



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex
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Willows, CA 95988
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PHOTOGRAPHER'S GUIDELINES

The auto tour and walking trail on both Sacramento NWR and Colusa NWR provide excellent photographic opportunities. The best time of year to photograph waterfowl and shorebirds typically occurs from November through February. For those who are interested in using the photography blinds on Sacramento NWR, Colusa NWR, and Delevan NWR, the following steps need to be completed.

1. Photography blind availability

The blinds may be used once each week from Wednesday through Sunday. The following blinds will be available:

- A. Sacramento NWR, Blinds #1 and #2; mid-October – March
- B. Colusa NWR, Blind #3; November – March
- C. Delevan NWR, Blind #4; November – March

2. Processes for requesting a blind

Photographers may request up to three photography blind days each season. Each blind assignment is actually for a week (Wednesday–Sunday). For example, if circumstances change and a photographer can not be present on an assigned date, he/she has the option to change to another day within their assigned week.

Photographers may apply through a lottery system and then, depending on any remaining availability, blind choices will be assigned by a first-come, first-served system. To apply for blind dates through either system, photographers must e-mail denise_dachner@fws.gov or send a letter to the Sacramento NWR, 752 County Road 99W, Willows, CA 95988 with their photography blind and date choice(s). See the sections below for the appropriate months to enter each system.

2. Processes for requesting a blind (continued)

A. Lottery Process:

1. Blind requests must be received between August 1 and August 31. The lottery will be held in mid-September.
2. The blind requests may consist of up to 10 date/blind combinations in priority order, [e.g. Choice 1 (first priority): Dec. 17, 2008 – Blind #4;
Choice 2 (second priority): Nov 17, 2008 – Blind #3;
Choice 3 (third priority): Jan. 2009 – Blind #1, etc.].
Note that each photographer will receive no more than three photography blind assignments. Providing additional blind choices assists with a more timely blind assignment process.
3. All individuals are randomly assigned a number, which indicates the order in which their blind request(s) will be processed.
4. The first priority date available is selected from each blind request. After all of the applicants have received one blind assignment (their first priority date not already assigned), the blind assignment process continues back to the beginning of the list until all applicants receive their next priority date of choice that remains or until all available dates are filled.
5. All applicants given a blind assignment will be notified by e-mail or telephone during mid-September.
6. If applicants have not been contacted by October 1, follow the process in Section B below.
7. If there is a need to cancel, please contact Denise Dachner as soon as possible so that others may schedule the blind.

B. First come, first served process:

1. Photographers that missed entering the lottery in August, or that received less than three blind assignments under the lottery system, may apply for any remaining dates through a first-come, first-served system, after October 1.
2. The blind requests may consist of up to 10 date/blind combinations in priority order. See the examples in Section A, #2 above.
3. Photographers' names will be put on a list and processed chronologically by the e-mail date/time or letter postmark.
4. The order of names on the list will remain until the applicants' choices (up to three) are assigned.
5. The blind requests will be processed as described in Section A, #4 above.
6. If all of the applicant's date/blind choices have already been assigned, photographers will be contacted by Refuge staff about remaining available date(s).
7. If all dates were assigned through the lottery system, then the first-come, first-served list becomes the blind cancellation refill list beginning on October 1.
8. If there is a need to cancel, please contact Denise Dachner as soon as possible so that others may schedule the blind.

2. Registration

Photographers must place a "Photography Blind Folder", which contains a Photography Blind Report form, on the dash of their vehicle. The folder may be picked up at the following locations: Blind #1 and #2 at the Sacramento NWR office between

2. **Registration (continued)**

9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. the day before the confirmed blind date or photographers may arrange to have the folder placed in the gray mailbox behind the visitor center; Blind #3 at Colusa NWR in the black mail box adjacent to the observation deck; and Blind #4 at Delevan NWR in the black mail box near the gate on Four Mile Road.

3. **Payment of photography blind user fee**

There are two non-refundable components to the blind user fee for all blinds: a \$15 daily fee and a Refuge entrance pass or equivalent pass. The Refuge entrance pass (\$3 Refuge Day Pass or \$12 Refuge Annual Pass) is required by all photographers who do not possess either a federal duck stamp, Golden Eagle, Golden Age, Golden Access or America the Beautiful Pass. Photographers must pay the daily fee by October 15 in order to confirm their blind date selection(s). If a blind assignment is made after October 15, the daily fee is due before the use of the blind. Photographers may make checks payable to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and send to: Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 752 County Road 99W, Willows, CA 95988.

4. **Proceed to blind**

Photographers must be in the blind at least 1 hour before sunrise. Photographers must park in the designated parking area and proceed directly to the assigned blind on foot. The route from the parking area to the blind will be marked by stakes with reflective tape. The route is designed to minimize disturbance; therefore, deviation from the staked route is not allowed. A flashlight will be needed to follow the staked route. Sometimes only one guide stake can be seen at a time. Enroute to the blind photographers may encounter deep water (waist high), ankle-deep mud, and slippery footing. Use chest waders and proceed with caution. People with physical disabilities may access the entrance to Blind #4 with a vehicle. Photographers may leave the blind at any time, but once the blind has been vacated, returning to the blind will not be permitted.

5. **Access to blinds:** Access to some blinds and the surrounding area may flood, therefore, blind use depends on road and habitat conditions. It is highly recommended that photographers call before their blind assignment date to check on the blind and road conditions. Blind location maps are available on the Refuge web site: sacramentovalleyrefuges@fws.gov or upon request.

Blind #1: Sacramento NWR

The blind access is from the auto tour. Drive approximately two miles to the parking area marked with the brown sign "#1". Place the "Photography Blind Folder" and the Refuge entrance pass on the dash of your vehicle. Look for a boat ramp on your left. At this site a small sled is available for transporting your gear to the blind. Walk down the boat ramp and into the water until you see the first guide stake. Continue to each stake until you reach the blind (about 300 yards). If the sled is used, it should be hidden in the tules behind the blind. Please return the sled to the edge of the pond beside the boat ramp, turn it upside down to keep the inside dry and latch it to the post.

5. Access to blinds (continued)

Blind #2: Sacramento NWR

Vehicle access to the blind is from the viewing platform parking area on the auto tour. Open the metal gate and close it before proceeding to the blind. Follow the road south along Logan Creek approximately 6/10 of a mile until you reach the brown sign "Parking Area #2." Place the "Photography Blind Folder" and the Refuge entrance pass on the dash of your vehicle. Look for the signs and guide stakes and follow them until you reach the blind (about 300 yards). If the road is muddy, photographers must walk from the viewing platform parking area.

Blind #3: Colusa NWR

Vehicle access to the blind is from the Colusa NWR auto tour. A space for parking is located approximately ¼ mile from the observation deck before you cross the bridge and is marked with a brown sign "#3". Place the "Photography Blind Folder" and the Refuge entrance pass on the dash of your vehicle. Proceed north on foot and follow the directional signs along the levee road (about 200 yards) until you reach a sign that will direct you into the water. At this site a small sled is available for transporting your gear to the blind. The water in this section of the pond is about 3 feet deep, so chest waders are needed. Follow the reflective markers about 150 yards to the blind. If the sled is used, it should be hidden in the cattails behind the blind. Please return the sled to the edge of the pond, turn it upside down to keep the inside dry and latch it to the post.

Blind #4: Delevan NWR

Vehicle access to the blind is from Four Mile Road on the west boundary of Delevan NWR. A space for parking marked with a sign labeled "#4" is located at the gate on Four Mile Road. Heading south, on Four Mile Road, the parking site is approximately 2 miles south of the intersection with Delevan Road. Heading north, the site is approximately 3½ miles north of Maxwell Road. Place the "Photography Blind Folder" and Refuge entrance pass on the dash of your vehicle. Proceed east on foot and follow the directional signs along the levee road (about 150 yards) until you reach a wooden boardwalk that provides entry to the blind. Individuals using wheelchairs should contact the Refuge for the combination to the gate to allow vehicle access to the boardwalk entrance. Although not required, it is highly recommended that people who use a wheelchair have their able-bodied companion park their vehicle back at the gate to reduce disturbance to wildlife using the area.

6. Blind description and use

Both of the Sacramento NWR blinds are 4½' deep x 6' wide X 5' high. They have adjustable camera size openings in three sides. Blind #1 is made of redwood and Blind #2 is made of gray, recycled plastic boards. The blinds accommodate one person comfortably; however, two people at a time are allowed. Two adjustable shelves which can be used for camera mounts are present in the blind. There is one swivel chair and a can of wasp spray in each blind. Tree snags and islands have been placed to encourage birds to perch or rest within range of a 400-500 mm lens.

Blind #3 at Colusa NWR has interior dimensions of 5' deep X 6' wide X 5' high at the front and 4.5' at the back. It has 3 sets of openings on each side and the front. There are two folding chairs and a can of wasp spray in the blind. Tree snags and logs have

6. **Blind description and use (continued)**

been placed in the water about 30-50 feet from the blind to provide sites for water birds and turtles to use.

Blind #4 at Delevan NWR is 5' deep X 6½' wide X 6½' high. There is a boardwalk to the blind allowing access for people using wheel-chairs. It has 3 sets of openings in the front and sides. Four adjustable shelves which can be used for camera mounts are present in the blind. There is a swivel chair and a can of wasp spray in the blind. Tree snags and logs have been placed to encourage birds to perch or rest 30-50 feet from the blind.

7. **Check out at the office**

Photographers must check out of the blind by returning the "Photography Blind Folder" with a completed report form to the following places: Blind #1 and #2 at the Sacramento NWR office before leaving or after 4:00 p.m. in the gray mailbox behind the visitor center; Blind #3 at Colusa NWR in the black mail box adjacent to the observation deck; and Blind #4 at Delevan NWR in the black mail box near the gate on Four Mile Road.

8. **Additional photographic opportunities**

Some of the photography blinds may be available for use during April – June, depending on habitat conditions. Please call the Sacramento NWR for current conditions and blind availability.

Also, a portion of the hunt area will be open for photography from February through June on Sacramento, Colusa, and Sutter NWRs. Visitors may utilize the existing directional blind, directional assigned pond and free roam boundary signs to access the areas. The in-ground, concrete hunting blinds on Sacramento NWR will be available for photographic use from February through June without user fees or reservations. Maps for these areas are available on the Refuge website: sacramentovalleyrefuges@fws.gov or upon request.

9. **Refuge reserves the right to revoke photography privileges**

Anyone found to be in violation of any of the conditions in these guidelines will have their photography privileges immediately revoked and will be asked to leave the area.

Checklist of helpful items to bring to the blind:

- flashlight
- field guides
- seat for a second person
- chest waders (needed for Sacramento Blind #1 & Colusa Blind #3)
- warm clothes
- binoculars
- bean bag camera rest
- insect repellent
- snacks and water
- sack for garbage

**Please leave the area and the blind the way you found it.
HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR DAY!**