

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fish Springs

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



Welcome



The Blue Goose is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a network of lands and waters managed for the benefit of wildlife and people.

Black-necked stilts in a courtship embrace.



Jana M. Cisar / USFWS

The peaceful solitude at Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is a pleasant change from the more energized setting of urban environments. Slow down. Breathe deeply. Like migrating birds, people also need places where they can find refuge and re-energize before taking flight again.

The Refuge covers nearly 18,000 acres between two mountain ranges on the southern end of the Great Salt Lake Desert in western Utah. A native fish species, the Utah chub, lives in the springs; thus, the name Fish Springs.

Fish Springs NWR is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is one of over 565 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Refuge System is a living heritage, preserving wildlife and habitat for people today and for generations to come.



American white pelicans on the Refuge.

Patrick Moffett / USFWS

The lush habitat of the Refuge, surrounded by a vast arid desert, is a true oasis for wildlife. The springs are filled from two aquifers, or underground reservoirs. It is estimated that the spring water, which flows upwards through a fault line at the base of the Fish Springs Mountain range, is about 10,000 years old. These springs supply water for the Refuge's 10,000 acres of wetlands. The water temperature stays near 75°F year-round so open water is present near the springs throughout the year. Mist can be seen gently rising off the springs on cold mornings.

The Refuge hosts almost 300 species of birds. Of those, 70 species nest and raise their young at the Refuge. The best time to see peak bird migration is mid-April and late September. Many species of native mammals such as coyotes, pronghorn, black-tailed jackrabbits, and muskrats also reside here or use the Refuge on a seasonal basis.

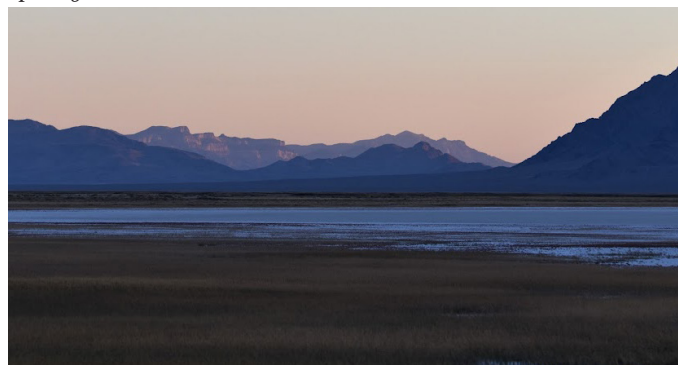
A Rich History

Around 17,000 years ago, the Refuge and the surrounding region were covered by Lake Bonneville, a massive terminal lake (a lake without an exit). The lake covered almost 20,000 square miles. That's an area about the size of New Hampshire and Vermont combined! The lake rose and fell several times during its 35,000-year existence. At the lake's peak, the Refuge would have been nearly 850 feet underwater. The Lake declined to present levels here and in the Great Salt Lake ecosystem around 11,400 years ago. On the mountain ranges that surround the Refuge, you can see the ancient shorelines, also called benches, where the water levels were stable for extended periods.

Based on archaeological investigations conducted on the Refuge, it is believed that the first inhabitants of this oasis, likely the Paleo Archaic, arrived here about 11,000 years ago. The Refuge is the ancestral homelands to the nomadic Goshute (Gosiuta) tribe which occupied the land from the 1400s to the 1900s.

European settlers first entered the region in 1827, when explorer, Jedediah Smith, visited the springs en route from California to central Utah. The Jackass Mail, the Overland Trail, and the Pony Express maintained waystations at Fish Springs and, in 1861, the first transcontinental

Sunset over the springs.



Patricia Mezza / USFWS



Patrick Moffett / USFWS

Great horned owl in a tree.

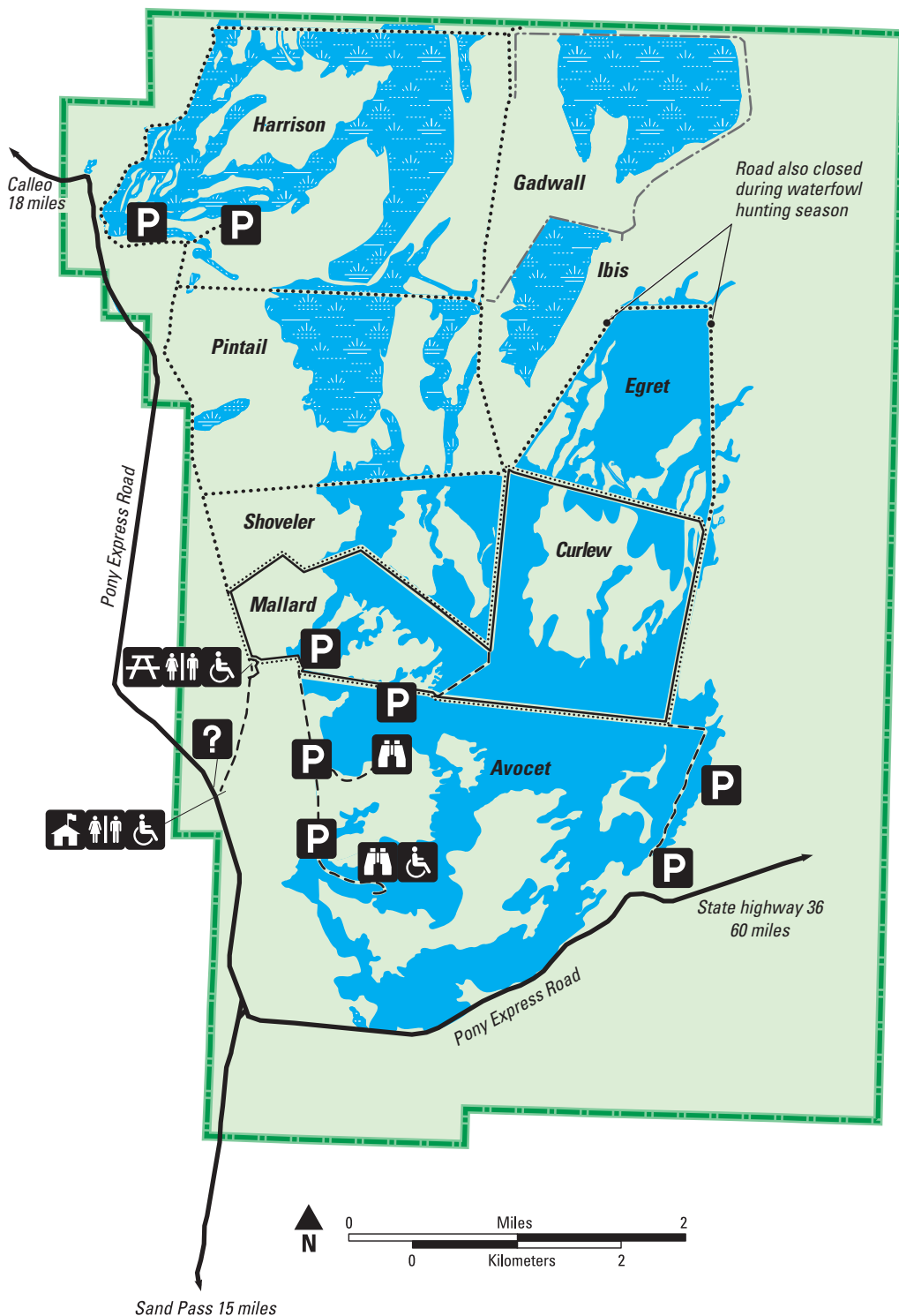
Managed for Wildlife Diversity

telegraph crossed the Fish Springs wetlands. Early in the 20th century, the nation's first transcontinental automobile road, the Lincoln Highway, cut its way through what is now the Refuge. Markers for these routes can be seen at the House Spring and Thomas Ranch.

Refuge staff use a variety of water management practices to provide wetland habitats for migratory birds and other wildlife. Staff manage seasonal water levels using a system of canals, water control structures, and dikes. This ensures a diversity of wetland habitats are available to meet the needs for a variety of species.

Another water management practice is to dry out each wetland unit once every few years and allow it to remain dry throughout the following growing season. This mimics the natural wetting and drying cycle of wetlands.

A third important practice is prescribed burning. In a healthy wetland, a variety of plants grow and die over the span of several years. Burning releases the nutrients tied up in this dead vegetation, resulting in a nutrient-rich environment when the wetland unit is flooded again.

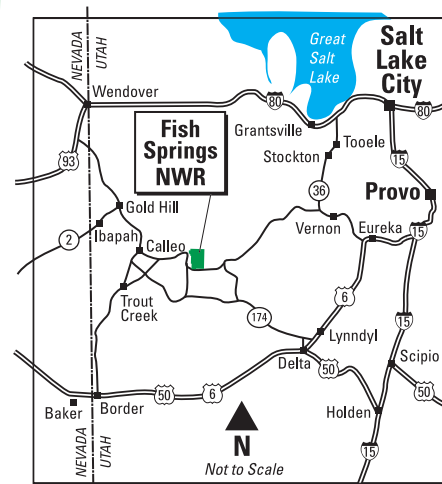


Fish Springs

National Wildlife Refuge

- Refuge boundary
- County road
- Refuge road
- Auto tour - 11 miles
- Refuge road (Closed April 15 - August 15)
- Levee (Closed year-round)
- Federal interstate
- Federal highway
- State highway
- Seasonal wetland
- Wetland
- Refuge headquarters
- Information kiosk
- House Spring and Thomas Ranch
- Restroom
- Linked symbols designate
- accessible features
- Wildlife viewing blind
- Parking

To protect wildlife and their habitat, the only areas open to the public are the roads and some areas during special activities.





Patrick Moffett / USFWS

Winters at Fish Springs can be snowy, even in the desert.

Enjoy Your Visit

Wildlife viewing opportunities at the Refuge bring new and exciting discoveries with each changing season. The Refuge is open sunrise to sunset every day of the year.

A monarch butterfly drinking nectar from a milkweed plant.

Accessible restrooms, drinking water, and an information kiosk with brochures are available at Refuge headquarters.



Jonathan Barth / USFWS

Getting Around

Enjoy the 11-mile self-guided auto tour. To protect wildlife and their habitat, stay on the roads. You may drive on other Refuge roads provided they are not gated or signed as closed. Some areas are closed from April 15 through August 15 to protect nesting birds (areas indicated on map). Biking is also an excellent way to observe wildlife. Two accessible photography and wildlife viewing blind sites are available for use. For more information, contact Refuge staff.

House Spring and Thomas Ranch

A nice stop for visitors is the House Spring and Thomas Ranch picnic site. Several poplar and cottonwood trees surround the spring and provide a shady respite for people and wildlife alike. An accessible restroom and picnic tables are available for visitor use.

Hunting

The Refuge is a great place to enjoy hunting. See the Refuge hunting brochure for additional information.

Volunteering

Volunteers assist the Refuge in a variety of ways. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Refuge staff.



Patricia Mezza / USFWS

Pronghorn running across the grassy uplands.

Prohibited Activities

To help protect wildlife and ensure a safe and enjoyable visit, the following activities are prohibited:

- Camping or overnight parking, including RVs.
- Swimming, boating, and fishing.
- Lighting of fires, campfires, or fireworks.
- Target shooting.
- Molesting, disturbing, injuring, destroying, or removing any plant, animal, rock, or cultural artifact.
- Use of drones or unmanned aircraft systems.
- Littering.
- Speeding and off-road vehicle travel.
- Entering closed areas, closed roads, and areas that are marked with signs or gates.
- Parking your vehicle where it will obstruct a road or dike.

Firearms

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of State and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32).

Northern Shoveler swimming amongst the reeds.



Tom Koerner / USFWS

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