

Montezuma's



Wild Things

Scavenger Hunt

Wild Things



W I L D T H I N G S

To find Montezuma's Wild Things....

- Visit the Visitor Center
- Drive the Wildlife Drive
- Walk the Seneca Trail (Note: Much of the Seneca Trail is closed. You can walk a small part of it by walking the entrance road in front of the refuge office. You will come out on the other side of the office and can walk through the parking lot to get back to the Visitor Center.)
- Walk the Esker Brook and/or South Spring Pool Trails
- Visit the refuge viewing towers
- Visit the refuge viewing platforms
- Visit our refuge overlook
- Take photos/selfies as you go and post on your social media # MontezumaWild

There is no time limit to completing this scavenger hunt! Bring it back with you the next time. Every time you visit offers something new to discover!

Helpful Resources:

A website to identify birds is allaboutbirds.org

An app to identify birds is the Merlin Bird ID app

Both of these resources are from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

An app to help identify plants is the Leafsnap app

**Please stay on the trails & follow all posted signs, barricades
and information in this packet.**

The List of Montezuma's Wild Things....

- ☐ Osprey
- ☐ Osprey in Its Nest
- ☐ Animal Track (any species)
From what animal? _____
- ☐ Scat (scat = animal poop)
From what animal? _____
- ☐ Great Blue Heron
- ☐ Mallard Duck
- ☐ Snake (any species)
Can you name it? _____
- ☐ Northern Shoveler Duck
- ☐ Yellowlegs (shorebird)
- ☐ Sandhill Crane
Do you see a colt (baby)? _____
- ☐ Bald Eagle
Have you spotted a nest? _____
- ☐ Purple Martin
Did you find their nest box? _____
- ☐ Sycamore Tree
- ☐ Garlic Mustard
This plant is invasive!
- ☐ Songbird Nest
Can you name the species? _____
- ☐ How Montezuma was Named
Hint: Check at the Visitor Center
information desk
- ☐ Water Control Structure
(Hint: Seneca Spillway is one)
- ☐ Canada Goose
- ☐ Canada Goose Goslings
- ☐ Dragonfly (any species)
Can you name it? _____
- ☐ Violet
- ☐ Woodpecker (any species)
Can you name it? _____
- ☐ Red-Winged Blackbird
Bonus: Can you spot a female?
- ☐ Muskrat or Muskrat Hut
- ☐ Turkey Vulture
- ☐ Bee (any species)
Can you name it? _____
- ☐ Any Non-Domestic Mammal
Can you name it? _____
- ☐ A Refuge Volunteer
Name? _____
What is their volunteer job?

- ☐ A Refuge Employee
Name? _____
What is their job?

***Please only take note, take pictures, and take away memories!
Picking and/or taking any natural materials or artifacts is prohibited.***

The List of Montezuma's Wild Things....

- ☐ Cattail
- ☐ Pied-Billed Grebe
- ☐ Black Tern
- ☐ Green Heron
- ☐ America Coot
- ☐ Common Gallinule
- ☐ Eastern Kingbird
- ☐ Turtle (any species)
Can you name it? _____
- ☐ Evidence of Turtle Nest
Describe it _____
- ☐ Oak Tree (any species)
Can you name it? _____
- ☐ Dandelion
These are great plants for bees!
- ☐ Heal-All
(Hint: Little purple flowers)
- ☐ Great Blue Heron Rookery
Search for it from the Tschache
Pool Tower, Rte. 89
- ☐ Spicebush
- ☐ Bird using a nesting box
What species? _____
- ☐ Spider (any species) or a Web
Can you name it? _____

- ☐ Your Favorite Montezuma Bird
Name it _____
Did you see it today? _____
- ☐ A Beautiful Landscape View
Describe it. Where is it? _____

- ☐ Your Favorite Montezuma
Moment
Describe it _____

Please share it to your Facebook
page and tag  Montezuma
National Wildlife Refuge

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This map shows the area around East Road, including Tschache Pool, Knox Marsellus Marsh, and Puddler Marsh. It also indicates the location of N. May's Point Rd and Tow Path Rd (Seasonal). A scale bar shows distances up to 0.5 miles, and a north arrow is present.





Montezuma *National Wildlife Refuge*

Visitor Information

Attention: Nesting Raptors in the Area

Bald eagles and great horned owls are nesting in the Seneca Trail/head of the Wildlife Drive area. To protect them, and in accordance with the law:

- Seneca Trail is closed through September 30
- Stay in your car; walking and bicycling are not permitted on the Wildlife Drive
- Obey all posted signs and barricades
- Keep viewing/photographing time to less than 5 minutes in this area
- Do not block the road



Outdoor facilities are open from ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset. The Wildlife Drive is open April 1 – November 30, weather-dependent. The Visitor Center & Nature Store are open April 1 – November 30 on weekdays from 10 am to 3 pm. We may not be open on weekends due to a lack of volunteer help.

About the Refuge

Montezuma National Wildlife refuge provides resting, feeding, and nesting habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds. The refuge is located at the north end of Cayuga Lake, situated in the middle of one of the most active flight lanes in the Atlantic Flyway.

Montezuma encompasses more than 10,000 acres in Seneca, Wayne, and Cayuga Counties. Most of the habitat on the refuge is emergent marsh, but there are also areas of grassland, shrubland, and forest.

Enjoy Your Refuge

- Seneca Trail: **CLOSED through 9/30/25; please abide by barriers & closed signs.** 1-mile loop starting from the Visitor Center parking area; easy. Observation tower & deck. Restrooms.
- Wildlife Drive: 3-mile, **ONE-WAY** driving trail. Stay in your car until you reach designated viewing areas, marked by a binocular sign. Pull over for better viewing but do not park and walk along the Drive. **No walking, jogging, bicycling on the Wildlife Drive.**
- Tschache Pool & May's Point: Viewing structures overlooking amazing emergent marshes!
- Esler Brook & South Spring Pool Trails: Nearly 4 miles, mostly in the forest. Moderate difficulty.

Refuge Etiquette

The refuge habitats provide homes, food, breeding grounds, and rest areas for migratory birds and other wildlife. You can be a welcome guest by following a few simple guidelines and setting an example for those who are not “in the know”!

Please DO:

- Stay on designated refuge trails and at designated refuge viewing areas.
- Stay in your car along the Wildlife Drive until you reach designated viewing areas marked with a brown & white binocular sign.
- Walk your dog on a leash on the Seneca Trail (when open) and Refuge entrance road only.
- Fish only in designated areas.
- Observe information & orientation signs.

Please Do NOT:

- Leave designated trails, walk on dikes, enter into water/Refuge pools, enter into closed areas.
- Walk or bicycle on the Wildlife Drive.
- Exit your car on the Wildlife Drive, except at designated areas marked with a brown & white binocular sign.
- Jog/Run anywhere on the refuge.
- Camp, have fires, or stay overnight on any part of the Refuge.
- Collect any materials (feathers, plants, rocks, animals, etc.) from the Refuge.
- Fish or boat in Refuge pools and other waters. You may fish and boat in the canals and rivers around the Refuge from designated fishing and launching areas.
- Feed wildlife.
- Fly drones.
- Walk your dog, except on the Seneca Trail (when open) and Refuge entrance road.

Contact Us at 315-568-5987

3395 US 20 East

Seneca Falls, NY 13148

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/montezuma>

Seneca Trail

Because of a nesting bald eagle pair, most of this trail is closed in accordance with New York State regulations for protecting bald eagle nesting areas. You can access a small part of the trail by walking the entrance road in front of the refuge office.

Once on the trail, as you walk toward the Cayuga-Seneca Barge Canal, look up on top of the power pole that stands near the water. That is an osprey nest! Can you spot an osprey on the nest or nearby?



ABOUT YOUR DOG:

Leashed dogs are permitted on this trail and around the Visitor Center area only.

All other trails are closed to dog-walking.

Your dog must stay in your car along the wildlife Drive and at viewing areas.

Please clean up after your dog. Garbage cans are located at the entrance to the Visitor Center deck and at the picnic area on the Seneca Trail.



*That's
Wild!*

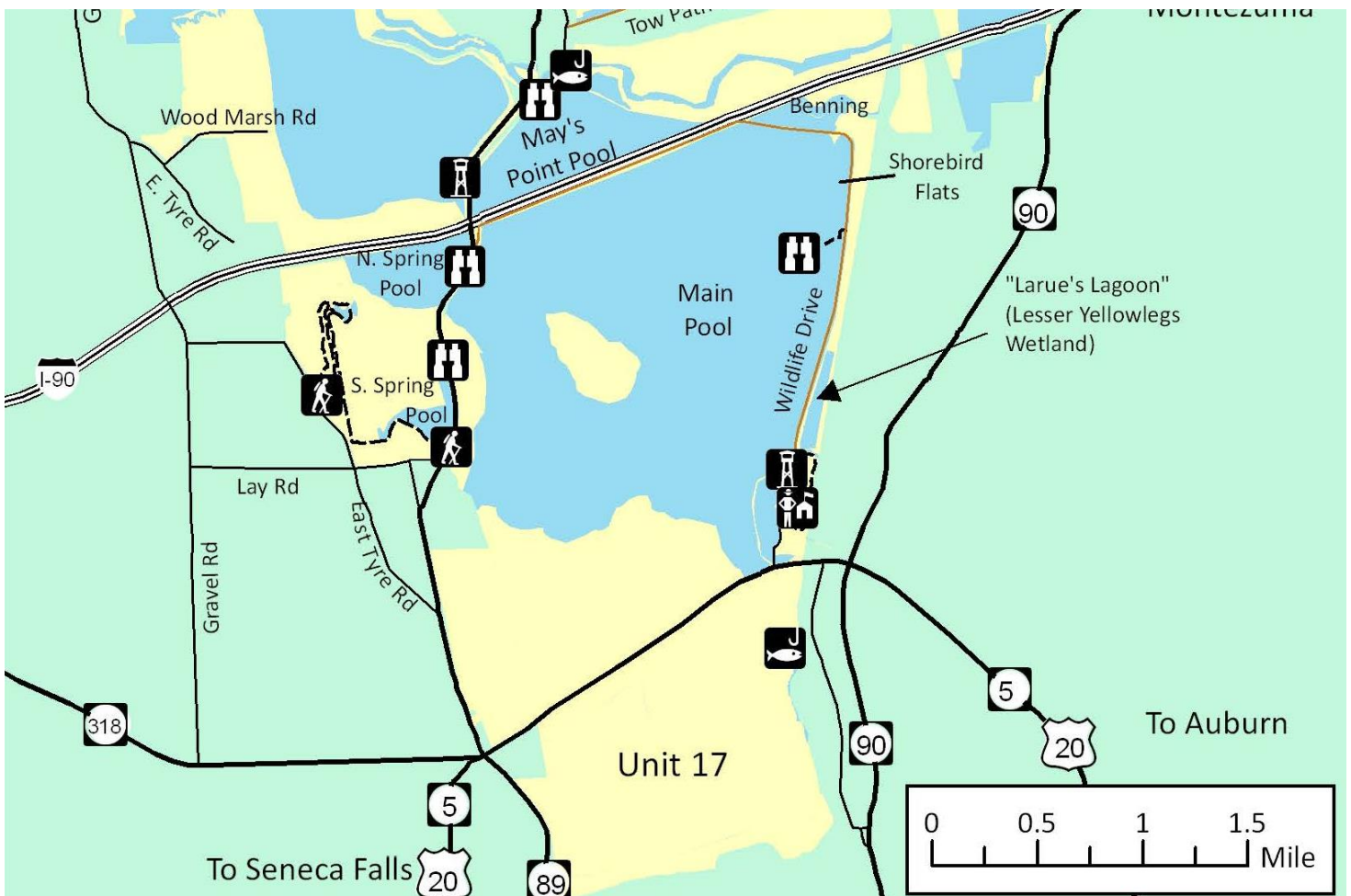
The Cayuga-Seneca Barge Canal was created in the early 1900s in order to connect the Cayuga and Seneca Lakes to the Erie Canal System. Creation of this canal changed the hydrology (how water behaves and flows) of the area and effectively drained the historic expanse of marsh land. Wildlife went the way of the water – gone! No more did enormous flocks of geese black out the sky.... Until 1938, when a portion of the area was purchased by the government and designated the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge.

Wildlife Drive

Begins from the Visitor Center Parking area (look for the sign resembling an entrance to a ranch). The Drive is about 3 miles one-way, ending on State Route 89. You may pull over anywhere for better viewing but must stay in your car most of the time. Brown & white binocular signs indicate when you can exit your car, but please stay with your car.

To protect the nesting bald eagles and great-horned owls near the beginning of the Drive, keep your visit brief and stay in your car. Please do not block the road.

At the end of the Drive, State Route 89 will take you to other walking trails and viewing areas on the refuge.



*That's
Wild!*

Your car acts as a viewing blind! Staying in your car “hides” you from the birds using the Main Pool, so they are less likely to fly away. Once you exit the car and your person can be seen, birds will be wary and fly off. When they fly, they use up the precious energy they are supposed to be storing for nesting and migration.



Wildlife Viewing Etiquette:

Protecting Our Nesting Birds

Spring is a critical time for our nesting birds, especially bald eagles and great horned owls. These incredible birds are raising their young right along the Wildlife Drive and Seneca Trail. Human disturbance, even from inside a vehicle, can cause unnecessary stress and impact their nesting success. New York State regulations require “safety zones” around bald eagle and great horned owl nests.

Please follow these simple Wildlife Viewing Guidelines to help protect our nesting birds:

Stay in Your Vehicle

Eagles and owls are highly sensitive to human activity. Exiting your vehicle can cause unnecessary stress and even lead to nest abandonment.

Keep Viewing Time Short

If you stop to view or photograph a nest, limit your stop to 5 minutes or less.

Prolonged stops can cause stress to the birds and disrupt their natural behaviors.

Do Not Block the Road

Pull over only where it is safe to do so, ensuring traffic can pass freely.

Avoid creating congestion near nest sites.

Use Zoom Instead of Getting Closer

Please refrain from approaching nests on foot or trying to get a better angle outside your vehicle.

Use binoculars or a camera with a zoom lens instead of moving closer.

Give Nesting Birds the Space They Need

Eagles may abandon nests if they feel threatened.

Owls may stay still but can still feel stressed by human presence.

Let's allow these birds to raise their young without interference.

Be a Conservation Ally! Spread the Word!

Regular visitors, birders, and photographers play a crucial role in protecting our wildlife. If you see others stopping too long or getting too close, kindly remind them about these guidelines.



Rick Greene



Jackie Bakker

Thank you for helping Montezuma's nesting eagles and owls thrive!



NATIONAL
WILDLIFE
REFUGE SYSTEM | **Montezuma**
National Wildlife Refuge

Where's the Water?

The Marsh Cycle Explained

Water levels drop when it is dry. We mimic this by draining the pool. Soils warm and seeds have enough air and light to grow. Plants take over the area.

↓
Wetter conditions return naturally or by opening water control structures, and the marsh floods again.

↓
Some plants, like annuals that have to start over from seed each year, eventually die off. The plants that do not need to be replanted each year, called perennials, survive.

↓
As the water rises, underwater plants and plants with floating leaves return. This regenerating stage lasts a few years.

↓
Then the perennial plants that grow up out of the water die off from natural causes, and perhaps from muskrats eating the plants or using them to build huts.

↓
Eventually, the marsh becomes an open water system, resembling a lake.

↓
A drought year or a mimicked drought starts the cycle over again.



Montezuma Mimics Nature to Manage the Marshes



Montezuma's wetlands actually consist of human-made pools of water. We mimic nature's drought cycle from wet to dry, to wet again in several refuge pools to keep the marshes healthy and diverse.



Dry and full of plants



High risk of plants & open water - optimal conditions



Nearly open water: time to drain



USFWS/Open Water



USFWS/James Ford



USFWS/Stephen F. Hunter

Marsh Cycles Make Amazing Habitat

By draining or flooding the pools on a schedule, we ensure wildlife have the varied and healthy habitats they need for survival.

If you see a drained pool, it's most likely done on purpose to start the emergent marsh cycle.

Bald Eagle Viewing Platform

Located towards the end of the Wildlife Drive, across from the New York State Thruway. This statue commemorates 40 years of bald eagle conservation. From the viewing platform, you overlook the refuge's restored dry marsh. Once an expanse of only cattail plants, this area was not productive for wildlife diversity. Refuge staff spent years digging out the pools before you in order to accommodate open water in this area. Water attracts life and now this part of the refuge's Main Pool is a great place for geese, ducks, marsh birds and birds of prey!



Look out over the marsh to the “island” of trees. This area is designated as a National Natural Landmark because it represents old growth red maple forest – a rare habitat these days!

*That's
Wild!*

There is a bald eagle nest out on Maple Island that is sometimes visible from this platform. It has been an active nest since the early 2000s and even survived the wildfire of 2010, which burned on an Easter Sunday. Ash from the fire fell on those at an outdoor church service in Skaneateles, NY, 18 miles away!

This map illustrates the San Francisco Estuary, highlighting several key areas and infrastructure. The map includes the following features:

- Roads:** Armitage Road, Gravel Rd, East Rd, Wood Marsh Rd, E. Tyre Rd, N. May's Point Rd, Tow Path Rd (Seasonal), and Wildlife Drive.
- Highways:** I-90 and Highway 89.
- Water Bodies:** Tschache Pool, May's Point Pool, N. Spring Pool, S. Spring Pool, Main Pool, Knox Marsh, Puddler Marsh, and Marsellus Marsh.
- Landmarks:** Tschache Pool Viewing Tower, Benning, and Shorebird Flats.
- Icons:** Binoculars, a fish, a person walking, and a person on a bicycle.

That's
Wild!

May's Point Pool Viewing Platform

Take a left out of the Tschache Pool area and then take the first right onto May's Point Road. Not far in, the viewing platform is on your right and the parking area is on your left. Walk the short boardwalk to the viewing area to look out over one of the refuge's emergent marshes.

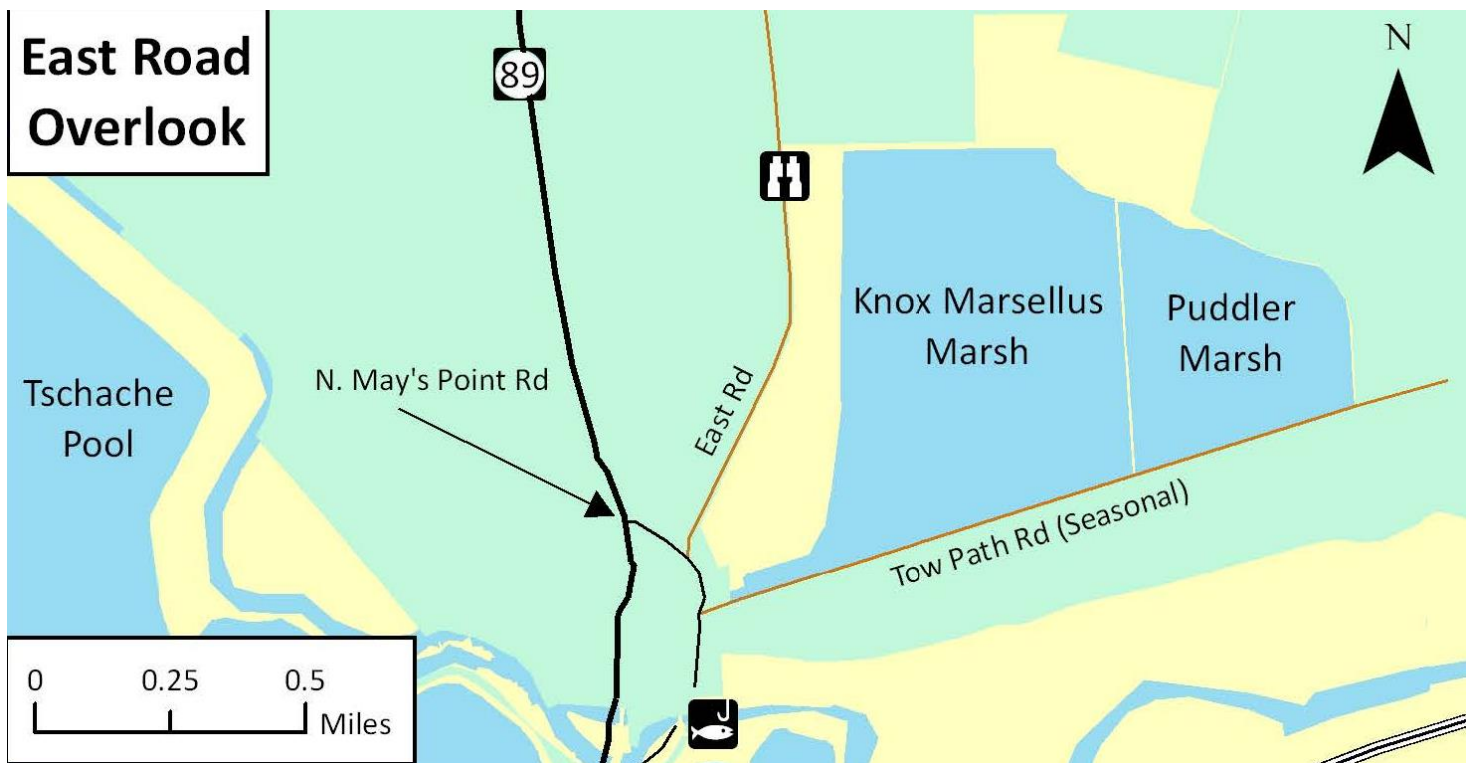


An emergent marsh is one where some plants are under the water, and some grow up out of the water. In addition, emergent marshes change over time, depending on weather conditions, particularly drought. In a drought, the marsh drains, exposing the soil to warmth and sun. This allows plants to grow! Filled up again by rain and snow-melt, emergent marshes offer great food and cover sources for migratory waterfowl and marsh birds. Over time, plants naturally die out or are used by muskrats for food and to make their huts. The marsh is then mostly open water until another drought. Refuge managers can mimic this emergent marsh cycle by managing the water levels. Since all of the refuge's pools are human-made, we must do this to ensure birds and other marsh-dependent wildlife have what they need to survive!

*That's
Wild!*

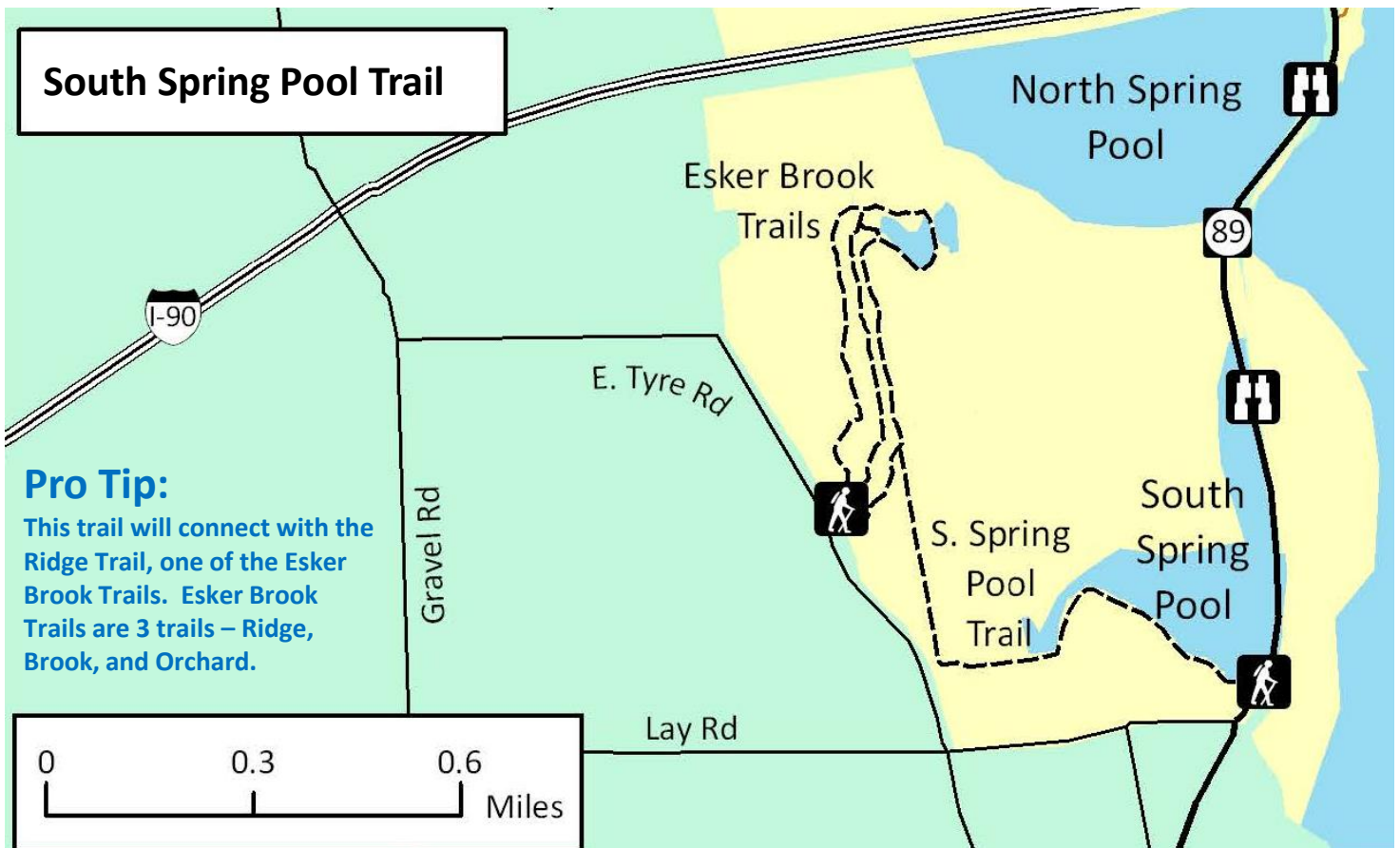
East Road Overlook

Turn right off of May's Point Road onto State Route 89, heading north. A bridge will take you over the canal. Take the next right onto N. May's Point Road and then the first left onto East Road. This road will become a dirt road. You will pass a warm-season grassland before you come to a parking area and overlook. Here, you look over the Knox-Marsellus Marsh in the foreground and Puddler Marsh in the background. While these pools are a favorite of geese and great blue heron, during the summer, shorebirds use areas that dry out naturally. Scan the marsh and the fields on the other side of the marsh for sandhill cranes. Cranes begin to flock up in October before migrating out of the area in late November or December, depending on the weather.



South Spring Pool Trail

Parking for the head of the South Spring Pool Trail is located off State Route 89, just north of the big goose (you'll know it when you see it) and just south of the refuge's Hunter Check Station area. This $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile trail has a grassy surface and is relatively flat; there is one hill to climb before it levels off again. The trail is out-and-back, rather than a loop trail. Watch for frogs on the path and woodpeckers and warblers in the trees. You may spot a great blue heron in the water. A very keen eye may even see a napping bat! **Dogs are not permitted on this trail.**



Esker Brook Trails

If you don't take the South Spring Pool Trail to Esker Brook's Ridge Trail, you can drive to the parking/trail-head area! From State Route 89, turn on to Lay Road. Take a right at the Stop sign onto E. Tyre Road. The large parking area will be on your right. From here, you can start off on one of 3 Esker Brook Trails. From Left to Right, the trails are the Orchard Trail, Brook Trail, and Ridge Trail. Each trail is about 1 mile long, so you can take one trail out and a different trail back to give you 2 trails in 2 miles! Be sure to walk around the ponds! The trail surface is natural and difficulty level is moderate. **Dogs are not permitted on these trails.**




*That's
Wild!*

An esker is a long ridge of gravel and other sediment, typically having a winding course, deposited by meltwater from a retreating glacier or ice sheet. The Brook Trail follows a stream that runs between two eskers.



You
can
Help!

Montezuma's Wild Things Scavenger Hunt was designed to help you discover the visitor areas and cool things to see at the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge!

You can share your experiences at Montezuma NWR by posting on your social media with #MontezumaWild or tag  Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge on Facebook.

Your tagged posts will help Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge be recognized for its natural beauty and welcoming nature!

You can help us manage wildlife habitat and/or help others have an amazing refuge experience by volunteering!

MARSH! Volunteers work alongside refuge and state biologists to manage invasive species and restore wildlife habitat.

Contact Andrea at andrea_vanbeusichem@fws.gov, 315-237-9862 (text preferred).

Nature Store Volunteers help the Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex help the refuge; profits from the store go to refuge projects. Go to <https://friendsofmontezuma.org/contact-us/>

Visitor Services Volunteers can help through a range of projects including Roving Naturalist, Event Planning, Visitor Use Surveys, Guided Tours/Programs, Junior Duck Stamp Program Assistance.

Contact Andrea at andrea_vanbeusichem@fws.gov, 315-237-9862 (text preferred).



NATIONAL
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REFUGE SYSTEM