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544 National Wildlife Refuges Are Wild Places Close to Home
**National Wildlife Refuge Week, October 10-16,
Celebrates Important Role in Species Recovery**

Tens of thousands of visitors will flock to national wildlife refuges for National Wildlife Refuge Week October 10-16, where they will see the National Wildlife Refuge System's pivotal role in protecting and, in cases, reviving wildlife species.

Bald eagles, the Columbian white-tailed deer and the California condor are only a few of the endangered and threatened species that have been helped back from the brink of extinction by the work of national wildlife refuges across the country.

The National Wildlife Refuge System, established in 1903, has 544 national wildlife refuges, more than 3,000 waterfowl production areas and spans approximately 100 million acres. It provides habitat for more than 700 species of birds, 220 species of mammals, 250 reptile and amphibian species, more than 1,000 fish, and countless species of invertebrates and plants.

Nearly 260 threatened or endangered species are found on national wildlife refuges, where they often begin their recovery or hold their own against extinction.

At the same time, the National Wildlife Refuge System offers unparalleled wildlife-dependent recreation. It has more than 890 trails covering approximately 2,500 miles, open to the public for wildlife observation and photography. Hunting is offered on more than 300 refuges; fishing is available on more than 280 refuges. Additionally, hundreds of environmental education programs are offered across the country.

But nowhere is the work of national wildlife refuges more important than in the recovery and protection of endangered and threatened species. The California condor, for example, dropped to a low of just 22 birds in 1983. Today, more than 100 condors soar in the wild, many captive-bred birds released on California refuges dedicated to their recovery.

“Wildlife refuges are critically important for endangered wildlife. They prove their value in that arena every day,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Steve Williams. “National wildlife refuges are important, as well, for the health of families and communities. There is no better place to reconnect with both wildlife and the family than on a wildlife refuge.

“We as a nation are fortunate to have the National Wildlife Refuge System as both an incubator and protector of endangered species and as a place where we can find such traditional recreation as hunting and fishing,” Director Williams continued. “Throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System, we use solid management techniques to ensure the health of the wildlife we protect. I look forward to celebrating National Wildlife Refuge Week on a refuge, seeing a new generation enjoy our outstanding natural resources.”

Every state has at least one national wildlife refuge. There are 19 refuges in Oregon, 6 in Idaho, 21 in Washington, and 19 in Hawaii and the Pacific Islands. People living in metropolitan areas can usually find a national wildlife refuge just an hour’s drive from home.

“We encourage people to use National Wildlife Refuge Week as a chance to discover wildlife refuges. Look for one near your home,” noted National Wildlife Refuge System Chief Bill Hartwig.

Sample events during National Wildlife Refuge Week: For a complete list of events, go to http://refugedata.fws.gov/databases/events.taf?_function=list&_UserReference=85D4D5C32E5CFBCBC4D06C4E&_start=1

- **October 9-10, Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, Ridgefield, WA:** BirdFest celebrates the return of the birds to their winter home with tours, presentations, children’s crafts, demonstrations, blue grass and old-time music, and vendors. Complete schedule available at www.ridgefieldfriends.org or contact: 360/887-4106.
- **October 9, Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, Cheney, WA:** Partner event with Spokane Audubon Society to plant trees and remove invasive species. Contact: 509/235-4723 ext. 28.
- **October 10, Siletz Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Lincoln City, OR:** Guided interpretive canoe or kayak trip on Millport Slough and the Siletz River, 9:30 a.m. to noon. Contact: 541/867-45550.
- **October 12-16, Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge, Kilauea, HI:** Daily guided hike, times vary, reservations required. Free admission on Oct. 16, special activities for children. Contact: 808/828-1413.
- **October 16, Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge, Hilo, HI:** Guided hikes and tours from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Pua Akala Barn. Reservations required. Contact: 808/933-6915.
- **October 16, Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, Sherwood, OR:** Free canoe trips on the Tualatin River with the Tualatin Riverkeepers. Reservations required; e-mail margot@tualatinriverkeepers.org. Contact: 503/590-5811.
- **October 16, Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge, Ankeny, OR:** Early morning bird walks at 7 and 9 a.m., prairie restoration walks, displays, children’s activities and games, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Contact: 541/757-7236.
- **October 16, Malheur Refuge, Princeton, OR:** Annual Ranching Heritage Day at the Historic Sod House Ranch, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Western music, traditional western craft demonstrations. Contact: 541/493-2612.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 84 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries,

conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.