



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Salt Plains

National Wildlife Refuge General Information

Welcome

Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge was founded in 1930 as a breeding ground, feeding area, and stopover for migratory birds. Over 315 species have been observed across this 32,197-acre refuge located in northwestern Oklahoma. Hundreds of thousands of birds migrate through in the fall and spring, including the endangered Whooping Crane, for which the refuge is critical habitat.

Encompassing one-third of the refuge area are the salt flats, the largest in the central lowlands. Millions of years ago this was an ocean, and is now a National Landmark designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Because of its importance to shorebirds, the refuge is designated a site of international importance by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

Rules and Regulations

- Stay on designated trails and always hike with a partner. Bring water, sunscreen, hat, bug spray, and appropriate clothing for the weather.
- Littering is prohibited. Pack it in and pack it out. Leave the refuge as you found it for others to enjoy.
- Drones are prohibited in all areas on the refuge.
- Disturbing or collecting plants and animals is prohibited. Help keep the wildlife healthy and safe by not feeding or harassing them.
- Pets are welcome on the refuge but must be kept on leash.
- Overnight parking, camping, and fires are prohibited.

Hours and Dates

The refuge is open daily from sunrise to sunset. There are no entrance fees or passes required to visit. Selenite crystal digging, hunting and fishing are open seasonally. Hunting areas are only open to hunters during specific hunting dates. Fishing areas, including fishing trails, and the selenite crystal digging area are open from April 1 through October 15. The Visitor Center is open Monday through Friday, 8 am to 4 pm, and is closed Federal Holidays.

Things to Do

There are a variety of activities open to visitors on the refuge along with crystal digging. Stop by the Visitor Center to learn more about the refuge. Explore the refuge with five hiking trails open daily year-round and two fishing trails open from April 1 through October 15. Bonham Pond is also available for kids and people with disabilities to fish for free with catch and release from April 1 through October 15. Drive the Harold F. Miller Auto Tour one-way north to view wildflowers, birds, and other wildlife.

The Public Hunting Area north of State Highway 11 is only open to hunters for pheasant, quail, dove, ducks, geese, and Sandhill Cranes. White-tailed deer and spring turkey hunting are only allowed by permit. Hunters can apply for permits through the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Controlled Hunting program. All hunting follows state regulations with additional refuge specific regulations. Contact the refuge or view the hunt brochure for more information.

Selenite Crystal Digging

Selenite crystals form naturally within the selenite crystal digging area on the salt flats. This is the only place in the world where these crystals form a unique hourglass shape with selenium, gypsum and iron oxide.

Dig for free selenite crystals from April 1 through October 15 from sunrise to sunset. Drive to the gate at 66003 Garvin Road, Cherokee OK 73728. Then drive one mile through the gate to the Dig Area marked with bright orange signs. Crystal Digging is only allowed in the Dig Area.

We recommend you bring: a shovel or something to dig with, protection from the sun (sunglasses, sunscreen) and water to drink, rinse crystals and clean with. Please remember that littering, using drones, selling crystals and going outside the Dig Area is prohibited. Each person is allowed to collect up to ten pounds and one large cluster per day. Remember to wash the salt off your vehicle when you leave.

Permits

A special use permit is required and available to access a closed area for research or photography/filming. For example, special use permits are available for photography on the salt flats. Visit the refuge website or contact the refuge directly for more information.

Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge
Visitor Center
71189 Harper Road
Jet, OK 73749-4953

(580) 626-4794
fws.gov/refuge/salt-plains
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This is a unit of the National Wildlife
Refuge System, a network of lands
and waters managed for the benefit of
wildlife and people.



Firearms

People possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on national wildlife refuges must comply with state and local laws. Firearms are prohibited in all buildings. People may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations.

Trail Information

All trails may be temporarily closed during hunts, prescribed fires and required maintenance.

Open Every Day

- Eagle Roost Trail: 1.34 mile loop with a slight incline and natural path
- Hoot Owl Loop: 0.68 mile loop, natural path
- Casey Marsh Trail: 0.28 miles out and back, natural path
- Sandpiper Trail: 0.54 miles out and back, paved and accessible
- Jet Recreation Trail: 1.85 miles out and back, natural path

Open During Fishing Season

April 1 – October 15

These trails are only open to fishing.

- Cottonwood Point Fishing Trail: 0.50 miles out and back, natural path
- Sand Creek Fishing Trail: 2 miles out and back, natural path

Best Time and Places to See

- Whooping Cranes: October through early November, and late March at Eagle Roost Trail and Cottonwood Point
- Sandhill Cranes: October through April at Eagle Roost Trail, Cottonwood Point, Jet Recreation Trail, and Hoot Owl Loop
- Golden and Bald Eagles: January through February at Jet Recreation Trail, Cottonwood Point, and the Harold F. Miller Auto Tour

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