above left), black-tailed prairie dog (above right), white-tailed deer (middle), mallards (far right)*

**Managing Land for Wildlife - the Work of the Refuge**

Common summer nesting species on the Refuge include snowy plovers, American avocets, black-necked stilts, and white-faced ibis. In addition, a colony of endangered least terns use the salt flats at the north end of the Refuge as nesting habitat. Other wildlife frequently seen on the Refuge include white-tailed deer, black-tailed prairie dogs, beaver, raccoons, badgers, and coyotes. Bird watchers can pick up a Refuge bird list containing more detailed information at the Refuge headquarters.

Quivira NWR is managed primarily to provide migratory waterfowl with food, water, and shelter. Other migratory birds, endangered species, and resident wildlife, such as deer and pheasant, also benefit from habitat management programs. Primary habitat management programs conducted on the Refuge include cooperative farming, grazing, prescribed burning, and water control.



*Farming for Wildlife*

In the cooperative farming program, crops are planted on the Refuge by local farmers who work on a share basis. Over 1,300 acres are planted with crops to provide food for migrating birds and resident wildlife. The fields are rotated between winter wheat and milo, with cow peas planted periodically to enrich the soil.

The farmers harvest their two-thirds share of the milo, leaving the Refuge share standing in the field as food for wildlife. Wheat fields are completely harvested, with the farmers receiving a three-quarters share. The remaining quarter of the harvest is left on the Refuge as food and cover for wildlife. Migrating geese browse on the tender young shoots of wheat growing in these harvested fields.

*Grazing Now and Then*

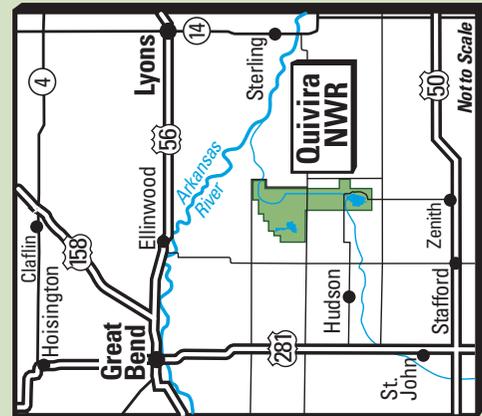
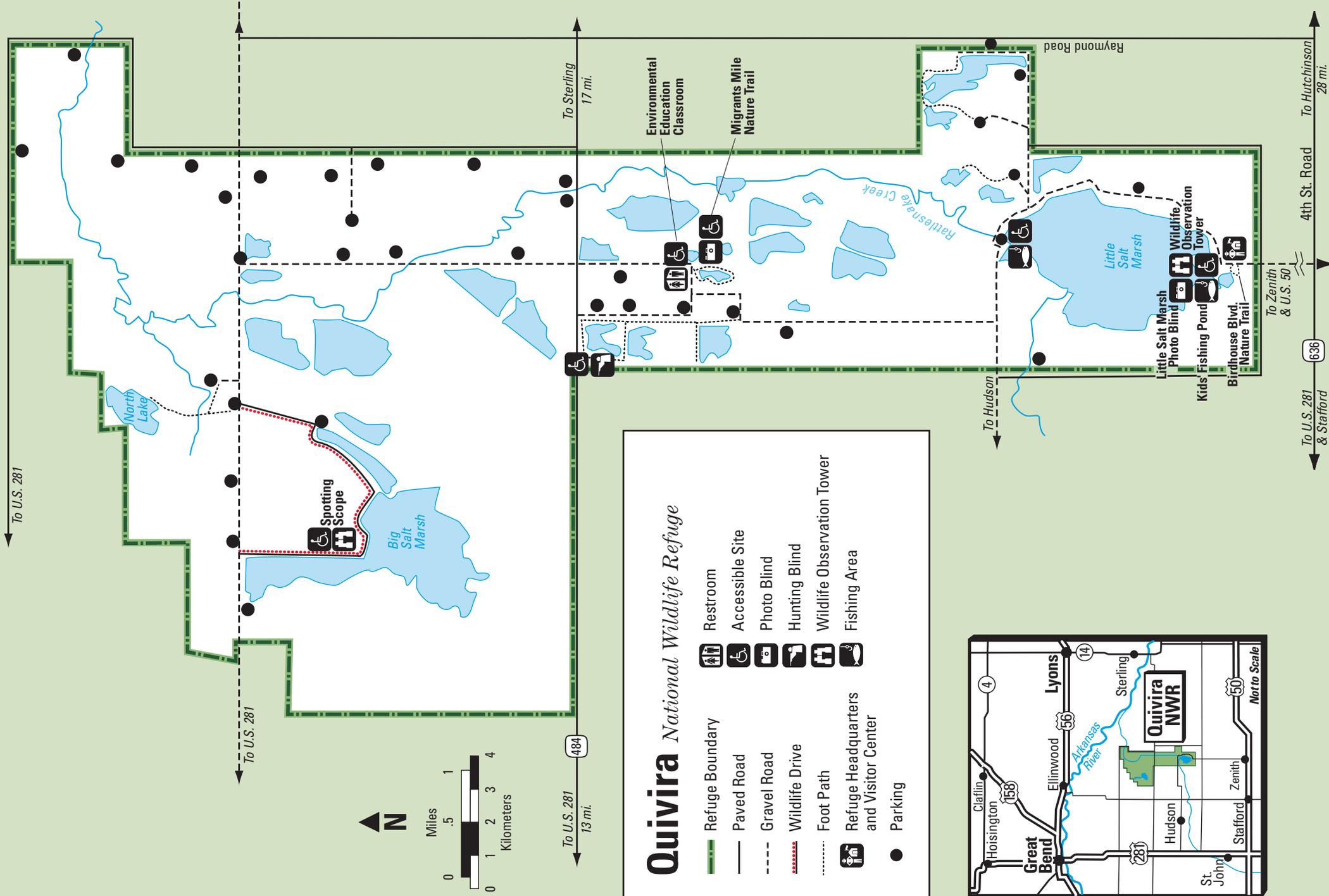
Historically, great herds of bison grazed the grasslands of this area. They would graze an area only for a short time, then move on, thus allowing the native grasses to regrow and continue the cycle. Since bison no longer roam the Great Plains, Quivira NWR imitates this natural cycle of high



*Water for Wildlife*

intensity grazing over a short period of time with cattle. Through this management program, local ranchers are permitted to graze their cattle on the Refuge, but only in specially chosen areas for short periods of time, often no longer than a few days. Once grazed, the area is seldom used again during that season, thus allowing the plants to regrow. Grassland birds and animals feed, nest, and rest in these areas. Deliberate, well-planned controlled burns also improve the habitat for wildlife nesting and cover.

Twenty-one miles of canals and numerous water control structures divert water to over 34 wetlands ranging in size from 10 to 1,500 acres and totaling over 7,000 acres of marshlands. Through the use of these canals and water control structures, water management, either flooding or removing water from an area, allows the Refuge staff to influence the types of plants that grow in the wetland. For example, by manipulating the water levels, large stands of cattails that have limited value to wildlife can be replaced by waterfowl food plants.



**Enjoying the  
Refuge**  
*Visitor Center*

Located in the Refuge Headquarters building, the visitor center is filled with hands-on displays for children and adults. The interpretive exhibits focus on the wildlife and habitats of the Refuge. A variety of wildlife mounts are also on display.

*Wildlife  
Observation*

Spring and fall are the best seasons to visit Quivira NWR since wildlife, especially waterfowl, is abundant and more easily viewed at these times. Try to schedule your visit early or late in the day when wildlife is most active and more frequently seen.

*Interpretive  
Nature Trails*

A 1.2-mile nature trail, the Migrants Mile, is located south of the Environmental Education Classroom. It loops through shaded woodlands, along marshy edges, and through native grasslands. An elevated boardwalk takes you across a large marsh. A surfaced, accessible three-quarter mile loop is also a part of the nature trail.

A 1,000-foot accessible trail, the Birdhouse Boulevard, is located on the west side of the Visitors Center parking area. A variety of birdhouses line this scenic trail.

*Auto Tour Routes*

The 14-mile drive through the Refuge provides visitors many opportunities to pull over and view wildlife.

The 4-mile Wildlife Drive at the north end of the Refuge offers wildlife watching opportunities and views of the Big Salt Marsh and surrounding habitats. An accessible spotting scope is provided to assist visitors in watching wildlife.

*Observation  
Tower*

An accessible wildlife observation tower is located on the south edge of the Little Salt Marsh. This tower allows visitors to get a better view of the Refuge wildlife.

*Wildlife  
Photography*

Photography blinds are located at the Little Salt Marsh and on the Migrants Mile nature trail. The photography blind on the Migrants Mile nature trail is accessible. Both blinds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

*Environmental  
Education*

Guided tours are available for schools and other groups. Educators are encouraged to investigate one of the many different educational activities for field trips available at the Refuge. Please call the Refuge staff for more information or to schedule guided tours, field trips, and/or teacher workshops.

*Hunting*

Hunting is permitted on 8,000 acres of the Refuge. The hunting program is managed in accordance with State and Federal regulations. Only waterfowl, pheasants, quail, dove, snipe, rails, squirrels, and rabbits may be hunted on Quivira NWR. Special Refuge regulations also apply, as listed in the Quivira NWR hunting and fishing leaflet available at the Refuge visitor center. An accessible waterfowl hunting blind is available by reservation only.

*Fishing*

Fishing is permitted on the Refuge. The fishing program is managed in accordance with State and Federal regulations. Special Refuge regulations, listed in the Quivira NWR hunting and fishing leaflet, also apply. An accessible fishing area is located on the north end of the Little Salt Marsh. The "Kids Fishing Pond" is located west of the visitor center. This pond is reserved for kids 14 years and younger. An accompanying adult may fish with the youth. An accessible pier is also located at this pond.

## **Refuge Regulations**

Although the following rules and regulations may seem inconvenient or overly restrictive to some, they are necessary for the protection of wildlife and their habitats, and, in some instances, for the safety of visitors. By observing these rules, visitors will make the Refuge a better place for themselves and the wildlife they come to enjoy.

### *Visiting Hours*

The Refuge is open to visitors from daylight to dark. The visitor center is open from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays.

### *Access and Parking*

Motorized vehicles are permitted only on developed roads and parking areas. Driving off-road or on roads closed by signs or barriers is prohibited. Parking in front of gates, on bridges, or on water control structures is also prohibited.

### *Restrooms*

There are restrooms at the visitor center, inside the environmental education classroom building, and just outside the classroom building. All restrooms are fully accessible.

### *Accessibility*

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. Dial 7-1-1 for a free connection to the State transfer relay service for TTY and voice calls to and from the speech and hearing impaired. For more information or to address accessibility needs, please contact the Refuge staff at 620 / 486 2393, or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

### *Hiking*

All of the Refuge is open to hiking.

### *Camping*

Overnight camping is not permitted. All visitors must leave the Refuge at the end of each day.

### *Bicycling*

Bicycling is permitted on the Refuge, but is restricted to established roads and trails. Bicycles are prohibited on both interpretive nature trails.

### *Horseback Riding*

Horseback riding is permitted, but for safety purposes, Refuge staff must be notified before any riding activities take place. Horses are restricted to established roads and trails. Horses are prohibited on both interpretive nature trails.

### *Boating*

The use of boats and canoes is not allowed on the Refuge.

### *Fires*

No fires of any type are permitted within the Refuge.

### *Firearms*

The possession of firearms is prohibited except as authorized during the hunting season.

### *Littering*

Littering is prohibited on the Refuge. Please remove all trash from the Refuge.

### *Nearby Accommodations*

Gas, food, and lodging can be found in the nearby communities of Stafford, Sterling, Hutchinson, and Great Bend.

## **Refuge Signs and Their Meaning**



Refuge Boundary - Authorized entry only.



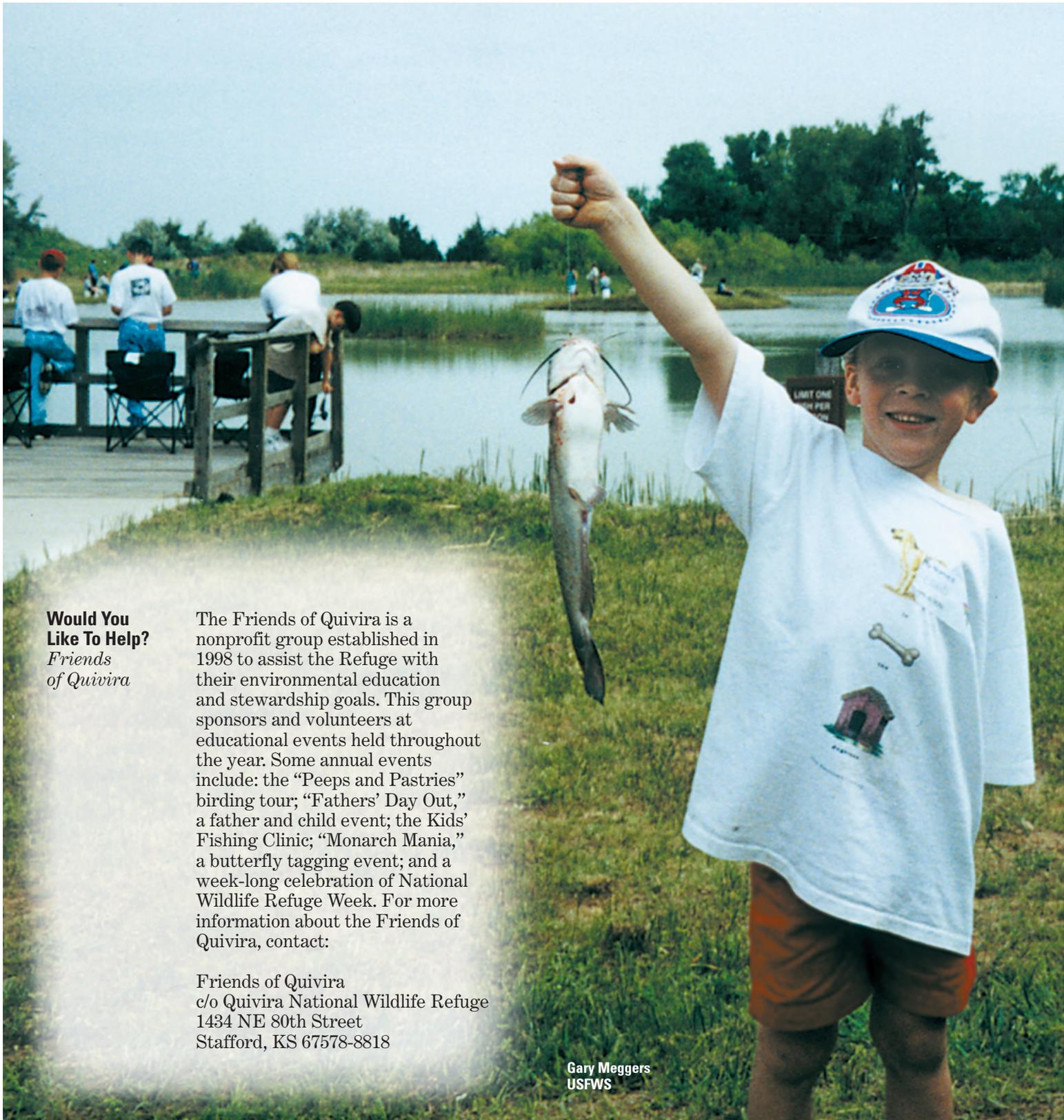
Public Hunting Area - Area behind this sign open to hunting.



No Hunting Zone - Area behind this sign closed to all hunting.



Non-toxic Shot Zone - Non-toxic shot must be used for all hunting.



**Would You  
Like To Help?**  
*Friends  
of Quivira*

The Friends of Quivira is a nonprofit group established in 1998 to assist the Refuge with their environmental education and stewardship goals. This group sponsors and volunteers at educational events held throughout the year. Some annual events include: the “Peeps and Pastries” birding tour; “Fathers’ Day Out,” a father and child event; the Kids’ Fishing Clinic; “Monarch Mania,” a butterfly tagging event; and a week-long celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week. For more information about the Friends of Quivira, contact:

Friends of Quivira  
c/o Quivira National Wildlife Refuge  
1434 NE 80th Street  
Stafford, KS 67578-8818

Gary Meggers  
USFWS