



NEWS

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THREE NEW REFUGES ADDED TO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

Three new national wildlife refuges have officially been added to the roster of the National Wildlife Refuge System, bringing the number of refuge units to 511. The San Diego, California; Mandalay, Louisiana; and Rappahannock River Valley, Virginia, refuges are now part of a nearly century-old system that has protected our Nation's rich and diverse wildlife and wildlife habitat since 1903.

"Each of these new refuges represents a distinct, vital, and irreplaceable part of the American landscape," said John Rogers, acting director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "They add immensely to the important role the refuge system plays in conserving America's wildlife heritage for the enjoyment of our citizens today and in the future."

The former Rancho San Diego was acquired from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation for the new San Diego National Wildlife Refuge. This initial 1,840-acre tract provides critical coastal sage scrub and riparian habitat for California gnatcatchers, least Bell's vireos, and many other sensitive coastal sage scrub species. The refuge lands were created through a partnership among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Resolution Trust Corporation, the San Diego Association of Governments, the County of San Diego, the California Department of Transportation, and the Otay Water District.

Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana encompasses 4,415 acres of freshwater marsh and wetlands in the Bayou Penchant Basin. As many as 75,000 ducks winter on the refuge, which also provides habitat for many neotropical migratory songbirds. Mandalay Refuge is the result of a donation from The Louisiana Nature Conservancy and a partnership effort with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and other state, Federal, and private conservation organizations under the umbrella of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

Southern Virginia's new 1,111.8-acre Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge is the result of a donation from The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Lands along with a partnership among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Rappahannock River Valley Initiative Committee, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The Rappahannock River Valley is

recognized under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan as one of the most important waterfowl migration and feeding areas along the Atlantic Coast. Most of the ducks common to the Atlantic Flyway use this river area during the winter, joining shorebirds, raptors, wading birds, and songbirds during migration. The largest winter bald eagle roost in Virginia is located within and adjacent to refuge wetlands, with winter roost counts ranging from 100 to 135 birds. The Rappahannock River is also an important nursery and spawning ground for striped bass, shad, blue crabs, softshell clams, and oysters.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency with responsibility for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages 511 national wildlife refuges covering 92 million acres, as well as 72 national fish hatcheries. It enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, stocks recreational fisheries, conserves and restores wetlands and other wildlife habitat, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that funnels Federal excise taxes on angling and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.

For a free brochure about national wildlife refuges, call 1-800-344-WILD.