Seney National Wildlife Refuge
1674 Refuge Entrance Road
Seney, MI 49883
906/586 9851

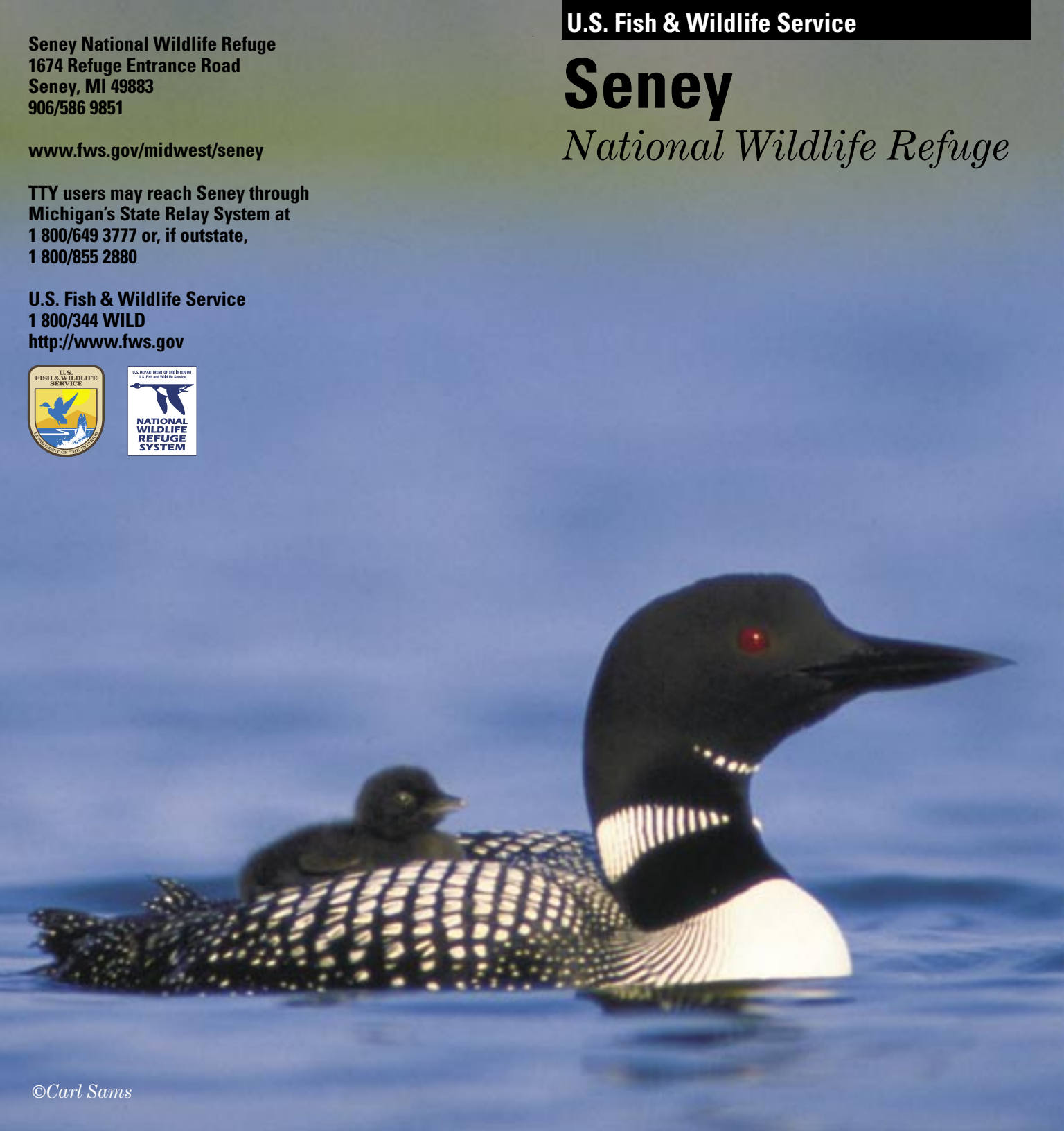
www.fws.gov/midwest/seney

TTY users may reach Seney through Michigan's State Relay System at 1 800/649 3777 or, if outstate, 1 800/855 2880

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
http://www.fws.gov

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Seney
National Wildlife Refuge



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Created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935, Seney National Wildlife Refuge was carved out of the Great Manistique Swamp by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Throughout this nearly 96,000 acres of diverse habitat live a wide variety of wildlife species. In this wild place, visitors encounter the cry of common loons, regal trumpeter swans, brilliant dragonflies, nesting bald eagles, and industrious beaver.

History of Seney

Seney National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935 for the protection and production of migratory birds and other wildlife. Today the refuge is a rich mosaic of marsh, swamp, bog, grassland, and forest; with nearly two-thirds as wetlands.

Over a century ago, lumbering operations forever altered the landscape of the Upper Peninsula's great pine forests. The ring of the lumberman's axe echoed through the forests as local mills depleted the region's valuable supply of red and white pine. After the pine forests were cut, mill owners turned their axes and saws to the refuge's northern hardwood and swamp conifer species.

Following the lumbering operations, fires were often set to clear away the debris. These fires burned deep into the organic soil, damaging its quality and killing the seeds that would have produced a new forest. On many areas of the refuge, the scars from these lumbering operations remain visible to this day.

After the fires, a land development company dug many miles of drainage ditches throughout Seney. This drained acreage was then sold using extravagant promises of agricultural productivity, but the new owners quickly learned that these promises were unfounded. One by one, the farms were abandoned, and the land reverted to state ownership.

In 1934, the Michigan Conservation Department recommended to the Federal Government that the Seney area be developed for wildlife. This proposal was accepted and Seney National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935.

Physical development and restoration of the refuge land began soon after establishment. With the aid of the Civilian Conservation Corps, an intricate system of dikes, water control structures, ditches, and roads was built. This system now impounds over 7,000 acres of open water in 26 major pools.

Spillway System

T. & J. Reuther

Managing for Wildlife

Water levels on over 7,000 acres of refuge habitat are managed using a system of spillways, called water control structures, and dikes.

High water levels support fish populations during the winter, protect nesting birds from predation, and regulate vegetation growth. Low water levels create mudflats for cranes and other birds, enhance feeding opportunities for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds, and make fish more accessible to osprey and bald eagles.

Prescribed burns, river and wetland restoration, mowing, and forest management are used by the refuge to maintain healthy and diverse wildlife habitats.

Huron Island

Distant Refuges

Seney National Wildlife Refuge also manages refuges far from the main office. Information about the following refuges can be obtained from the Seney headquarters:

- Huron NWR - Lake Superior, established 1905;
- Michigan Islands NWR - Lake Michigan, established 1969;
- Kirtland's Warbler WMA, established 1980;
- Harbor Island NWR - Lake Huron, established 1983; and
- Whitefish Point Unit, established 1997.

Migratory Birds

Sandhill Crane

J. Mattson

Seney is for Wildlife!

About the time the ice melts off the pools, Seney's summer wildlife residents return to their nesting grounds. Canada geese are usually the first to arrive in late-March to early-April. Their familiar honking is a welcome sign that spring is near. Close behind are sandhill cranes and red-winged blackbirds. Common loons arrive after most of the ice has melted.

Eastern Kingbird,

R. Denomme

The refuge's many species of songbirds are some of the last to arrive. By the end of May, birdwatchers will be delighted with the variety of birds. The best time to listen for birds is late May to early June.

In the fall, peak waterfowl migration occurs from the end of September through October. Common loons are some of the earliest to leave in September. By the end of October most migratory birds have left the refuge for their wintering grounds.

Success Stories

Trumpeter Swans

R. Denomme

At Seney, the trumpeter swan is a true success story. In 1991 and 1992 captive-reared swans were released. Excellent habitat and food sources have allowed the swans to flourish. Today trumpeter swans, the largest North American waterfowl, are a common sight on the refuge.

Loon and Chick

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Common loons have been banded and monitored on the refuge since 1987. Due to clear water, plentiful food, and areas with little disturbance, the refuge is a successful breeding ground. As increasing development threatens the loon's habitat, Seney refuge is a very important nesting area.

Wildlife Watching

Doe and Fawn

R. Denomme

Wildlife abounds in the refuge's forests, marshes, pools, creeks, rivers, and bogs. Wildlife enthusiasts may see beaver, river otter, white-tailed deer, black bear, coyote, fox, muskrat, mink, snapping and painted turtles, frogs, and insects. Patience and knowing where to look for these creatures is key to seeing them. Refuge staff and volunteers at the visitor center will gladly provide you with helpful wildlife watching tips.

Painted Turtle

K. Sommerer

Seney is for People, Too!

Visitor Center

The Visitor Center is open daily from May 15 to October 15, 9:00 am-5:00 pm. Exhibits, an orientation slide show, a bookstore, and friendly staff will help you plan your visit.

Marshland Wildlife Drive

A 7-mile, one-way auto tour route takes visitors alongside wetlands and meadows and through forests. Three observation decks with viewing scopes make this a great wildlife watching opportunity. The tour route does not accomodate large recreational vehicles.

Pine Ridge Nature Trail

Starting from the Visitor Center, this 1.4-mile looped trail takes visitors through a variety of habitats. Songbirds and beavers are common sightings along this trail.

Backcountry

T. & J. Reuther

Many miles of trails are available for hiking and biking through the backcountry of the refuge. For those who seek wildlife and solitude, these trails are for you. Certain roads may be closed to all entry during peak migration periods. Check with the visitor center concerning closed areas.

Canoeing

T. & J. Reuther

Enjoy a day of paddling along the Manistique River, which flows through the southern part of the refuge. Canoe outfitters are located in Germfask. Use is limited to daylight hours with no overnight camping allowed. No canoes are permitted on refuge pools or marshes.

Nature Programs & School Groups

Programs and special events are offered during the season, May 15 to October 15. Call the refuge for a program calendar, or to schedule. a field trip.

Highbush Cranberries, T. & J. Reuther

Winter Activities

The Northern Hardwoods Cross-Country Ski Area offers over 9-miles of groomed trails. Snowshoeing is allowed anywhere except on the ski trails.

Wilderness Area

A 25,150-acre Wilderness Area is found on the western side of the refuge. Open to day use only, this truly wild section of the refuge is primarily wetland, and difficult to access.

Fishing

T. & J. Reuther

Anglers can fish along the 3-mile *Fishing Loop,* or at the accessible fishing pier. Fish species found on the refuge include: northern pike, yellow perch, brown bullhead, brook trout, and pumpkinseed. To protect the trumpeter swan and common loon, lead sinkers cannot be used on the refuge. *See the fishing brochure for current regulations.*

Hunting

Ruffed grouse, American woodcock, snowshoe hare, white-tailed deer, and black bear may be hunted during some state seasons. *Please see the hunting brochure for current regulations.*

Mushroom & Berry Picking

The refuge is open to the picking of wild foods and fruits.

T. & J. Reuther

Please Obey These Special Rules

- Daylight use only.
- Dogs allowed on a leash.
- No camping or overnight parking is allowed.
- Off-road vehicles are prohibited.
- Open fires are not allowed.
- Boats, canoes or other flotation devices are not permitted on refuge pools.