

5.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides the Service's policy governing the management of recreational wildlife photography programs on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). In an effort to avoid redundancy, we have placed critical information and guidance for all wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation) in 605 FW 1. Read 605 FW 1 with this chapter for complete information for planning and implementation purposes.

5.2 What is the scope of this chapter? The policies contained in this chapter apply to recreational wildlife photography programs within the Refuge System. See 605 FW 1 and other chapters and regulations governing policies, guidelines, and procedures for additional information. Refer to the administration of specialized and economic uses chapter in the Refuge Manual (RM) at 5 RM 17 and the audio-visual productions chapter (8 RM 16) for policies and procedures related to activities associated with professional guide services and commercial filming and news photography, respectively.

5.3 What is our policy regarding recreational wildlife photography in the Refuge System?

A. The overarching goal of our wildlife-dependent recreation policy is to enhance opportunities and access to quality visitor experiences on refuges and to manage the refuge to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats (see 605 FW 1.6).

B. Recreational wildlife photography is an appropriate use of the Refuge System when compatible. It is also a priority general public use of the Refuge System and should receive enhanced consideration over other nonpriority uses. We strongly encourage refuge managers to provide visitors with quality compatible recreational wildlife photography opportunities. Recreational wildlife photography programs will promote understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management on all lands and waters in the Refuge System. We encourage refuge staff to develop and take full advantage of opportunities to work with other partners who have an interest in helping us promote quality wildlife photography programs on refuges.

C. We cover commercial photography permit requirements under the audio-visual productions chapter in the Refuge Manual (see 8 RM 16, 43 CFR 5.1, and 50 CFR 27.71) and also 5 RM 17, Administration of Specialized Uses. Commercial photography is prohibited without a valid special use permit.

5.4 What are the guiding principles of the Refuge System's wildlife photography programs? The guiding principles of the Refuge System's recreational wildlife photography programs are to:

A. Promote visitor understanding of, and increase visitor appreciation for, America's natural resources.

B. Provide safe, enjoyable, and accessible wildlife photography opportunities and facilities.

C. Provide opportunities for quality compatible recreational and educational experiences consistent with criteria describing quality found in 605 FW 1.6.

D. Minimize conflicts with visitors participating in other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation activities.

5.5 What authorities allow us to support wildlife photography in the Refuge System? See 605 FW 1.3, for laws and Executive orders that govern wildlife photography in the Refuge System.

5.6 What does the term 'commercial photography' mean? Commercial photography is a visual recording (motion or still) by firms or individuals (other than news media representatives) who intend to distribute their photographic content for money or other consideration. This includes the creation of educational, entertainment, or commercial enterprises as well as advertising audio-visuals for the purpose of paid product or services, publicity, and commercially oriented photo contests.

5.7 How do we foster public stewardship in our recreational wildlife photography programs? Refuge managers provide opportunities for visitors to photograph wildlife to instill an appreciation for the value of and need for fish and wildlife habitat conservation. Refuges provide enhanced opportunities to photograph wildlife in their natural habitat by providing platforms, brochures, interpreters, viewing areas, and tour routes. Refuge managers should seek to develop partnerships with organizations that promote wildlife photography and that value wildlife resources.

5.8 What are some examples of tools we can use to support our wildlife photography programs? The refuge manager should consider the following examples of tools as guidelines and continually use their creativity and ingenuity when providing opportunities that highlight the uniqueness of a particular refuge.

A. Developed Photography Sites. Developing specific areas for visitors to photograph wildlife enhances the opportunity for quality wildlife photography experiences and limits the area of disturbance to wildlife and habitat. During the planning process, refuge

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
REFUGE MANAGEMENT**

Refuge Management

Part 605 Wildlife-Dependent Recreation

Chapter 5 Wildlife Photography

605 FW 5

managers should work with visitor services professionals to locate and design facilities that minimize disturbance to wildlife and habitat and maintain a quality visitor experience. Developed photography sites provide a centralized area for visitors to photograph and create a safe, quality experience. Examples of such developments include trails, boardwalks in wet areas, photography platforms, blinds, vehicle pullouts, information kiosks, identification signs, and automobile tour routes. Refuge managers must weigh the benefits of enhancements to wildlife photography with any changes in existing habitat as well as any potential harm to wildlife's life history requirements. If a potential facility modification for people with disabilities would cause harm to the setting's appearance, environmental features, or historic character, we will make efforts to provide alternative access to the activity.

B. Information. Information distribution is an invaluable management tool as well as a means to promote wildlife photography opportunities. Information, distributed through various media, should communicate available wildlife photography opportunities, best viewing times, techniques that emphasize respect for wildlife through the minimization of visitor impacts on wildlife, access point information, photographer etiquette, regulations, restrictions, management concerns, and management objectives. Examples of ways to provide information include the Internet, bird/plant/mammal check lists, brochures, maps, books, and staffed information desks. Distributing information is a way to direct visitor use to appropriate areas; provide managers with the opportunity to present the refuge, Refuge System, and Service messages to visitors; and foster visitor appreciation and stewardship. See 605 FW 7, Interpretation, for guidance on interpretive programs.

C. Specialized Equipment or Facilities. In cases where direct wildlife photography would be detrimental to sensitive species or habitats, refuge managers may develop facilities that provide remote photography opportunities. Refuge managers may, for example, install wildlife photography blinds to shield sensitive wildlife from the human activity associated with photography. Refuge managers may also install remote video cameras in dens, nests, or hacking towers to allow photographers to obtain footage or still photographs of sensitive wildlife from off-site.

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