



FACTS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Birdwatching:

Because the National Wildlife Refuge System's origin is rooted in the protection of migratory birds, many refuges have been established along the four major migration flyways, as well as the prairie pothole region of the Upper Midwest, often dubbed "The Duck Factory." Excellent bird-watching opportunities abound on refuges. Here are just a few:

Cape May National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey is the first refuge giving top priority to the protection of migrating songbirds. A most interesting spectacle occurs on the Delaware Bay in the summer as horseshoe crabs come ashore to mate and are greeted by millions of shorebirds, including hundreds of thousands of red knots, thousands of short-billed dowitchers, Atlantic sanderlings, and ruddy turnstones, all of which greedily feed on crabs' eggs. In the fall, tens of thousands of raptors use the refuge, including peregrine falcons, osprey, kestrels, and sharp-shinned hawks.

The largest concentrations of waterfowl in North America can be seen on **six Klamath Basin national wildlife refuges on the California-Oregon border**. Twenty different duck species and snow, Ross', Canada, and white-fronted geese number in the millions during migration, darkening the skies. In the fall, about 10,000 tundra swans use the refuges as well. Hundreds of bald eagles make up the largest concentration in this country outside of Alaska. Nesting birds include white pelicans, white-faced ibises, and eared grebes; breeding birds include avocets, coots, and black-necked stilts; and smaller birds such as hermit warblers, tricolored blackbirds, and mountain quail are also present on these refuges.

Wading birds are a sight to see on **Florida's J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge**, especially during November through April. Snowy and reddish egrets, white ibises, and roseate spoonbills are among the great spectacles. Other birding attractions are yellow- and black-crowned night herons, black skimmers, shorebirds such as plovers and dowitchers, bald eagles, osprey, brown and white pelicans, and red-shouldered hawks. Songbirds include warblers, indigo and painted buntings, cedar waxwings, and mangrove cuckoos.

Shorebird birding at **Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Utah** can't be beat. Spring and fall are the best times to catch sight of millions of migrating birds such as eared grebes, marbled godwits, and long-billed dowitchers. Located where Bear River empties into the Great Salt Lake, the refuge also hosts 12,000 tundra swans in the fall--the largest concentration anywhere. Shovelers, green-winged teal, pintails, canvasbacks, cinnamon teal, and other ducks number about a half-million in the fall. Other refuge birds include avocets, white pelicans, Western grebes, curlews, spotted sandpipers, bald and golden eagles, and great blue and black-crowned night herons.

Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge in Montana hosts 250 different species of birds. Franklin's gulls, black terns, black-crowned night herons, eared grebes, and white-faced ibises nest in the bulrush marshes of Lake Bowdoin while white pelicans, double-crested cormorants, great blue herons, and California and ring-billed gulls occupy its islands. More than 30 shorebird species, including piping plovers, avocets, marbled godwits, and black-necked stilts nest or stop over on the refuge. In the winter, snowy owls, snow buntings, Bohemian waxwings, northern goshawks, bald and golden eagles, and rough-legged hawks are often present.

Erie National Wildlife Refuge in Pennsylvania hosts more than 200 bird species: nesting songbirds such as the rare Henslow's sparrow in the spring and summer; shorebirds such as sandpipers and yellowlegs use the mudflats during summer and fall; and black-capped chickadees, nuthatches, downy woodpeckers, and dark-eyed juncos spend the winter.

Forty million seabirds of 30 different species breed and nest on the slopes, cliffs, burrows, and rock crevices of **Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge**. Interspersed on the Aleutian Islands and off the west coast of Alaska, five units of this refuge host huge seabird colonies including fulmars, storm petrels, cormorants, kittiwakes, murres, auklets, and puffins--many of these populations setting world records. The Pribolof Islands host the largest bird colony in North America, with up to 3 million murres, puffins, and red- and black-legged kittiwakes.

Fishing:

Three-hundred-seven national wildlife refuges are open to fishing, offering outstanding opportunities for the Nation's 35 million anglers. Some notable contenders:

Wetting a line on any of **Valentine National Wildlife Refuge's** nine sportfishing lakes can yield trophy northern pike and bluegill renowned throughout the State of Nebraska.

The wildlife-rich estuary making up **Florida's Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge**, a new refuge, is a great spot for redfish, snook, sea trout, and tarpon fishing.

The **Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge**, stretching 220 miles along the river through the states of Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, sports walleye, bass, perch, catfish, and crappie, among others.

Seney National Wildlife Refuge in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan offers great northern pike, bass, and brook and brown trout fishing. Winter ice fishing is popular.

Fighting bluefish and stripers are much sought after by saltwater fishermen visiting **Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge in Rhode Island**.

At **Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana**, a brand new refuge, anglers can seek bass, bluegill, and crappie in the 1,600-acre Black Bayou Lake, an oxbow lake amidst bottomland hardwoods.

The emerald-green waters of the Kenai River offer trophy king salmon for anglers casting a line on **Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska**. Rainbow trout and kokanee can be fished in the refuge's numerous lakes.

The Togiak, Kanektok, and Goodnews rivers on **Alaska's Togiak National Wildlife Refuge** offer some of the world's finest remote salmon and trout fishing. The 1,500 miles of riverine habitat at Togiak teem with five species of Pacific salmon, rainbow trout, Arctic grayling, Dolly Varden, and Arctic char.

Hunting:

More than 1½ million people out of the 14 million hunters in this country seek their quarry on national wildlife refuges. From big game to waterfowl, 290 national wildlife refuges offer hunting. A few excellent programs include:

At **Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska**, hunters can walk the rolling and ruggedly beautiful hills in pursuit of upland game birds such as grouse, prairie chicken, and pheasant, or try for white-tailed and mule deer.

Moose hunting is a popular pastime on many of Alaska's interior refuges, including **Innoko, Kanuti, Koyukuk, Nowitna, and Yukon Flats** national wildlife refuges. These refuges also offer black and brown bear, barren-ground caribou, and Dall's sheep hunting programs.

Delaware's Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge is an excellent place for hunting snow geese, ducks, and white-tailed deer.

In addition to snipe, pheasant, and quail hunting, **Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon** offers tremendous goose and duck hunting.

White-tailed deer hunting is a main attraction at **Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Alabama**, as well as squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, and opossum and quail hunting.

J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota is noted for its snow and Canada goose and duck hunting, as well as grouse, partridge, pheasant, turkey, and white-tailed deer hunting programs.

Environmental Education:

Hundreds of national wildlife refuges have environmental education programs ranging from interpretive nature walks for local school children to full-scale teacher-training programs. Many have environmental education centers. Hundreds of thousands of school children visit refuges to learn about the environment. A few popular environmental education refuges are:

Thousands of school children who visit **Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge** each year learn about habitat conservation, especially the importance of saltmarsh habitat to migratory birds and endangered species. The refuge hosts outdoor classroom and other activities as well as an environmental education center in San Jose.

Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Iowa just opened a new Prairie Learning Center, where school children and others learn about the refuge's extensive efforts to restore the tallgrass prairie, including reintroduction of bison on the refuge. The learning center has many educational exhibits on prairie management and restoration, a simulation of an underground burrow giving the illusion of being an insect in the soil, as well as interactives and theaters.

Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland offers wildlife management demonstration areas and outdoor education sites for school classes year-round. The refuge hosts an extensive teacher-training program for environmental learning. Its visitor center focuses on wildlife research and management practices, as well as endangered species and habitat conservation.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge near Minneapolis provides curriculum-based field trips for students ranging from pre-school through high school, a river stewardship program

focusing on water quality, and helps Boy and Girl Scouts hone natural resource management skills. The refuge has a visitor center with interactive exhibits explaining the history of the Minnesota River and how wetlands are managed for waterfowl and other wildlife.

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